

THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about
with truth.”—Eph. vi. 14.

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THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S
TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER I.

ADAM TO ABEL.

I PROPOSE, with the Lord's help, carefully to trace the line of testimony from Adam downwards, embracing, as far as I can be assured, the state of man under each phase of testimony. I trust the attentive reader, or still more, the earnest student of the word, may be led from these pages to dwell on this wondrous subject, even how God has maintained a testimony for Himself from the beginning of man's history on the earth. That He did preserve such a testimony we may safely conclude; for though now and again it may have been reduced to a

single thread, yet that thread was a golden, a divine one.

Whether it would be possible to trace the line outside revelation, I cannot determine. My business now is with the Scriptures.

There are two things which must strike every thoughtful man. First, that the Supreme Being, God, must be supremely good. Secondly, that if God be supremely good, why is man so miserable? Now if the first premise, that of God's goodness, be granted, we cannot account for the second, man's misery, on any other ground than that he is under penalty for transgression. Man in himself is in a twofold misery: he is thwarted in his moments of greatest enjoyment by the uncertainty of life—a fear which the lower animals know nothing of—and his superior intelligence, because of this felt uncertainty, imparts an additional misery to his existence; and he is also liable at any moment to be made a prey of by Satan in a way that none of the lower animals could be. Every one admits that man must be impelled

by an evil spirit more powerful than himself, or he never would commit the crimes of which he is guilty.

Scripture opens with an account of man's fall, which explains all to us fully. It presents him to us as placed in a circle of blessing where every thing was suited to him; and with a suited companion. But notwithstanding all, he acts on the instigation of Satan; distrusts the love of God towards him, and incurs the penalty of disobedience. Thus the sentence of death falls on him, which entirely explains why man, notwithstanding God's goodness, is in so miserable a plight, uncertain of his life, and exposed to the power of Satan. He has yielded to Satan's representation of God, and has brought judgment on himself as well as placed himself in subjection to the enemy whom he obeyed. While surrounded in the garden of Eden with every thing that his heart could enjoy, and with all that the kindness and love of God could group together; then and there, in the very enjoyment of all these indications of God's thought about him,

Satan suggests that God has not *heart* to advance man's interests as He might according to His power. The power he admits, but the very admission is only to enforce the denial of God's *heart* to use His power for man's advancement. Man adopts this impression, acts on it, and thus incurs the penalty of death; while at the same time he becomes exposed to the thralldom of Satan, to whom he has lent himself without knowing the malice of the one who had beguiled his wife.

For a moment Adam was God's witness in Eden. Made in the image and glory of God, he was set in the finest group of natural blessing as God's representative on earth. Adam was at first the witness of God's purpose in man; lord over every other creature, naming them as he approved. And again in the espousal of the woman as formed from himself, as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. In both testifying of the two great circles in which our Lord will be manifested by and by as the last Adam. He sinned, and death

came in, but even for the moment that he occupied this great position he prefigured and foreshadowed the last Adam, the second Man, the Lord from heaven, in whom every one of the blessings and glories forfeited by the first Adam shall be reproduced and set forth with surpassing glory and perfection.

Hence the testimony in the hands of man has a double interest for us, for we see therein, not only God setting Himself forth and maintaining an expression of Himself through fallen man on earth; but that every phase of that testimony, so feeble and imperfect as it is in the descendants of the first Adam, will be reinstated in all the greatness and might of the last Adam. What a captivating view of the purposes of God we obtain when the vision of His testimony, marred as it was in the hands of the first man, serves all the more to engage our souls with the assurance that all shall be presented anew in the power and dignity of the last Man, the Son of God! The day will come when our blessed Lord, with His Bride, will, as the centre of

every blessing, set forth the glory and purpose of God in man. And in that day "the city shall have no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof."

But man, though fallen, and impressed with the sense of inevitable and impending death—the judgment on account of disobedience—is not abandoned by God; but on the contrary, in the greatness of His grace is sought after by Him. He addresses him, not from heaven, but in the garden, man's own abode, with those wondrous words, "Adam, where art thou?" And the avowal which this great question draws forth betrays to us man's newly-acquired relation and feeling towards God. "The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" had made him afraid, and he had hid himself behind the trees of the garden! Such was man's position now towards God. But God's thought about him is, on the other hand, most interestingly and blessedly disclosed. Dis-

tinctly and yet precisely the whole scene presents the mind of both God and man toward one another. Man, a sinner, in fear of God; his mind and heart alienated from Him; while God in the love of His heart follows the wanderer and opens out to him the purposes of His grace, even that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This, the first intimation of the everlasting gospel to be yet preached to all the earth, is revealed to man shuddering in God's presence, and yet with tastes nurtured in a scene of the highest natural bliss, but now checked and clouded by the doom of death under which he is righteously placed. The more we are able to comprehend the mixture of taste, enjoyment, and disappointment which enter into the nature of man, the more do we see what a complex being he is; and thus are we prepared for understanding him, which is a difficulty, unless we combine the elements which comprise his nature. Adam is now set on entirely new ground, the ground of redemption and grace, and

is presented to us as a witness of the same. God details to him His purpose, and he calls his wife's name "Eve," "the mother of all living," as manifesting his faith in God's grace now unfolded to him. He thus expresses his clear conviction that life will come where death was in crushing force impending. Thus the certainty of life through God's grace was given. Through the dreary cloud of judgment a ray of assured light had penetrated. Through that grace he could now speak of life, and connect her, through whom death came, with the One "who is our life." Wondrous testimony! How admirable and suited! What must have been the feelings of Adam at the moment when he called his wife's name Eve! What a rebuke to Satan! What a voice to the angels in heaven! In the presence of God condemned as a sinner and under judgment, sensible of the immense contrast which awaited him on the earth, he had received in his soul this blessed conviction, vouchsafed to him by the grace of God and esta-

blished in his heart, by the very word of God ! How much the infidel loses ! He cannot in any satisfactory way account for man's state. If he could but understand revelation, it would charm him by the miraculousness of its disclosures. What more fitting, what more just, what more beautiful ? The one who sees the connexion and scope of this revelation cannot but admit it to be the profoundest theory that was ever propounded. True, the natural mind cannot enter into its depths, because the grace of God is above it.

But, as I have said, If God be good and man be miserable, must there not be some just reason for man's misery ? and must there not be some definite way in which God, as good, would retrieve man from his misery ? This God does. His love has been denied by Satan, and Adam has adopted Satan's idea. But now Adam is obliged, through grace, to contradict the ideas he had accepted and acted on, while suffering the consequences of his sin. Adam believes in the love of God and calls his wife's

name "Eve." Love, the greater it is, the more distinctly does it act for me when I most want it. Adam at once laid hold on the life which his condition so required from the love of God. To man in his present state, there could be no real love unless life were the first expression of it. And hence, when God's love is fully revealed, it is eternal life, which is His gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. Adam, who had been the first man to distrust God, and thus, in consequence, to fall under the penalty of death, is also the first man to bear testimony that God is love, and that through His love he can call his wife "The mother of all living." She is the monumental witness of this great and glorious fact.

Hence God clothed them in skins, as a token and guarantee that He would shelter them from the shame they had drawn on themselves; and thus clothed by Him, He compels them to take their place *outside the garden*. Adam must enter on another scene. He had been happy and innocent in Paradise: and

he had been miserable there because of sin and judgment. He had learnt from God to rise by faith out of this judgment, and now, outside the garden, as clothed of God, he takes his place. What a beginning is he to the long line of witnesses! How he exemplifies God's purpose and interest in man! As head of our race how he must engage and interest us, and how we may learn from him our proper place, even as though we were beside him, or as if we had lived in his day.

We have now to behold Adam outside Paradise. On this wide earth, dressed in the skins which God had prepared for him, baffling the natural and domestic trials of an ordinary man, children being born to him, and he plodding his way for many a year as God's only witness on the whole earth. In process of time his sons grow up, and there we shall see a new testimony declared in the person of Abel, but the history of it I reserve for the next chapter.

FORESHADOWS OF THE KINGDOM.

It was the will of God that man should have authority over this earth. Accordingly Adam, the last of God's works in creation, was formed for and placed as supreme over this part of the universe. His place of residence was the garden of Eden, his work to dress it and keep it. For him "every green herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed," the ground brought forth for meat. To him was given dominion over all the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, the cattle, all the earth, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. All these owned his sway. On the earth he was, under God, supreme. He had no rival. And to stamp his authority over animate creation, and to show God's will concerning it, we read that the Lord God brought to Adam every living creature to see what he would call them, and what he called

them that was the name thereof. What a picture does this afford us of God's complacency in His work, and in that the last piece of His workmanship—man. Beautiful indeed must it all have appeared, as the angels surveyed this world, fresh from the hands of their and its Creator, and man, its lord, made in the likeness of God. Well might the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy (Job xxxviii. 7,) as they gazed on such a fair scene. But how short-lived was their joy. He whose sphere of government was earth, and his dominion, coextensive with its boundaries, fell, and all was changed. The earth, which would have yielded its fruit for him, was cursed, and thorns and thistles were brought forth in response to his toil. (Gen. iii. 18.) Its fruits were no longer for his refreshment; and he, lately lord of creation, is an outcast from that garden of pleasure and delight. In the sweat of his face he must eat bread and that only the herb of the field. Sin had entered and defiled God's paradise, and through sin, death.

Adam, created spotless, pure, innocent, is so no longer. The image of God, in which he was created has been sadly marred. God's plans have, to all appearance, been wholly frustrated. Man has believed a lie, distrusted God's goodness, doubted His love, listened to the tempter, sinned against his Maker, and suggested that God was the cause of it all in the helpmeet He had graciously provided him. What would happen now? Had the Creator's plans been for ever thwarted by the enmity and wiliness of a creature? Had Satan triumphed here for ever? Had he, by ruining man, dethroned for ever God as the Lord of all the earth? It seemed like it. But God promised one who should reconquer what Adam had lost. Adam had failed and fallen, having listened to the suggestions of the devil through the instrumentality of Eve; but the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Another Man, the second Man, the last Adam, shall more than retrieve the ruin entailed on all his descendants and on this earth by the first.

This is never lost sight of. Throughout the whole interval that has elapsed since the fall, God has had this in view. So the announcement of the gospel of the kingdom is called the everlasting gospel. (Rev. xiv. 6.) The gospel of the grace of God does not supersede it. It introduces souls into the kingdom. From first to last this object is kept before us in the Bible, and we see how everything has been working, and is working, under God's direction for the accomplishment of this end. The kingdom is the Lord's, and He shall be owned as Governor among the people. We see not yet all this brought about, but we see Him, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. Glimpses of this coming glory are afforded us from time to time, enough to make the heart desire, and the eye watch for, the fulfilment of the creature's wants, and creation's highest aspirations, in the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord on the earth.

We get a glimpse of the future in

the position of Noah after the flood. Landed in a new world, as it were, swept by the waters of the flood, man is placed again on the earth, and government entrusted into his hand. The fear and dread of him was to be on all the animal creation, and to him they were given for meat. The fruits of the earth, withdrawn, it would seem, from him after the fall, are again permitted him for use, as well as the herb of the field. But the curse on the earth, though lightened, is not removed; and the fear of man implanted in the brute creation does not ensure him immunity from their wrath. The child cannot lay its hand without chance of harm on the cockatrice's den, nor does the lion yet eat straw like the ox—nay, the enmity to man of the wild beasts is distinctly pointed out. (Gen. ix. 5.) Imperfect, then, as man's position was compared to that which Adam had held, we see in the instance of Noah that man,—as he then existed, fallen man, though he might be a just man, and perfect in his generation, and walking with

God, and such Noah was, as God bore witness,—was not the one who could bruise the serpent's head and overthrow the god of this world. Noah soon shows that he is not *the man*. He planted a vineyard, drank of the wine, and was drunken. He cannot rule himself, how then should he rule the world? The future which looked so promising after the flood is quickly obscured. The man who was seen righteous before God in his generation has failed, and any hopes of coming blessedness fade away before the spectacle of Noah lying unconscious in his tent.

Violence, and idolatry, and lust of conquest now characterize the world. The sons of God are seen no longer as distinct from the children of men, till God calls Abraham to walk with Him alone on the earth. In him shall all the families of the earth be blessed. But when? When shall this blessing be enjoyed? When the royal priest shall bless Israel victorious over their enemies. We get a passing glimpse of this in Abraham's

history. He sojourns in the land promised to his descendants. An enemy from without has invaded it. He goes forth with his trained servants, and Aner, Eschol, and Mamre, and conquers. Returning victorious from the combat, Melchisedec, God's priest, meets him and blesses him. Is this the one to come? Is this the true king that is to reign? Many years must elapse ere He can appear. As yet Abraham had no direct heir, and when he is born, as the next chapter tells us, his seed must sojourn as strangers 400 years ere they can call the land on which Abraham walked their own. This scene, but a glimpse of the future, fades away into darkness before the long night of Egyptian bondage revealed in the next chapter.

Another scene depicting what happiness shall be enjoyed on the earth, is given us in Jacob's dream, when a ladder is seen set up on earth, and the top of it reached unto heaven; and, "behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold,

the Lord stood above it." What man (Gen. xi.) had vainly attempted in the pride of his heart, and in the power of his might, to accomplish, to open a communication directly with heaven, Jacob dreams has really been done; not by fallen man indeed; for the confusion of tongues was God's answer to the attempt, but by God Himself, who was seen above it. Could this last? Jacob awoke in the morning, and, behold it was a dream. The houseless, homeless wanderer must serve in a strange land, exposed to all the vicissitudes of climate, and the injustice of his father-in-law, for twenty long years. Never again in the course of his long life did this bright vision, that we know of, return. He revisited Bethel, and met again with God, and had renewed to him the promises made to Abraham and Isaac of the land for his posterity, but nothing more of the ladder connecting earth with heaven is mentioned.

Years pass on, his descendants have multiplied, yet he and they are still sojourners in the land. The 400 years

have run along half their appointed course, (see Gen. xii. 4; xxi. 5; xxv. 20; xlvii. 9; Exodus xii. 40,) and a famine visits Canaan, which compels the sons of Israel to go to Egypt to buy corn. There they find Joseph the hated, persecuted, and in purpose murdered one, raised up by God to preserve the chosen seed alive. He whom they hated, when formerly recounting the dreams presaging his future greatness, is the one before whom they bow, and whom they address as Lord. But Joseph dies and all his brethren, and their children are evil entreated by another king who knew him not. Deliverance was wrought for the children of Israel by the one they had rejected, saying, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" But it is only temporary; he dies, and greater afflictions than ever befall the chosen race.

If blessing is in store for Israel, is it not also in store for the Gentiles? The second Man will exercise authority over the whole earth. We have next a scene

which portrays what shall be when He comes. The people are in the wilderness, redemption from Egypt having been accomplished. Thither to meet them repaired Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, the Midianite, with Zipporah his wife, and Gershom and Eliezer, his two sons. The Lord's deliverance of Israel is the subject of their conversation; "and Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians." (Exodus xviii. 9.) Then they offer sacrifices, and Jethro the Gentile, Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel, together eat bread before God. It is not Jew and Gentile taking new and a common ground, becoming one new man as in the Church, but Jew and Gentile, preserving their distinction of families, together rejoicing over the Lord's deliverance of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians. The night succeeds this happy day, the morrow comes, but the feast is not again, that we read of, repeated. It shadows forth what shall be on the earth.

The wilderness life of the people supplies us with another and a very different glimpse of coming glory. Aaron and his sons have been consecrated priests to God. The tabernacle has been erected; the eighth day of their consecration has arrived, and Aaron arrayed in the garments of glory and beauty, lifts up his hands from the altar and blesses the people. Then with Moses he enters the tabernacle of the congregation, and the two coming out, the king and priest, bless the people. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation; a fire comes out from the Lord and consumed the burnt-offering and the fat. The people saw all this, they shouted and fell on their faces. How shortlived is this too! Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire before the Lord. Mourning succeeds rejoicing. The garments Aaron wore that day he would never have occasion to wear again. Never again could they behold Moses and Aaron coming out from the tabernacle of the Lord to bless them.

Another period of more than four

hundred years elapses. Moses and Aaron die, Joshua dies, the elders which outlived Joshua die, the judges pass away, and there is a king over Israel. Solomon occupies his father David's throne. David has conquered his enemies, reduced to submission all the kings who inhabited the territory outside Canaan, promised to Abraham, and Solomon, king of peace, is established in the kingdom. The tabernacle has been superseded, the temple takes its place, and all Israel are called to celebrate its dedication, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. Never before has there been such magnificence, such wealth in Jerusalem as under Solomon. (2 Chron. ix. 23—28.) The glory of the Lord appears and fills the house, and the people keep the feast of tabernacles, type of millennial rest. Has the reign of righteousness really commenced? Has the second Man appeared to sit on David's throne? "Solomon loved many strange women, (together with the daughter of Pharaoh,) women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, Hittites,

of the nations *concerning* which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you; *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon clave unto these in love." (1 Kings xi. 1, 2.) The glory of the kingdom is dimmed, his sun sets in gloom, and the Lord announced the rending of his kingdom in twain, and the establishment of his enemy as king over the ten parts of the land. Fallen man is again proved unfit for the place of sovereignty.

Dark times follow. Near three hundred years roll by, when the nation is encouraged by a prophecy of a king who shall reign in righteousness, and of princes who shall rule in judgment. The throne of David is filled by a pious king. The temple, closed in the reign of Ahaz, has been re-opened and purified; the lamps, suffered to go out, have been again lighted; the priests and Levites have been sanctified for the service of the Lord's house; the passover in remembrance of redemption from Egypt

has been once more celebrated; the enemy of God's people, the Assyrian, has been successfully and signally defeated. He never returns to invade the land. Add to this king Hezekiah has been sick, and is recovered of his sickness; the sundial of Ahaz has marked the retrogression of the sun ten degrees; and the fame of Hezekiah's recovery has prompted the king of Babylon to send letters and a present to him. Judah had been of late more accustomed to have letters enjoining submission from that quarter of the world, and an army attempting to enforce it, than a present in token of friendship. Has the king that was to come appeared? Again we see how fallen man cannot occupy the position yet to be filled. In the pride of his heart Hezekiah shows the ambassadors all his treasures; he fails, and the captivity is announced. This, too, is but a passing glimpse of the glory of the kingdom yet to be made good.

Another period of years elapse, and *the King* appears on the mount of transfiguration. The three disciples behold

His glory: "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." With Him are seen two men in glory, Moses and Elias. Now, surely, the kingdom will be established; now the coming time of blessing for the weary world has dawned. There is the king, the woman's seed, Abraham's heir, and David's son. These two talk with Him. Is it of the glory of His kingdom, the grandeur and majesty of His reign? Another subject occupies them. "They spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." A cloud overshadowed them all: when it passed away the manifestation of "His majesty" had disappeared. Short, indeed, was their glimpse of His glory. It faded away from sight, not memory, as quickly as Jacob's dream. And in due time the subject of the conversation on the mount was made plain to His disciples by His death. The King had come and gone. Since He hung on the cross, and Pilate gave the word to take His body down, the world has never seen Him. Was this all that was to be

enjoyed of the glory of the king and kingdom? Had He, rejected by the world, disappeared for ever? The world may and does ignore the truth of His return. We look for it and the kingdom likewise. "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor xv. 25.)

Man, the son of Adam, the woman's seed, shall have the dominion Adam lost. Melchisedec, king and priest, shall yet bless Israel. The ladder of communication between earth and heaven shall one day be manifested as set up. Already the circumstances under which it can be erected have begun to be unfolded. (See John i. 51, ἀπ' ἄρτι, "*from henceforth* ye shall see," etc.) Jew and Gentile shall together rejoice before the Lord. (Deut. xxxii. 43.) The throne shall be established in peace and judgment return to righteousness. (Ps. xciv. 15.) All these foretastes of happiness shall have their full accomplishment in the abiding presence and reign of Him who alone is worthy to receive and retain the sovereignty of the earth.

But how could a king reign in righteousness whilst sin and lawlessness abounded? How could happiness be the constant portion of the saints of God, and the earth be gladdened and rejoice with them, whilst sorrow, sickness, and death had power to cut short their enjoyment? How could a man reign without a rival over this world whilst Satan, who had usurped its sovereignty, and declared it, by saying, "All these will I give thee," etc., retained the title of its prince? These must be conquered. He the King died, but rose again. All seemed lost when He died—all was manifested to be gained when He rose. By the sacrifice of Himself He put away sin. By His death He overcame death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil. (Heb. ix. 26; 2 Tim. i. 10; Heb. ii. 14.)

Nothing remains but to take the kingdom. Yet He waits—we know why. He waits the Father's time. (Psalm cx. 1.) He delays for the salvation of souls. (2 Peter iii. 9, 15.)

His next appearance to the world on this earth will be to claim the kingdom for His own. Then shall be seen man in power, owned by all as Lord, acknowledged by Israel as King.

How full of interest, then, are these brief, passing glimpses of the glory of the kingdom, which, enabling the saints of old to taste for a moment something of that joy which shall yet be known on the earth, kept them looking forward as those who had desires unsatisfied, longings not yet fully met; and surely, whilst we know of, and rejoice in, a heavenly position, we too should feel an interest in all that concerns His glory on this earth, and the full recovery of creation from the grasp of the god of this world, by the establishment of power and sovereignty in the person of the second Man, the Lord from heaven.

“O WHAT a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours will be,
When from its throne the tempter hurl’d,
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to thee!”

EXTRACTS.

.... "You are asking bread from a hungry man. For though I have known what it is to have spiritual supplies heretofore, my liberty of spirit seems at present as much obstructed as my voice. Still you have with you the omnipresent Lord, who once visited us from the bosom of the Father, clothed in the nature of man—a name which before had been out of repute in heaven: but which He has now made honourable among angels, and has rendered graciously acceptable to God. Here then is our light; contemplate it with stedfast eye; sweep away, if possible, out of its beams everything unholy and unclean; read, and pray, and praise; yea, persevere in such exercises. 'Give thyself wholly to them,' and apply all to your *personal* spiritual improvement."

"I beseech you, my dear friend, to abide by that one dictum, 'It is written,' and leave, 'It appears to us,' to the

philosophers. Theological verities themselves, in their harmony and beauty, are to be looked for in the Scriptures alone; it is there we find their best mutual illustration; and we must ever consider the sacred volume as its own safest and best interpreter.”

“As we cannot contemplate a globe without observing how round and complete it is, so, to *an attentive observer*, are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. . . I cannot conclude without reminding myself and you, that all doubts are more easily resolved by prayer and retired communion with our own heart, than by any argumentative proofs.”

“It is only in the Bible that the all-pure Spirit of God breathes; I am afraid of human theology lest it “savour the things which be of man.”

REST IN THE ROCK OF AGES.

“Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” (The Rock of Ages.)
—Isaiah xxvi. 4.

Rest in the Rock of Ages—
In Life's eternal Word;
Rest, through time's passing stages,
In Christ, the faithful Lord.

Rest on thy Saviour's promise,
O helpless, weary child;
Trust in His tender, Shepherd care
To bear thee o'er the wild.

Where should the dove be shelter'd
Save in the riven Rock?
The Hiding-place, where God's own power
Secures from every shock.

What though the tempest rages?
What though the wild waves foam?
Safe in the Rock of Ages
Dwell—as thy spirit's home.

High o'er the highest billows
Thy God, thy Saviour reigns;
His hand controls all creature things,
His hand thy soul sustains.

Rest in the Rock of Ages,
In God, for ever blest;
Eternal love maintains thy lot—
Rest, then, in Jesus rest.

A SERIES.

No. 13.

CHURCH—DISCIPLINE.

While the true and happy place for every saint is running the race set before each, looking unto Jesus, deriving from Him nourishment and counsel; while it is the labour of the Spirit directly, or through the ministry of the word, to sustain each in his course unblamably and unrepitably; still if any soul wanders, or is drawn aside, discipline in one form or another is to be resorted to, as the divine mode of dealing with, and eventually blessing such an one, if born of God. Food is the natural means by which support is afforded to the body, but when derangement supervenes, we resort to medicine or remedies of some kind, and not merely to food, in order to effect a cure. Discipline is the medicine or remedy for the soul, when the food has been hindered, or where there is no reception or appropriation of it.

When the derangement is great, or rather in proportion to its magnitude, there is neither appetite for food nor any result from it, even if apparently accepted. In such a case we must have recourse to discipline as the divinely-appointed means for restoring the soul. And it is well for us to understand the necessity and also the intent of it.

Discipline becomes necessary when the natural and normal condition of a Christian is openly departed from; and when the Spirit is so leavened by it that there is no ear for the word of the Lord which would detach him from the evil that is damaging; and when the heart has become so hardened through the deceitfulness of sin that the word has lost all power on the conscience, or must have lost it before the soul could have sunk into its present condition. The ministry of the word, while the conscience is awake, acts to preserve us from falling, and to separate us in the power and virtue of itself, from the defilement to which we are exposed and liable. But when there is no ear for

the word, the proper office of which is through the power of the Holy Ghost to keep us in communion of heart and purpose with our Lord, then there is sure to be an exposure of the evil of our hearts; and when this exposure occurs, we must deal with it in discipline. How else can we? There is no ear to hear the word, and there is no vindication of holiness as becoming the house of God otherwise. If every one professing the name of Christ and taking his place as a member of His body down here, were to walk in reverence of His word, there would be no room for discipline; but when the word has been refused, and evil practice has been, as it must be, the consequence, the means appointed of God for restoring the soul, and at the same time maintaining the holiness which always becometh His house, is discipline.

Congregational discipline was first introduced when Israel, God's redeemed people, "sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play;" when they said, "up, make us gods which shall go before us." They made a calf in those days and

offered sacrifice to an idol. They had openly and avowedly departed from the place of a people redeemed by God, and hence when Moses returned to the camp, he stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" And his word to the Levites is, "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord; even every man upon his son and upon his brother, that he may bestow on you a blessing this day." Here we get the first great principle of discipline, namely, the vindication of God's holiness in His redeemed people; and necessarily that must have been the leading principle until grace in a risen Christ came in. Under the law discipline was enforced according to the nature of the guilt of each; though in the case of leprosy which the law did not reach, there was an opportunity to present the course and principle on which grace would act. There was, we find, a great effort to restore the leper; and there we are first taught that while the holiness that becometh the house of God is maintained, the restoration of the one who had per-

sonally compromised it is earnestly aimed at, and he is, if possible, restored. The holiness is most rigidly maintained at the same time, and by the same act in which the health and blessing of the leper are secured: and this is the principle of discipline under grace.

When the Church was first organized, the holiness of it as Christ's house was unequivocally maintained; for it was to be the expression of Him who is now absent. Two things were then co-existent: one, the moral sense of what became those who took the name of Christ here; and the other, the power of Christ to maintain them in keeping with this moral sense. The Spirit was not only with them *for* Christ, but maintained in them a true sense of what was due to Christ. Hence Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.) are at once, and in the most signal manner, removed from among them. The true moral sense had at command the power of God to support and justify it. The thought of restoration in such a case is not expressed. But when the moral sense declined, as

we find in 1 Corinthians v., then, though the power of Christ was for them, when in solemn assembly they owned their need of it; yet while it acts primarily with reference to the Church, the body of Christ, in excluding the wicked person, the benefit arising to him from the discipline is not overlooked; for, it is added, "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." And thus grace, as in the case of the leper under the law, considered for the transgressor while the holiness was stringently maintained; and the leaven, which would have leavened the whole lump, was wholly purged out. Here for the first time we are warned that evil in another, if in fellowship with us, as the assembly of God, imparts to us a like evil. We are infected by it through fellowship, though we may have no liking or tendency whatever to it of ourselves. Moral sense from the Spirit of God in us would doubtless have instinctively impressed us with this truth; and it is an evidence of the low moral tone to which the Corinthians had sunk when they

required to be reminded of a fact so elementary in understanding what the Church is as Christ's body on earth.

We have now before us the principle and purpose of discipline, namely, to preserve the holiness of the house of God; and therefore taking into account every kind of evil which would leaven the members of Christ. For even "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." But, at the same time, it keeps in view the ultimate blessing of the disciplined and excommunicated one. We must unflinchingly keep before us the first of these principles; for it is the primary condition of our being as the body of Christ, while we must not forget the second.

If there had been true and spiritual sense there would have been no need for the apostle to supply a list of the evils which otherwise the Corinthians might not class under the head of leaven. He does not include the grosser evils, because there was still moral sense enough to know that if the lesser evils disqualified for membership with the Church of God on earth, how much

more the greater! We learn from this scripture (1 Cor. v.) that the power of Christ acted with the assembly to consign to Satan the transgressor. I am of opinion that the apostle's words imply that if they had felt the evil as they ought it would have been "taken away" in some singular way. The feebleness of the Church gave, as I may say, a wider sphere to grace towards the transgressor, and yet a more distinct responsibility to the Church itself to act with reference thereto. While the Church continued to be the pillar and ground of truth there is no doubt but that the power of Christ was ever ready to act for the assembly when it waited on Him for it; for then it was not doctrinally leavened. But when the assembly, as we find in 2 Timothy, had suffered in its midst "profane and vain babblings;" the servant of the Lord is directed to purge out *himself* from it. Now this determines an important epoch in the Church's history. The Church was appointedly "the pillar and ground of truth;" but that great characteristic it had now sur-

rendered, for it suffered to proceed babblings of such an order that the apostle pronounces the evil from them not only leaven, but still worse GAN- GRENE—mortal disease—for vitality was affected. In this state of things not only was the moral sense as to the assembly gone, but power was only given where there was spiritual sense, and therefore it was an individual action. Every one calling on the Lord out of a pure heart is directed and empowered to separate from the large body where vessels to honour and dishonour are found promiscuously. No doubt the purged ones according to their spiritual sense, received power to maintain themselves pure according to the unchanging principle that “holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.”

Any distinction forfeited is never restored. The Church has never recovered the high position of being what it once was, the pillar and ground of truth; and therefore the power which always acts with reference to the position, must not be looked for to act as it did at first. If

the Church cannot assume to be the pillar and ground of truth; neither ought it to look for or expect the manifestation of power which acted in its midst while it maintained this position. But though the Church is not now the pillar and ground of truth, yet as the habitation of God through the Spirit, the first and great principle of His house can be in no wise slackened, but must be rigorously adhered to, according as there is faithfulness of heart towards Him. General declension and indifference only urge the true-hearted to more devotion to the Lord, and what becometh His name and honour in the earth. The *manifestation* of power is lost, because a certain high position has been forfeited; but the circle of God's interest in the earth, where Christ's heart is set, must ever engage the faithful, and there will ever be grace granted to maintain in it, though in feebleness, what is worthy of Him. Even as with Israel after the captivity, (Haggai i., ii.,) the moment we accord with His mind and work in sympathy with His counsel, though

visibly powerless as they were, (for the glory and the kingdom were never restored); we shall, like them, be blessed; He will be with us, though we may have but a "little strength." We *now* properly take the place of purged ones; the only true place for a saint when the house of God has suffered false doctrine to obtain a hearing in it. From that time, I am bold to say, that the only true or worthy place for a disciple of Christ is as a purged one; one who has purged himself out of the great house and is seeking to walk in company with his fellow purged ones; sedulously watching lest he should decline into that state of practical indifference, where false doctrine would find an utterance. The Church lost its high position because of its carelessness in suffering profane and vain babblings in its midst; the faithful are bound to purge themselves from the mass of the house; but the tendency natural to such, is to relapse into the evil of Christendom; and through indifference and carelessness again to allow erroneous doctrine to be

uttered and listened to. Satan's greatest aim is to corrupt the truth of God. He would degrade us in practice; but how much more would he corrupt that which can alone maintain us in divine conduct ! So much is this danger in the mind of the Spirit as to the latter day, that discipline is alluded to chiefly with reference to false doctrine. The time would come when professing saints would not endure sound doctrine. And when the doctrine of Christ would be denied the faithful were then to be most exclusive, and to preserve the most rigid discipline. They are warned not only to refuse to receive such into their houses, but to decline all common salutations, for he that biddeth them farewell (*χαίρειν*) would be partaker of their evil deeds. The very feebleness of the faithful one should only urge him the more to preserve himself from all association with that which had been so fatal to the Church and so dishonouring to the Lord; and therefore it is to a woman that this very stringent rule is committed. (2 John.) The greater the

moral declension, as we see in Jude, the more the faithful should be banded together, and watchful how they preserve themselves distinct from what would contaminate.

It is evident that the great principle of God's house must ever be maintained by the faithful, and that the true-hearted will abide by the circle of His interest to the last. The company of the purged ones will always command the power of Christ to keep themselves from practical defilement. There will be no open demonstration of power, but the Lord will support them in their action. If, however, false doctrine be suffered in any degree, there is no remedy then, as it appears to me, but to resort to the simple rule to purge out oneself from the defiled company; and here is the true and salutary discipline in that state of things. I stand apart where I cannot suppress; for I must not remain where the truth of God is wilfully misrepresented and a false doctrine accepted. In such circumstances how can the word of God act or be used?

There is, however, another form of discipline which is exercised *within* the assembly. That which we have been considering requires that either the delinquent be removed from the assembly, or that the assembly has so forgot its own true dignity that the faithful are called to purge themselves from it. These two forms of discipline we have considered above. I desire now to offer a few remarks on that which is to be exercised within the assembly. This order is spoken of in 2 Thessalonians iii. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." This rule was given with reference to one who would not work with his own hands. It was a case which did not amount to immorality of conduct or unsoundness of doctrine; and yet it was sufficiently important to be brought under the notice of the assembly. The refractory and disobedient were not to be excommunicated, but they were to be excluded from

social intercourse. The failure in this case was of a milder order and therefore to be dealt with more leniently.

Another point to be noted is that the teachers of the law were not excommunicated though denounced in no measured terms. "I would," the apostle says, "they were even cut off which trouble you;" (Gal. v. 12;) and who would subvert the gospel of Christ; but they had some show of right. And until they became heretics, or *persistent*, in what was fundamentally wrong, we are not directed to reject them. If the Epistle to Titus be studied it will be seen that this is the course enjoined by the apostle. First, to exhort and convict the gainsayers whose mouths must be stopped; but if they will not be stopped, in strivings about the law which are unprofitable and vain; then they are heretics and must be rejected.

One word more concerning those who, because of weak consciences, observe days, or impose restrictions on themselves. It is not assumed that such practices are in accordance with the truth; but then there is nothing done or

allowed detrimental to truth or morals. It is mere weakness of conscience; it is intended as self-denial, and it arises from ignorance and prejudice. It has to do with oneself individually, or points referring to oneself, and therefore the lenity and consideration to be observed toward such, would not be applicable to or could not be claimed by those who from ignorance or prejudice prescribe and adopt forms and rules for the Church of God. I am suffered because of a weak conscience to restrict and determine for myself when truth and morals are not involved; but I am at no liberty whatever, nor is it a case of weakness of conscience, when I assume to make and abide by rules which concern Christ and the government of His house. Such is not a weak conscience but a tyrannical one; one which assumes rights never in any way conferred on it.

The Lord lead us in His infinite grace to understand and maintain what concerns His honour and glory in the earth and the real blessing of His beloved ones, our fellows in the grace of life through Him.

ON THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST AS LORD.

“ For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1 Cor. xi. 23—32.)

The frequent recurrence in this passage of the term Lord, the special title of authority, directs the mind to the speciality of the instruction it presents.

All the names and titles of the Lord Jesus are distinctive ; and they cannot be employed indiscriminately or interchangeably without losing their force, and without injury to the truth. For example, the Apostle Peter says, (Acts ii. 30,) “ Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that

God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST." In this passage it is plain that, while the name "Jesus" points out the person of our Lord, as known to the Jews and crucified by them, the terms "Lord" and "Christ" mark out the official positions to which God had advanced Him in spite of His rejection by the nation.

The name of "Jesus" never lost before God, and never will lose, its import of "Jehovah the Saviour," nor indeed to us who believe, though it was used as a mere appellative by the Jews; and too often now by those who do not know its worth. But in the titles "Lord" and "Christ," the attention of those whom Peter addressed is especially called to the import of those terms as employed in the prophetic scriptures on which he was arguing. He had connected the signs of Pentecost with the last days which should be precursory of "the great and terrible day of the Lord," as mentioned by the prophet Joel; and he had insisted that in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, who had been so wonderfully attested among them "by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him," God had accomplished David's prediction in the sixteenth Psalm, and had raised up Christ, or the Messiah,

whom He had sworn to David that He would seat upon his throne. This was what pricked his hearers in their heart, that they had rejected the Lord, of whom Joel had said, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved;" and they had crucified the Messiah, or Christ, David's Lord, and the heir of David's throne. In Him who sustained these two titles of authority and glory, every promise and prophetic declaration of Israel's blessing and supremacy as a people concentrated; and on their recognition every hope of the nation hung. But, as Peter says, "that same Jesus whom *ye have crucified*, God hath made both Lord and Christ." This was the gravamen of his charge. And it was the terribleness of their position when this truth reached their consciences that made them cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

This, however, I do not pursue. I adduced the passage merely as an illustration amongst many of the designative character of the names and titles of our Lord, and of how much may be lost by failing to mark their force and distinctness.

"Jesus," then, is more especially the personal name of our Lord, still retaining its original import of Saviour. "Christ,"

or the anointed, marks Him out in the New Testament scriptures as especially in connexion with His Church, as Head of the body. Moreover it gives its true designative force to the term Christian: "If any man suffer as a Christian." "Lord," is a title of authority, and directs the thought to Him to whom we owe our allegiance, and whom we are called to serve and obey.

With this latter title the apostle commences his immensely interesting and important instructions concerning the Lord's supper in the passage before us; and he carries it through to the close. He begins by saying, "For I have received of the LORD that which also I delivered unto you." And he closes by the declaration that, "When we are judged we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world." As to the title itself, it expresses much more than master. And its correlative implies much more than, we, at any rate now, understand by, servant. It is a term that claims for its possessor, the position of absolute, unquestionable authority over those by whom the title is acknowledged. Nay, whether acknowledged or not, the authority which it marks will eventually be vindicated to its possessor by the almighty

power of God, even over those who do not now acknowledge it. For "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*," [this is the point of their confession, that sovereign, universal authority is, by the fiat of God, in the hands of Jesus,] "to the glory of God the Father." But Jesus to us is Lord now, in all the absolute and unrestricted authority which the title expresses. It is true that this title rises much higher than is expressed by it in its most ordinary application in the New Testament; for here unquestionably it presents to the mind the relative position of owner and slave. I do not mean, of course, that there attaches to its application our notions of arbitrary and capricious power, on the one hand, and of oppression and degradation on the other. But I do mean that the claim of authority is absolute, and that it is met only by absolute and willing subjection. For example, in the Colossians, where the apostle is treating of the relative obligations of masters and servants, [owners and slaves,] he says, "Servants obey in all things your masters

according to the flesh....and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily to the Lord, and not unto men...., for ye serve the Lord Christ." In other words, he shows that the authority, I might say, ownership, remains, but it has passed into other hands. The call to subjection is equally absolute and binding; but it is to another, and a very different, Lord. It may be the authority of grace, but it is not the less authority, nor the less obligatory on that account.

It is indeed in redemption and grace that this title of Lord is founded, as we learn especially from Romans xiv., and in many other scriptures. In the passage referred to, the apostle says, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be LORD both of the dead and living." Nothing can be more absolute than this language of the apostle. One sees at a glance that there is no room for "playing fast and loose" with this authority of Christ; an authority that is binding upon us at all times and in all places; and the foundation of which is laid as deeply as the foundation

of the eternal redemption in which we rejoice.

Now, I confess that I delight to contemplate the supremacy of my Lord; though I know how poorly His grace is met in the daily practical subjection of my soul to Him. Still it is my delight to think that I am emancipated from the tyranny of every other Lord, to be henceforth and for ever subject alone to Him. And so far as it appears, it is a relationship that will never be laid aside. At least it is found in "the holy Jerusalem," that is, seen, "descending out of heaven from God," of which it is said, "the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." They are in this scene *δουλοι* still; and openly and with honour they wear the badge of their subjection: for it is added, "they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." At any rate now, before the kingdom of our Lord is established in glory, amidst the "gods many and lords many" that seek to rule the minds of men in this world, it is the mercy and blessing of our souls to know that, "*To us* there is but one God the Father of whom are all things, and we for him; and one LORD Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." And what is there so right,

as that He who has delivered us from death, from sin, from the power of Satan, from "this present evil world," and from self, the worst of tyrants, should be owned by us as our sole and only Lord? And this especially, if we reflect that we belong to "the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood:" for that which is true of the whole is also true of each of its parts?

However, in the Church, as presented in the Epistle to the Corinthians, what was in requisition amongst them was the practical acknowledgment of the relation in which they stood to God, the Lord, and the Spirit. For these are presented not only as the source of heavenly blessing to them, so far as they could be viewed as a body redeemed by the Lord, but as imparting its essential character to their position and witness in the world. Their gifts were the gifts of the Spirit; their ministries or services were to be in subjection to one Lord; and their energies were to be known as the result of the power and energy of God.* It was alone by the recognition of these fundamental truths, which give its essential character to the Church of God, that their walk could be steadied, and the disorders, which had so

* See 1 Corinthians xii.

large a place amongst them, were capable of correction. Now it is in the midst of these characteristic and controlling thoughts that the injunctions concerning the table and supper of the Lord take their place. And it is of deep significance that the one institution which is left to us, by Him who is everything to our souls, and which was to be in perpetual recurrence, should have this special bearing that, with all the grace it exhibits and the depth of love which it calls to mind, and the efficacy of the work accomplished on the cross which it declares, it is His special claim on our souls to acknowledge Him as Lord. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the *Lord's* death till he come." His claim is thus perpetually enforced. It is not to lapse until He comes. It is the most striking living demonstrative witness to the truth of Christianity. It is a monument which has already outlived the lapse of more than eighteen hundred years. And when I look back through this dim vista, I reach that sacred company in which its institution was marked by the bodily presence of my Lord, the echo of whose voice has reached us in the touching words, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." His

claim is thus, at least, weekly enforced. And if it have faded from our thoughts amidst the din and drudgery of this world's affairs, or amidst its ease and comforts, it is on the recurrence of every first day of the week designed to be recalled. For surely a dead remembrance of accomplished redemption, in which my conscience can take repose, or in which the indolence of my heart is ministered to, is not to meet the design of the Lord's supper. No. But, if I understand its import aright, it is on my part the acknowledgment of His claim to the utmost fealty of my heart, made in the most affecting manner it is possible that it could be made, by a living and present Lord. For if He is not present, it may be dismissed as an idle formality, and all further reasoning upon it may be closed.

Moreover, it has been insisted on that the peculiar construction of the passage, "Do this in remembrance of me," which occurs here and in Luke's gospel, has the signification of "Do this for my remembrance;" and is rather the Lord Jesus Christ's reminder of His claims, in infinite grace, upon us, than that we should bring our best thoughts and remembrances in the supper to Him. And the predominant title under which He is presented in the institution as already noticed, seems to

give its sanction to this. For it is not right to call it the Father's table, as is often done; though it is true that none but His children are entitled to be there. It is the Lord's supper and the Lord's table. It is the Lord's death that in it is proclaimed. It is the Lord's body that in eating is to be discerned. Unworthily eating and drinking renders one guilty in respect of the body and blood of the Lord. And the discipline that is carried on in connexion with it is expressly declared to be the discipline of the Lord. "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Ordinances and institutions are for this world. The witness of the Lord's supper is not to the Church's heavenly character and portion as risen into the heavenly places and there seated in Christ. It is rather the witness of each believer's connexion with a rejected, though risen and ascended, Lord. It is the balancing truth to the Church's heavenly position, as the cross is the pathway to the glory. "If we be dead with Him we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." It does not contradict the truth of the Church's position as risen in Christ, far from it; but it presents altogether

another aspect of redemption. It is my Lord's death that has bound me to Him as His bondsman. His cross was the separating point between the world and Him and all His claims. His cross is the point of union between my soul and Him who hung upon it; and its moral power is to crucify the world to me, and me to the world. The standing witness of the Church's allegiance to Christ is that in heart and purpose it shows "the Lord's death till he come."

The Epistle to the Corinthians presents the Church's position and witness on earth in relation with Christ's title as Lord. It is addressed, in the universality of its bearing, "to all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Moreover the Epistle to the Ephesians, which so specially unfolds the relationship of the Church with Christ as His body, participating, in the infinitude of God's grace, in all that characterizes the position of its risen Head, does not omit to present also Christ's title as Lord. For if "*there is one body and one Spirit,*" there is also "*one Lord and one faith.*" Christians are not gathered together by God's Spirit to be in subjection to a dogma; but to yield a willing and due obedience to a living Lord. A profession of speculative

truths, though of the highest possible character, may leave the soul at fault in this most essential point, the witness of a good confession. The truth of the Church, in conjunction with the mystery, does not in itself furnish us with the grounds of this. It gives the true formative power to the affections, and links the soul in living association with God and Christ. But to Christ personally, as rejected in the world and coming again in glory, I am to show my loyalty here in the world through which I am passing to the heavenly kingdom. It is a principle that binds me to Him at all times and in all circumstances. It is the substance of the witness I am to bear to Him, "whose I am and whom I serve." I am to confess His name and paramount claims where they have been rejected. The truth of the Church in its association and union with Christ is *for* the Church. Knit up with it are God's counsels of grace, by which its heavenly character and heavenly hopes are formed. But my confession of Christ as Lord is the bond of my fellowship here in this world with those who by the cross are separated from its course and judgment. We own allegiance here to a common Lord, whatever the heavenly portion and hopes we have in Him, and which will be realized at His appearing.

I may talk of the heavenly calling, and rightly too, but I ought to remember that the earthly part of the heavenly calling is the cross and the denial of self. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and *follow me*." I may delight to think of the certainty of my position before God, as sealed by the possession of Christ's risen life. But I ought to remember that there is the other side of this truth, even the "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." I may see with admiration and rapture how everything of man's thoughts about the Church is thrown into the shade and utter insignificance before that blessed revelation of its portion as the body and Bride of Christ; and withal, of its possession of the present Spirit of God to tell her of the worth and glories of Him to whom, as a chaste virgin, she is espoused. But I want another principle, which is not speculative but practical, in order to give stability to my course through the conflicting elements of the world, and which will produce a practical conformity to Christ. It is the principle of subjection. That principle which is in itself the reason for what I do, as well as my authority for doing it. Christ has not redeemed us and set us loose to follow our own will. He

has said with infinite grace, "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." We are "sanctified unto obedience," as well as unto the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." And what is there in my whole course through the world, whether in heavenly association with the children of God, or in the every day pursuits and business of life, that ought not to be brought into direct contact with that question, and under its governance, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Love, as the apostle shows, the love of Christ, is the constraining principle of all true Christian action and suffering; but then the will of that Lord who has loved is as necessary to guide the outgoings of affection.

Thus while this principle of subjection to the Lord, leaves the heavenly portion of the believer and of the Church untouched, it furnishes the only bridle of restraint for the manifold operation of self-will, which, as the evil of the world advances, becomes more and more the temptation of the children of God. It gives the whole rule and guide for that walk on earth which ought to result from the Church's heavenly character. Moreover, it is especially the re-

gulating principle of christian fellowship. For we are not only members one of another, but we are mutually servants of the same Lord. I see no reason for Christians being gathered together at all, apart from the acknowledgment of the will of the Lord. And it is to be carefully noted, in days like these, that all that was heavenly in Christ, all that connected itself with his conscious unbroken communion with the Father and His knowledge of the heavenly glory; all, in a word, that is contained in his declaration, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen," so far as it was seen on earth, was in lowly subjection to the Father's will. In result and embodiment here in this world it is expressed in the sentence, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." But who is there of us who duly lays to heart the import of that word, "As (*καθὼς*) thou has sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world?"

"O Lord ! thy boundless love to me—
No thought can reach, no tongue declare,
Then bend my wayward heart to thee,
And reign without a rival there ;
From thee, my Lord, I all receive ;
Thine, wholly thine, alone I'd live."

THE TRUE PATH OF A CHRISTIAN.

Allow me to present to you a brief outline of what has struck me as to the true path of a Christian, or rather the principle and measure of his walk, as taught in Ephesians iv., v. I purpose merely to draw attention to the great principles.

I should gladly see some application or exhortation added by yourself.

We get the principle and the measure of this walk; its double principle in chapter iv. If we have learned the truth as it is in Jesus, it is that we have "put off" (not to put off) "as concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that we have put on the new man." And here we at once get the true character of this new man. It is "created after God in righteousness and true holiness:" not yet love, though this will never be separated, but its intrinsic moral nature in respect of good and evil.

God has been perfectly revealed through the work of Christ, and revealed in respect of evil and sin. He has been revealed in his dealing with others, with evil and with good where it is, with what glorifies Him, that is Christ. He is righteous. He has been revealed in His own nature too, as regards good and evil: abhorrent of evil and having his delight in what is pure and good; He is holy. Adam was innocent; he did not know good and evil till after he had eaten the forbidden fruit. Now we know good and evil, and if we are to be "after God" it must be more, far more, in nature than Adam's estate. It must be in righteousness and holiness of truth. The power of the divine word revealing God, as Christ as now sitting at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens has brought Him to light, and quickening us, gives the true character of holiness in which we are created after God. (Comp. John xvii. 17, 19.) God is known now not merely as a Creator who saw all as very good which had come out of His hands, but as one whose

whole nature is revealed in the dealings and work of redemption, when evil and good are fully manifested, when evil is there and ripe. But redemption, the *new* creation in which we are quickened out of our state of death in sin and raised as Christ out of His grave, has taken us completely out of that condition, and has made us as so quickened the living expression of the divine nature thus fully revealed. We are created again *after God*, in righteousness and true holiness. (Comp. Col. iii. 9—11.) What God is in respect of good and evil, we are in nature as having put on the new man created again in Christ Jesus; and this as we see in Colossians connected with a true full knowledge of God as so revealed. We are partakers by a new creation of the divine nature as fully revealed in Christ.

This is the first great principle of our walk as Christians. It is our life, what we are.

The second is the presence of the Holy Ghost as dwelling in us.

God Himself dwells in us by His

Spirit, and sheds His love abroad in our hearts. We have been thus sealed for the day of final, full redemption. We are not to grieve so holy and blessed a guest. Nothing inconsistent with His presence, where all is peaceful and holy love, is to be allowed in our hearts. It is not now merely a new nature, holy and righteous in itself, and capable of enjoying God blessedly revealed in Christ, but God dwells in us, shedding His love abroad in our hearts, sealing us for the time when we shall fully enjoy Him. He guides, orders, reveals the things of Christ to our minds, communicates what is blessed to us, filling us with what is divine. But especially, here, is present in us, so that nothing inconsistent with God's own presence in love is to be allowed in us. Nay more, we are to walk according to the love of the divine nature.

Such are the two great principles of the Christian's walk. He has put off the old man, the first Adam, with all its lusts and will, and put on the new man which, with the knowledge of God's

estimate of righteousness and holiness, is created after God according to this righteousness and holiness; and the Holy Ghost is present with him and in him, and he is not to grieve Him. No word or temper unsuited to that holy guest who sheds abroad God's love in our hearts, and seals us for the day when all will be holy and blessed, is to find a place in our mouth or in our heart. In a word, the divine nature with its moral effect, and the presence of God in love, and the power of holy hope, form the Christian.

We now get the measure of this. In the latter we already get the walking of love. Chapter v. gives us the measure, if measure indeed we can call it.

God takes two essential names: Love and Light—none else. These are taken as characterizing the walk of the Christian. The measure of it Christ Himself, being the practical model, Christ in whom we see the life of God, God Himself, in a man. And this it is leads us to the full extent and character of what is looked for from the Christian. We

have seen that we have been made partakers of the divine nature, created after God, and that the Holy Ghost is given to us—we are sealed by it. The measure of the Christian is not what man ought to be, but what God is, and has been to him; of course this does not refer to His Omniscience and Omnipotence and the like, but morally in holiness and love. The latter we are never said to be. It is the prerogative of God to be it, and love without a motive. We, that it may be also holiness, and withal as creatures, must have an object, and a motive. We cannot be it and love sovereignly; for we are not sovereign but subject. Yet we shall see how blessedly the divine character of this love in us is maintained, though God Himself becomes its full and final object.

Light we are said to be, for purity of nature we can have, and have, as regards the new man. We are called then to be *imitators of God* as dear children. Being born of Him we are to imitate and follow Him in our actions and spirit as par-

taking of the divine nature, and in relationship with Him as children. We are to be followers of God and walk in love. We find a double character of this, by which, as I just now intimated, its divine perfectness is maintained. We are to be tender-hearted and forgive, show grace to one another as God has forgiven and shown grace to us. (Comp. Matt. v. 48, and the preceding verses; see also Col. iii. 13.)

But there is another element in divine love in man, which has a very deep stamp of perfectness on it. I have said Christ is given as the model of the display of God's character in man, as naturally it must have been. It is said here, "And walk in love as Christ has loved us and given himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Perfect love was here shown in giving up Himself. So we are called to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our intelligent service. Two principles characterize this perfectness. First, offering up himself. It is not loving

my neighbour as myself—a true and perfect principle when evil is not, a state which the law as such would produce if efficacious to do so—but where evil, moral or external, or sorrow requires it wholly giving up, offering up oneself. This Christ did. He offered up Himself perfect in love. Our path is to follow Him in this. As in 1 John iii., “Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” The second seal of perfectness is that it was an offering *to God*. The object and motive were perfect. If he had only given Himself for us, there might have been touching generosity, nobleness of character. But the object which formed the motive was inadequate to give perfection to the act, take men as good, or simply evil; for it was love in a man and had a motive, though divine love; and it is in that He is a model to us. But He offers Himself *to God*, though for us. Here our worthlessness only adds to the proof of the perfectness. But the offering being to God the motive was

adequate—the act of love perfect. Hence, too, we are called to add to brotherly kindness charity or love, which we are told is the bond of perfectness. Absolute, sovereign love is where there is no motive in the object. This we have seen in the last verse of chapter iv. and in Colossians. And this we are called to imitate as concerns our matters; i. e., when any wrong is done to us. But when it is love with an object or motive in a man, when the motive gives its true character, then to be morally perfect, self must be given up to God. In us it may have been an evil self. But whatever it may be, it is given up, and, in our own case, the body presented a living sacrifice.

We are not, then, said to be love, for sovereign love we cannot be; but we are called to be followers of God in it, as forgiving in grace, which rises above all injury, and to walk in a love which gives self wholly up to God, as Christ did. Blessed privilege!

The other essential name of God is

Light—essential purity of nature. And this in the Lord we are said to *be*. For in as far as Christ is our life, as having put on the new and put off the old man, we are so. Christ is our life. This is not prerogative with an object in grace: it is a nature which we have. We were darkness, but now are we light in the Lord. It cannot be separated from the love, because that gives us purity of motive, setting aside self. (Comp. 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.) Yet it is a different thing. It is the purity of nature, thought, and object which were manifested in Christ. I do not add conduct, because that is a matter of exhortation. “Walk as children of light.” God is light, purity itself, and making all things manifest. While Christ was in the world, He was the light of the world. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” And in Him we have life and thus become light in the Lord, in a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the

word of life, as Christ (1 John i.) was the manifestation of the word of life. God hath shined in our hearts to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. Then indeed it was for the full purpose of apostolic testimony. Still as having Christ as our life, the fruits of light are manifested, divine intelligence of good as in Christ Himself contrasted with the darkness of the world (a darkness which belonged to our nature) and the separation of good from the evil by the word, but by the living knowledge of Christ as He is, which was practically expressed in all His life. As it is written, "Sanctify them through the truth; thy word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified through the truth." So even in our intercourse with God, "Such a high priest *became us*, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." It is the revelation of Christ as He is now that acts by the Holy Ghost on our

souls, "We beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory." The effect produced, in walk, is what His walk was on earth; and for the same reason He could then say the Son of man who is in heaven. That, no doubt, was the glory of His person, but so far as we are introduced by faith, livingly, through the power of the Holy Ghost into what is heavenly, we, as to object and motive are purified according to that in our walk here, while His lowly path here engages our affections in imitating and following Him. That of which the power is seen in what He is was manifested to the understanding heart in His life down here. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, *according to the Spirit of holiness* by resurrection from among the dead. In us it is a nature, a new man, but as the creature must, having an object, Christ. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I live in the

flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." So in Ephesians v.: "Ye are light in the Lord." Then not only are reproveable things manifested by the light, but Christ is Himself the perfect standard and light of the soul. "Awake, thou that sleepest," sunk into ease and apathy as a Christian, like the dead, though not dead, "and Christ shall give thee light." God is light, we are light in the Lord, and the perfect divine expression of this light in man, in which we are to walk is Christ. The eye is upon Christ. "Christ shall give thee light."

Such, then, is the true measure of christian walk what God is in His nature as love and light, brought down to its true, perfect, and blessed expression on the earth, in man, in Christ. Thus we are to be followers of God as dear children, the fruit of the light, the purity of the divine nature to be seen in us.

J N. D.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER II.

A B E L T O N O A H.

We should keep distinctly before our minds the place which Adam held on the earth, from God up to the mention of Abel. Adam and his wife bore on the earth a most remarkable testimony. There they were inwardly and severally conscious of their fall, but "clothed of God!" There is a wondrous and beautiful significance in the survey of our first parents, filling their appointed sphere in this wide earth in garments of skins made of God for them. We revere them as we realize the hand which clothed them, while we are solemnly reminded that no other hand but God's could in any degree repair the disaster that had befallen them. They moved and lived as distinguished witnesses of God. No eye could light on them, but it must be occupied with the work of God *for* them, with which they were in-

vested. How fully and touchingly it set forth the great standing and position to which He would eventually exalt man in Christ and by Christ! Let men or angels look at me a Christian according to the purpose of God, and their eye, as it surveys me, must be engaged with the beauty and being of Christ, by which I am and in whom I am. I am in Him who is of God to me wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. I cannot but regard it as a most attractive and impressive sight to see Adam and Eve, in the ordinary ways of this life, consciously and manifestly clothed of God; and thus in themselves testifying on the earth of the great purpose of God in His love toward man. If this testimony had been perpetuated, what could have been more significant? And possibly it is in connection with that, according to the law of the offerings, the priest who offered the burnt-offering had the skin for his part. He was entitled to that part with which God first clothed man, indicating that he could appropriate personally the sweetness and

value of the burnt-offering, which is Christ Himself.

But in process of time (or literally in "the end of days")* Cain comes forth with his offering to God, thus superseding the testimony which up to this was supported by his parents. Let us note here, ere we proceed, that when the failure of one phase of testimony is consummated, and the attempt to supersede it is perpetrated as a consequence of the laxity in which the former was held, then a new phase is introduced; not a revival of the old, but one which declares the truth of God's purpose apart from, and yet in keeping with, the intention couched in the old. Cain essays (and I assume it was the result of his education) to restore man in his relations with God, a very laudable desire if undertaken under the mind of Him who claimed every consideration on the part

* What is the exact meaning of this I do not pretend to say; but it is evident that Cain, in the spirit in which he was educated, as "the man gotten from God," seeks to repair the disaster under which they lay.

of man, who had been the offender. If I am a grievous offender against one who has every claim on me, I am bound to seek the reparation he requires, and not assume for myself what should be an adequate set off. But this latter is just what Cain did. He overlooks both the magnitude of man's offence, and the immensity of the claims which God had on man. He judges and determines with himself what he considers will be sufficient to repair the breach which is acknowledged as existing between them. Cain, I repeat, instead of being impressed with the fact that God must clothe man, and that thus alone could he stand, screened and separated from the exposure of his fall, that his position was of such a nature that God alone could act in it, and therefore that man could not in anywise meet him as things *then* were; that is, simply as man in his own life and strength, for it was under judgment, and therefore positively in itself impotent to effect relief or even reprieve. Yet Cain assumes, and brings according to his own mind of the fruits

of the earth an offering unto the Lord. By toil and industry, at personal cost, he succeeded in obtaining fruits from the earth which is now cursed. The very toil he endured in trying to counteract the curse, and extract from the earth fruits that would indicate that the effects of the curse had been mastered and annulled, had a voice to every one with a conscience.

Let us walk beside Cain for a moment, and catch up the idea under which he acted. Here was a man, the first-born of fallen Adam, conceiving in his own mind without co-operation or subsidy from others the idea of placing the earth and himself with it in acceptable relations with God. What an amazing scope of purpose is thus in its first and simplest form propounded! A man to conceive and attempt to set aside God's curse on the earth with the intent of placing himself and it in acceptable relations with God! View it from any side one may there is a boldness of design in it which lends an interest to it independently of the beneficent results

it sought to effectuate. Cain, in his purpose and aim, gives to us in a very distinguished way the highest and best aim of the natural man. If it were but right how amiable and fine would Cain's action appear to us ! He was evidently sensible of God's claim to a certain degree ; he must have experienced painfully the distance in which man on the earth stood in relation to God. In a word, he was the first, and at this stage of his course, I doubt not, the brightest example of natural religion (eventually the Antichrist), he could set matters to rights ; he did not deny the state of things, but not understanding anything morally of the distance between man and God, he attempts by individual toil to surmount and countervail the consequences of the penalty under which man lay, and not the penalty itself. In his act Cain embodies and exhibits the largest and fullest development of man's attempt in any age to place the earth and man in it, in such acceptability with God, that man would be owned of God as having effected such a desirable

end; and hence, when the Spirit of God would delineate the characteristics of the great enemies of the Church in the latter days, He says, "They ran in the way of Cain." The scope and purpose of the apostacy in the latter days will be only on a par with that of the first human religionist. Whether as to its course and manner of action, or as to the moral feeling towards the people of God: respecting the one Jude warns us, and for the other John prepares us.

It was when this terrible and consummate purpose of man was being enacted, that Abel, the younger son of Adam, and therefore without natural title, propounds and sets forth, as taught of God, the only right and true ground on which man can ever attain to true and happy relations with God; and that, on that ground, he is sure to be in those desired relations. Abel is the witness raised up, not only to vindicate the truth of God in opposition to Cain's assertive attempts, but also to set forth to man the simple and blessed way in which God accepts the sinner. Abel acts in strict

reference to the moral relations between man and God. God in His righteousness engages his soul, and man as a sinner under penalty, because of sin, is before him. He, therefore, brought of the firstlings of the flock and the fat thereof, expressing thereby the two chief points of that great sacrifice which should be henceforth offered to God by His own Son, namely, a life not chargeable—offered up vicariously—and the excellency which the fat represented, obtained through death. By this offering Abel sets forth what was due to God and incumbent on man. He was thus a true witness. He rebuked the presumption of Cain, and, at the same time, became the channel of announcing the terms on which God would resume happy relations with man; nay, accept him. “God had respect to Abel and to his offering, but to Cain and his offering he had not respect.” “By the which,” says the apostle, “he obtained witness that he was righteous,” for he had apprehended the righteousness of God. The testimony is beautiful and distinct.

In "the end of days." I conclude when Adam was 129 years old, Cain presumptuously attempted to represent on earth what practically disavowed and superseded the testimony which, as clothed of God, his parents presented. Cain, as the first-born, had natural title to maintain the truth of God, as His witness on earth; he failed, because he overlooked the moral distance between God and man, and therefore did not comprehend what God in His righteousness required. He had no just apprehension of God morally; whereas, Abel, apprehending the righteousness of God and his own sin, offers with strict reference thereto, and is accepted. The mind of God is met, and as is always the case the moment it is, blessed be His name! He declares His acceptance of the sinner. *How* God signified His acceptance of Abel and his offering I cannot say, but that it was manifest enough is very plain: possibly by fire coming down from heaven; for Cain had palpable evidence of the different reception that Abel's offering met with in contrast to

his own. Morally now there is the same difference only more controlling and influential. The Cains perceive easily enough that the Abels have an acceptance with which they are in no way favoured, and on this account they hate and would extirpate them. "Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Abel not only fully and distinctly set forth on earth the only true and perfect way of ensuring acceptance with God—vindicating God in nature, and His ways toward man and the earth, but he seals his testimony with his blood. He dies by the hand of his brother because of his acceptance with God. This was the fruit of acting righteously; for I do not act righteously unless I act according to the mind of God, and in keeping with His nature and will. How fine the testimony! May the heart travel in company with Abel, and may it covet to maintain this testimony in the most unequivocal manner though the consequences be nothing short of death; and death, too, at the

hands of a brother who had assumed to repair everything.

Abel, the first martyr on earth, closes his history here in death at the hand of him against whom he witnessed for God as to the true manner of approach to God, and of acceptance as the fruit of it. If we could with any accuracy survey the scene and the testimony, and the different motives and ideas which produced such diverse actings in these two men, in the opening of the world's history, how impressive and grand it would become to us the more we dwelt on it, as a display of human religion against divine! Man does not, as a rule, deny altogether the claim of God, but he overlooks the moral side of it, and seeks to commend and render all acceptable by IMPROVEMENT. The Cains do not deny that there is need for improvement, but they rest everything on improvement. Abel, on the contrary, announces that all blessing to man comes from God through the intervention of one entirely *outside himself*, and therefore he is accepted; and because thus manifestly

accepted of God, he is pursued with relentless hate, a hate that taketh away the life of the owner—the hatred of a murderer. The highest human religionists are, in reality, God's bitterest opponents; and in proportion as human religion is held to, so is their opposition to the divine. Abel heads the cloud of witnesses or martyrs. (The word is the same for both in Greek). He had obtained witness that he was righteous, hence he fell by the hand of his brother. What a commentary on man's goodness! and the earth which drank in his blood must answer for it. The fact of his death has a voice to man, and therefore though dead yet speaketh. Hence the Lord pronounces that, of the Jews—the earthly people rejecting Him—all the righteous blood shed upon the earth should be required: "from the blood of righteous Abel," &c. It called for judgment, and the world is oppressed with this additional judgment. Hence it is said of the blood of Jesus that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel;" for it on the contrary speaks of forgiveness.

After the death of Abel there does not arise any new order of testimony for 200 years; and then we find it in the person of Enoch; but during that interval, as we gather from Genesis iv. 26, there was a faithful company who called on the Lord, or "by the name of the Lord." Growing evil compelled the faithful openly to seek the Lord and to manifest unequivocally where their hope lay. Doubtless the voice from Abel's death was not unheeded by those who feared God. To Adam and Eve is given another son after the death of Abel, and he is called Seth,* in faith that God had "appointed them another seed;" so that both Cain and Abel are omitted from Adam's line: Abel because he had passed away in death, and Cain because he had forfeited his place in Adam's family—in the human family owned of God. At an interval of little more than 100 years, about the time of the birth of Seth's son Enos, men began to call on the name of the Lord; or, as the LXX. give it, "This man hoped to

* Seth; i. e., appointed.

call on the name of the Lord." "This man" I should suppose to be Seth, and this rendering shows us how the passage was understood when the Greek translation was made (B.C. 273).

In studying the history of testimony we must be prepared to find long intervals between very distinguished witnesses, who were raised up specially to maintain the truth of God against increasing evil and assumption on the part of man, because God's principle has ever been, "when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raiseth up a standard against it." An interval is allowed in order to prove the effects on man of any remarkable testimony, and then another phase is presented, though the former testimony is by no means superseded. Nearly 200 years have elapsed before Enoch,* the seventh from Adam, is born, and he occupies the place of God's witness for 300 years. He "walked with God" for 300 years, "and he was not, for God took him." He was known as a prophet, warning of

* Enoch; that is, dedicated or disciplined.

coming judgments, and in the spirit of John in the Apocalypse, testified of the judgments coming on men, because of their growing ungodliness. From God's side he viewed the state of things on earth, and as Abel had testified how approach to God was to be obtained and acceptance known, so Enoch in acceptance (the word "walked" is synonymous with "well-pleasing"—see Heb. xi.) with God looks on the earth, and proclaims through His Spirit, in which he is himself in fellowship, what must befall man on earth, because of his departure from God. Looking from God's side and knowing in himself what was compatible with God in His holiness and truth, he saw clearly that nothing less than terrible judgment could vindicate it, even what is fully depicted in Revelation xix. His was a glorious testimony. He walked with God for 300 years and proclaimed to men the judgment which, as worthy of God, should await them. *With* God and *for* God on the earth, he passes away from it as one beyond the power of death. His testimony is sealed

by the announcement, now through his translation made for the first time, even that the heavens are opened to man, that he is to have a place, an inheritance *there*, even as Adam in his first estate had on the earth. The seventh generation from Adam is chosen to announce the glad tidings that God will deliver from death; yea that light and incorruptibility have come even now. The supremacy of grace over the penalty of man is declared. If Abel had died at the hands of his brother because he was accepted of God, Enoch is enabled through the same grace to show himself victorious over death, as Stephen did in principle, and he "is not, for God took him." What instruction and interest does his testimony in every way convey to us!

Enoch's son, whom he named Methusalah,* lived to the very year of the flood. Methusalah's son Lamech lived to within five years of it. None from

* The word Methusalah signifies, "he dies and it is sent," or "at his death he sends it," thus giving moral confirmation of the chronological fact that his life, which was 969 years,

Seth down died before the translation of Enoch. We may conceive the effect that this increased light must have had on this living chain. The story of Abel was part of the history of each on earth, but the translation of Enoch presented a new and wondrous consummation to all their hopes and desires. What a revelation it must have been to those who must have felt the judgment on man, now the more aggravated since the unnatural death of Abel. Adam is now dead, but all his posterity in God's line do not pass away until after the translation. Even Adam lived to within fifty-seven years of it. What a day it was! And what strange joy it must have diffused among the godly, and what full and gracious unfoldings of His mercy for God to vouchsafe at that early day!

482 years elapsed between the translation of Enoch and the deluge. Methusalah, the son of Enoch, lives to the

reached to the very verge of the judgment, which Enoch his father doubtless, foresaw, when he thus named him at his birth, the very year he began to "walk with God" (see Gen. v. 21, 22).

year of it, and Lamech, the son of Methusalah, is the father of Noah, whom he thus named in prophetic faith, which reached on to a time beyond that of which even Enoch had foretold, even the days when the earth, now cursed, should again be blessed by the Lord, and when the heavens should rule. "This same," he says (i. e., Noah, which signifies rest), "shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." He had found nothing but toil here, and he does not, like Cain, attempt to improve the earth. He had no hope from it in its then condition, having seen the growing misery of all around him. But he had also seen the translation, the victory of God's witness not only over the earth, but over the penalty of death. He had, doubtless, hearkened to the prophetic warning of Enoch as to the coming judgments, and he is allowed to discern in the distance a happier scene beyond those judgments; a time of rest even for the cursed earth. In token of this he names his son Noah;

he who was to pass through the deluge unscathed and be blessed anew in a purged earth; even as it will be with those whom Noah typified, in the days of millennial rest which will succeed the judgments which Enoch had foretold, and which that of Lamech and Noah's day had foreshadowed. Lamech did not die till within five years of the flood, and when the ark must have been well nigh completed, having, perhaps, assisted in its construction. His age is significant being 777 years; the number seven being, as we know, that used in Scripture to denote perfection; and the three sevens stand out in contrast to the three sixes (666) given in Rev. xiii., as the number of the Beast—the "Man of Sin."

Lamech is properly the last before the flood and outlived all his forefathers except his father Methusalah, who, as living up to the last year, indicates, I should suppose, that the line of testimony should be unbroken to the last, and thus brings us in the year of the world to the flood, which I shall reserve for the next chapter.

THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie: behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”—Rev. iii. 7-13.

How careful we should be in using the knowledge we gain at the hands of others, for there is danger of our using it, in ministry, as our own, in satisfying the desires of our minds! How different is this from the thought of the apostle in speaking to Timothy: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that

hear thee." (1 Tim. iv. 16.) All that Timothy taught was to revert back on his own heart, and to be found in his own path. The delight felt by ingenuous minds of spiritual intelligence has been great at all that has been opened of the Scriptures in the past years; but the minds of teachers may be surely inclined, though taught of the Spirit, rather to multiply the setting forth the bright things which have been opened successively to their view than to regard the need of the conscience which the love of Christ was there to sustain. There is no book that has not received an enlargement, and its page a life that it never had before: at least it has not been recorded. Among others the Apocalypse presents difficulties more profound than most; but the portion from which our quotation is taken bears a simpler form, and one that is easier to illustrate from other parts of Scripture, but yet unexhausted.

In many respects the "Seven lectures on the seven churches, delivered in Davies Street," have supplied more than

would content most readers; but Scripture knows no bounds in its teaching by the Spirit to the conscience, where there is a spiritual capacity to receive it.

It would be unnecessary to go far through the addresses to the churches in chapters ii., iii.; but there are two points I would observe upon: first, the sequence to be found in the addresses themselves, besides as one after another; and, secondly, the ground of the decadence of the assemblies; and then, God willing, how they apply to this particular church.

The first point I would suggest to the meditation of brethren, is whether there does not appear a succession in the *state* of each, as we have generally received a succession one to another. They all begin, up to Sardis, with a good and faithful state. Nor can we wonder at Thyatira receiving its meed of praise, so high and full, if we look at the corruption of Rome so faithfully delineated. What more excellent was there than her commencement, thirty of her bishops being martyrs in succession?

Sardis (to which Laodicea would have been a natural sequel, and succeeding the abuses of Thyatira,) came under correction of outward evil by the introduction of a controlling power, which was not of God and which left but little of Himself. She received another lord than Christ. She was to strengthen the things that remained. The power of worldly interference in Protestantism was now completely established in its rule in the Church, though it began with an emperor becoming a Christian. The faith that the Church should be removed, and that Christ was to come and rule the earth with His saints, had left the earth: truths which, by mercy, have been so widely restored. The failure of the recognition of the kingdom of God as to come, and to be established in the personal advent of the Lord, now bore its full fruit; and the Church, instead of being an exception to the world and the witness of the hopes of the saints, served only the order of the world as far as it might: but surely it took the sword, in princi-

ple, to perish by it. The fearful consistency of Rome in claiming power over all things, being but thus the source of the deepest religious corruption. The Church waiting in hope of the kingdom of God as the reward of her confession and path, and desirous of being with Christ, was kept free of the world, as well as of the value put on possession of it. While this faith continued, the impetus of the first works of the assembly at Ephesus continued. But they gradually failed in the works of faith as towards the Lord of glory, and in their affections towards Himself; and thus the separation that the standing of faith marked grew fainter, and the hope that belonged to it; and so the LOVE waned. It is not absolutely said that the works were His; but the divine love was, and the works began to take the character of christian beneficence. The love that looked on all those about them as heavenly strangers with themselves—and what they possessed not their own, and the mammon of unrighteousness making friends for the

unseen country—was beginning to fail. The kingdom in which they were to rule and the hope of Christ, were ceasing from their spiritual vision; whose glory was the glory of the desolate of the earth, till He came. They referred their assigned duties less and less to the Lord, who should reward them in that day, because they served Him in them. The offering was less acceptable, and less accounted of, and the reward of the inheritance diminished, as He was less in view in them. All these defects continued to increase, and all that should have characterized the confession of saints continued to decline. In Smyrna there was some boast of either extension or of its embracing the great of the earth. It was to be tried therefore by fire. In Pergamos the evil becomes permanent. The Holy Ghost could not witness amidst such a state, and the felt deficiency was sought to be met by superstition (completed in Thyatira) and the filthy lucre of a Balaam spirit to establish its power. There was one sign of early declension which, I believe led

to this, which is mentioned in the reprobation of the Nicolaitanes.

I see no ground for the common view of it. Could such have commenced in Ephesus? Hardly possible. But it has far more consistency with the state of the Church in considering it as the growth and claim of ministerial distinction, putting aside the place Paul saw himself in to the Church of God in 1 Cor. iii. 20—23. “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” It continued and found its way into the practice marked as the sin of Balaam. Thus the authority of Christ as Lord and the power of discipline were lost. God’s assembly in, and yet out of the world, became corrupt; and how should not the calling of the Church become obscured and the heavenly calling despised?

We need not extend these observations for the purpose of drawing the attention of believers to Philadelphia.

Its first characteristic at the Lord's hand, is that He had set before her an open door. It is not the praise of the churches before Sardis, however they had fallen; but the opportunity God had given her—of what?—of return, of taking up again that which was lost in past ages. It is the last opportunity of recovery—nor is it called repentance. It is not given to Laodicea. Why is there room for the hope that such an opportunity puts before them? Because of previous grace. "Thou hast kept my WORD and not denied my NAME." The order is that of God. Keep my word—disciples indeed—knowledge of the truth again; knowing God's will—doing it—acquaintance with God. So here an open door is granted. Now, therefore, enter upon the charge my grace has given you in these last days, before the state of Sardis, closing in Laodicea, has earned final rejection of the testimony of the Church to Christ.

It is quite a mistake, that the open door is to the gospel. It is an open door to a return from a lost condition and confession. It is such an open door with His word and name, that makes such as to whom it is given to gain the place of pillars in the house of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How sad is it to see on one side the apprehension of the exalted nature of the Church put aside the faith of the heavenly calling as a path on earth; and on the other, believers refusing to gather in the oneness which they may call a party, and deny as a practice, to secure the blessing.

Now, accepting Philadelphia as representing much we see and rejoice in at present, what a deep instruction it should carry to those "who seem to be pillars," and a warning to those who would call the acknowledgment of the appointment of the Holy Ghost as the unity of the body and the duty of acting on it, sectarian! The neglect of this, coming on the failure of looking to the coming of the Lord as judging all things, has been the

source of declension and every difficulty. Even error would not cause mischief (for this works security against it) so dissolving to the Church of God as that. What, then, is said? "Hold fast that which thou hast: let no man take thy crown." The fruit of the mistake of those who gainsay their faith, however painful the sense of the stumbling-blocks around them, is not to weaken the hands of those to whom the Lord has committed, serving the saints in guarding them against these things. We are in face of the synagogue of Satan; that is, a return to beggarly elements as well. But if we would pass on through the open door it is in confidence of the wonderful grace of the opportunity given to those that hold fast the Word and Name of the Lord. It is this keeps it open in his hand; and what grace is there that does not humble and prepare the heart for service!

The stamp of rejection of the world which is on the heart of faith, and Christ coming to take possession with His saints, works strength to the Church,

having her place above and knowing the mystery. These, thus taking up the desire of what is set before them, accept as no boon any veiling of the holiness of God in love. It is the want of affection to it that claims on the ground of the joy of grace (alas! we find often how the flesh can take up the best things), a latitudinarianism in principles, which has not learnt the love of brethren after 1 John v. 2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." What is pleaded for by this latitudinarianism is not merely the reception of a believer simple and of very small knowledge.

The due acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ in its various aspects is surely to enter on the way of "overcoming," through the open door. The firmness of the PILLAR in this evil world will never be found without the faith of it in its revealed extent. How shall we enjoy the presence of the Holy Ghost unless Christ's exaltation is held in wonder and humility, and His steps

ours? Nor should we forget the gracious encouragement as to being saved from the judgments, or "those things coming on the earth," yet worthy of the shelter and to stand at last among the attendants of the Son of man.

A S E R I E S.

No. 14.

PRAYER.

The more divinely instructed we are, the more the word of Christ dwells in us, the more shall we value and be in dependence on God. The more conscious I am (and this true intelligence imparts) that all I have and all I am comes from God, the more natural and happy is it for me to be dependent on Him. Anything else would be dishonest and unseemly. If I feel that I derive everything from Him, and know that everything concerning myself is of interest to Him, I must feel that it is true and right of me to own all as coming from Him; and that both my hap-

piness and strength are according to the constancy and accuracy in which I look to Him for everything that in any degree concerns or interests me. This is prayer, though it may be subdivided into various orders, as I trust to show. Prayer, then, in itself, is our natural and wondrous privilege. It is the expression of my dependence, but my dependence on One from whom I know I derive all. It is but just of me to refer all to Him, and it is most blessed for myself to be assured in my heart, that He not only confers on me everything that I have, but that I am, because of His interest in me, free to speak to Him on any subject of any moment to me.

Prayer properly combines dependence and confidence, and according as they mutually increase, so is prayer better known. If I am dependent on God for everything, I must look to Him for everything. I grow in confidence as I grow in practical dependence, because if I can depend on Him for everything, I may, nay, must, as I feel this, confide

everything to Him. I have nowhere else to confide it, and if I but know that I may confide, I must depend on Him, for everything comes from Him. But I confide, also, as I know that His love is as great as His power; His will to serve me as great as His power to do so. Prayer is the expression of this combined dependence and confidence, and the absence of either must necessarily make the prayer defective.

Prayer is awakened when one realizes that God orders everything; and that He is so near me and easy of access, that I may speak to Him. Abraham's prayer, where he is especially called the "friend of God," is recorded for us. The Lord communicates His mind to Abraham in a near, intimate way; and Abraham then, according to his confidence, prays to Him respecting Sodom. In like manner when David heard from Nathan how God felt and purposed about him and his house (1 Chron. xvii.), he went in and "sat before the Lord;" and then states that *because* he had heard of the Lord's mind about him and his house,

"therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee." Prayer necessarily must express the amount of my dependence and of my confidence. If I am not dependent, why do I pray? And if I have no confidence, what is the use? I may know that there is power there, but if that power is not available to me, if it cannot be enlisted on my behalf, what object is there in my appealing to it? Prayer is the expression of life in a new-born soul, its instinct according as it feels its new relation toward God to be that of dependence and confidence, instead of distance and distrust. Thus the evidence the Lord gives to Ananias of Saul's change of heart is, "Behold he prayeth."

There is such a thing as crying to God without any thought of being heard, more from superstition, if haply on account of it a desired answer might come. This is rather tempting than believing, and not properly prayer, which cannot exist unless the soul has some sense of its dependence on God and some faith in Him as being One who will attend to

a supplication. The more we contemplate prayer, the more impressed must we be with the grace and mercy of God in ordaining such a link between us and Him. Such a sense of dependence and yet confidence is imparted as we know what prayer is by the use of it. I may have the fullest conviction of God's omniscience and omnipotence, and yet not at all apprehend the intent and value of prayer. In prayer I am of myself assuring my own heart of not only my dependence on God, but of my confidence in Him; my prayer goes no further. It is always characteristic of my real apprehension of Him in His relation to myself. It is not so much impressions of Him coming from Him to me, but rather my expressing my state and circumstances and impression of Him to Him. There is something peculiarly expressive of our relation to God, or the relation He would have subsisting between Himself and us in that we are not only permitted to pray, but enjoined to do so. The true relation between God and us on earth is maintained by

prayer, and while His permitting it is a marvellous expression of His grace; it at the same time indicates the truest expression on our part of our place of dependence. Man ought never to have departed from the place of dependence. The Lord Jesus here a man used it and appropriated its value fully, for He was entirely dependent. It is not a question as to whether my prayers move God or alter His purposes. My simple duty and blessing too is to unfold all to Him, sensible of my dependence on Him for everything; and confiding in His love for me that He will in some way assure my heart touching the state of things through which I am passing, of His unfailing wisdom and His care of me. This the soul truly praying is always sure to obtain.

Let us now examine how prayer is presented to us in the New Testament. In order to make the subject clearer, I propose to divide prayer into three orders, only premising that the first order may reach to the third, but that the second may not touch on either the first or

third, and that the third may exist without embracing the two others.

The first I may call the prayer of persistence (*αυαιδεia*), and the scripture I refer to is Luke xi. Here we find the disciples asking the Lord to teach them to pray, and consequently here we are taught the first rudiments, or the first right ideas of prayer. The state of the disciples must be taken into account or we shall not arrive at the instruction communicated in this passage. They were but just awakened to the sense and value of prayer, and meeting them exactly and suitably to their then state and intelligence, He replies and instructs them, divinely of course. Having told them the subjects which should form their prayer, subjects, as I have above said, which were correlative to the apprehension of their relation to God *at the moment* they uttered them, for had it been otherwise it would not have been prayer. It could not be prayer for me to address God in terms as to His relation to me of which I had no ideas or warrant for at the time. The place their

souls ought to have occupied with God at that *very* moment was embodied in the words which the Lord dictated. It was a prayer for that present moment, and useable only by those who could personate the disciples' state at that moment. From this the Lord enlarges on the subject and nature of prayer, showing the state of soul in which one must be towards God in prayer. It is simply, as we gather from the parable of the man going to his friend at midnight, not only that I have a want, but that I know of none who can relieve me but One—that is God. It is the sense of my entire dependence on Him without any other resource; and hence the needy one at midnight persisted in his request, even after there was no response on the ground of friendship. The sense of necessity on his own side, and the conviction that his friend could help him, is what he exemplifies. Now this is the first and simplest order of prayer. I am sensible of a want, and I know God alone can supply it; and the greater the power with which these two con-

victions engage my soul, the more continuous am I in prayer, and the more am I simply and entirely confined to Him. Instead of in the natural restlessness of my heart trying one here and another there, I am ever looking to Him in the unquestioning conviction that no one else can help me. We are often reduced to the last strait and extremity in order to establish unequivocally this dependence on God.

After this the Lord sets forth, that while the persistence proves that I have no other resource, for I should not continue importuning unless I were convinced that I could be supplied, and that my need demanded it; yet, besides the importunity, which is the evidence of my sincerity, I should know in myself that I am appealing to a Father from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down. The Lord impresses that we have to deal with one superior to a natural father. If we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened; but we must bear in mind the nature and rela-

tion of God towards us. If a natural father would not give us a stone, if we asked for bread, or a serpent for a fish, or a scorpion for an egg; if one evil in himself knows how to give good gifts unto his children, how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. The gift would be in keeping with the goodness of the Giver, and the relation in which He stood toward us. The better and the nearer any one is to me, the better, intrinsically, are all his gifts to me. If I ask of God, knowing the relation in which He stands to me, I may depend that He will not give me anything inferior to that which I have asked for; but, on the contrary, something superior and after the order of His own Holy Spirit; something which will assure my heart and establish it in the nature and holiness of Himself. He would not give me that which would only prove a stone instead of bread. He is the judge of what is really bread—the bread of affliction from Him is bread and no stone. I may seek a fish,

something more than bread; He takes care that what He gives me will not be a serpent, something poisonous to me. How often the fish, something to please nature, turns out to be a poisonous reptile ! What He gives will never be of this kind; and if I ask an egg (something more of a luxury), He will not give me a scorpion—something to wound and afflict, as a luxury to nature always proves to be. He will gratify, He will answer, but always after the manner and order of His own holy mind and interest as a Father about us. Now in this, as I term it, the first order of prayer, there is some pressing need, some need, from whatever cause it may arise, that so oppresses us, that we feel compromised unless we be relieved; sometimes it may be on account of our imprudence or failure—such, for instance, as borrowing an axe, and then the head of it falling into the water. (2 Kings vi.) We may be to blame in the first instance, i.e., the cause of our present embarrassment may be attributable to our want of faith or wisdom in some

form or another; yet we have no other resource but God, and we turn to Him, and wait on Him, importuning for relief, and the more so as we are pressed by the need and believe that no one else can help us; and He does help when we are simply and entirely dependent on Him; not always as we may have proposed to Him, but in a way to assure our hearts of the high quality of His love and interest.

The next order of prayer is described in Philippians iv. 7. There we are told by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known all our requests unto God, and that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Here all our requests are made known by prayer, simply pouring forth of the heart; and supplication, which is more expressive of want, but all with thanksgiving, the sense of having already received, for it encourages one's heart greatly to recall God's love and goodness, and how He has dealt with one in times past. Now when you

are in this state of soul, making known all your requests, it is not so much obtaining answers for your requests which relieves you, but you derive from so doing such a sense of God's interest in you, such a reliance on Him that the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. You may have want; you spread out all before God. You make known all to Him; and if your conscience refuses to submit to Him anything you desire; you are convinced that you must not seek it; but all you can conscientiously make known to Him, you feel is so before Him. You are so conscious of being with Him, if you have made it known to Him (merely formal utterance would not come up to that), you are assured that the pressure is gone. You feel that He is for you, and you have in lieu of the pressure, the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeping your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. The question of results or answer does not arise here. The soul is assured of God's

intervention, and in the consciousness of this there is the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which is far better than any answer, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus, who is our Lord and life. The soul, through this order of prayer, is set in a very blessed and wealthy place; the peace of God barring out pressure, keeping the heart and mind from anxiety through Christ Jesus. He is the source of this peace to me, so that it is not only good in itself passing all understanding, but the source is inexhaustible, and I know it to be so. If this order of prayer were better known and more cultivated, there would be more real happiness of heart in passing through the circumstances of this evil world. The sense that I had made known every pressure or question on my heart to God, and that I had His peace, keeping my heart and mind through Christ Jesus, would enable me to go on brightly and cheerfully through everything with my feet like hind's feet. The soul is in the fruition of this order of prayer in

Ephesians vi. When after being invested with the whole armour of God, you are praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, the sense of security from all antagonistic agencies, only enables you the better to spread out not merely your own wants, but the circumstances and wants of all the saints unto God; and you are thus watching unto this very thing, engrossed with the communication and reference of everything to God, as also for the word of the testimony.

The third order of prayer differs only from the second in this: that while the second reaches to happy, unquestioning reliance on God, and has simple rest in Him with respect to everything presented to Him, in this order the heart is so assured that the thing asked for is according to His will, that there is distinct faith as to the answer (1 John v. 15), we have the petitions which we desired of Him. In this scripture we find, that if we ask anything according to

His will He heareth us, and we know that if He heareth us, we know that we have the petitions which we desired of Him. The point practically turns on our knowing that He heareth us; the peculiar sense of His hearing us assures us that we have the petitions which we have desired of Him. In Philippians iv., the preceding order, it is our making known our requests to Him, and we resting in the fact that we have made them known to Him. It is different my making known my requests to God, and therefore resting in the certainty that as He knows them all will be ordered aright; and the assurance that He hears me because I have asked according to His will. Our Lord could say, "I know that thou hearest me always." Hearing implies acceptance. I have a sense of having asked what is acceptable. He has heard me, and if I know that He has heard me, I know that I have the petitions I desired of Him. I think, that in making known my requests, there is a sense of what He is for me, that I have Him to see

about them; but when I know that He hears me, I am assured in myself that I am asking according to His will, and therefore the things I desire shall be granted; and I feel that they will.

In the first order I am engaged with my want, and with God as my only resource, all the more so as I understand Him to be my Father. In the second, it is rather to acquire rest for my heart from the pressure bearing on me; and this is done by making known all my requests to God; and then I am assured, not that all shall turn out as I desire, but that God is everything to me and gives me such confidence in His love, that His peace keeps my heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Now, in the third, it is more; it is my heart being assured of certain petitions being according to His mind; and that as I know He hears me, I may reckon that I shall have the petitions which I desired of Him. When I know that I have made known to Him all my requests, I am at rest, and my heart and mind are kept in peace through Christ

Jesus; but when I know that He hears me respecting what I ask for, because it is with reference to this that I am aware of His hearing me; when I am conscious of this, I may rest assured that I have the petitions which I desired of Him. They may not, however, be granted as I may have expected or described, but they are granted in a divine way. Paul may have prayed, and have been assured that he should serve the Church after his capture at Jerusalem, but it is not likely that he expected his prayer would be answered by his writing his epistles, by which he has served the Church better and more amply than if he had obtained his liberty, and had resumed his former labours. The petition is granted, not after our small selfish idea, but according to the grace and greatness of God who answers the prayer in the largeness of His own heart.

I think prayer in John xiv., xv., xvi. is of this order. In chapter xiv. 13, 14, the heart troubled during Christ's absence, prays in His name, and is cheered and helped by the Lord Himself, that

the Father may be glorified in the Son; i.e., that the goodness of the Father may be known through the Son's helping us, and answering the prayer which we have asked in His name, realizing so what becomes Him that we can assume to personate Him, and therefore taking His name upon us, asking thereby, and thus asking, receiving. Chapter xv. 7 is of the same order but with reference to fruit-bearing and service, while in chapter xvi. 24 it is with reference to our place in the world during our Lord's absence; and hence it is added, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full;" so personating our absent Lord in the world, that we can ask in His name and have our joy full amidst all the surrounding antagonism, because we are receiving from God whatever we ask, and asking only what in such a position we could only value, even what suits us as of Christ here.

I may add one word as to Matthew xviii. 19, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of

my Father which is in heaven." Here all depends on the agreeing, "If two do agree." It is the power of God's Spirit rising above their individual selfishness, and giving each of them a common desire; and this will be owned of our Father in heaven.

I need hardly after the foregoing refer to Mark xi. 24, "Whatsoever ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive, and ye shall have." This is simply realizing that I believe He hears me, and therefore I am assured that the petitions I desire will be granted to me.

The Lord lead us more into dependence on Himself and rest in Him; always conscious that we have made known to Him all our requests, and glad of heart when in His goodness to us He lets us know that He hears us respecting anything we may desire of Him; our hearts growing and deepening in our confidence in Him, and in the knowledge of His heart toward us for His name's sake.

FRAGMENT.

In Daniel iii. we have the spirit and character in which the godly remnant will pass through their trials. It is not in that character, however, not the outward difficulties here referred to, but it is the aspect of the thing that I desire to call your attention to, because there are various trials which attend the soul while passing through this world. In Israel God was showing forth His mighty power in temporal deliverances, as in the case of Pharaoh; but with us it is a different thing, being spiritually delivered we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. All through, those who are faithful to God have been a suffering people. Obedience and reliance on God, characterize the seed all the way through. It is another thing we find here. Besides the love of power, they use religion to unite and band together, to oblige conformity to the king's word. No matter whether king or pope, if it is *his* religion, for religion being the strongest motive in the human heart, men use it to sway and influence others to gain their own selfish ends.

THE KING IN HIS KINGDOM.

2 Samuel xxiii.

There are two songs in the Books of Samuel indited at different times, with upwards of a hundred years interval between them, yet when read together they appear as two parts of one whole, the work of one mind—the Spirit of God—though the utterances of different hearts and under different circumstances. They are the prayer of Hannah and the last words of David.

Hannah bursts out in praise to God after years of heaviness, sorrow, and reproach (1 Sam. i. 6), when it had all passed away, and the Lord, in answer to her cry, had granted the desire of her heart. It is the first, though we can well believe not the last, effusion of her heart in praise to God, yet in Scripture the only song of hers that is recorded. Of David's psalms we have many, but this is his last. Hannah might look forward to years of happiness now that she devoted her child to the Lord, and

entrusted him to Eli to train up for Him. David had nothing before him but death. She looks back on all God's dealings with her and rejoices. David looks forward and hopes. Hannah sings because of a salvation already accomplished. He is occupied with the covenant as yet unfulfilled, which is all his salvation and all his desire. Accordingly she celebrates God's ways of sovereignty and grace to the afflicted: "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: he bringeth low and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Sam. ii. 6, 8.) David's words have for their burden, the character and work of the King—the Lord's Christ. But no celebration of the Lord's intervention in grace and goodness on behalf of His people, could be complete without a reference to that for which God had been all along work-

ing, the establishment of the kingdom; so Hannah goes on to speak of the king, although the kingdom had not then been set up in Israel. "He shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." It is at this point where she ends that David begins; and, speaking by the Holy Ghost as he expressly affirms (2 Sam. xxiii. 2), he treats first of the king, then of his work. And so the whole chapter gives us a slight sketch of the king and his kingdom from "the pen of a ready writer." Hannah's prayer, deliverance having come, is full of brightness: David's song is full of beauty yet tinged with sadness.

The priesthood, which in the days of Hannah was God's appointed form of government in Israel, had been displaced and the kingdom set up—but the king was yet future. So, in speaking of him, David declares he speaks by direct inspiration. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." Nor that only. It was to him that God revealed the character of

the One who should sit on his throne. This is only in harmony with the rest of God's dealings with David. It was to him the form and character of the house was revealed. It was by him the Levites and priests were arranged in their order and courses. It was he who appointed the choir, and set apart the different officers of the intended house for their respective positions. And if Solomon was to execute justice on Shimei and Joab, it was David who charged him to do it. So here it is to David that the character of the king is first revealed. "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

If such was to be the king, David was not the man. Tried by this standard he had failed, and that grievously. That Saul, made king by the people's

request, should have proved himself unfitted for the office might not seem so surprising; but that David, the man of God's choice, not selected because of outward appearance (i.e., after the judgment of man), should have been tried and found wanting, might indeed surprise some, proving, as it does, that fallen man, even if renewed in heart, is unfit for the place of universal sovereignty. David's adultery, followed by the murder of Uriah, and his manifest partiality for Absalom, though his hands were stained with the blood of Amnon, his brother, were proofs that he had not been always just, ruling in the fear of God. But might not his son, beloved of the Lord, be the man? Ah, no! He surveys his family and confesses, "Although my house is not so with God." Young and tender, his hand free from blood, an untried sovereign was Solomon, yet the dying prophet could see he would not answer to the description of God's king.

There is something touching in this statement of his house. Death was near

him. He was singing his last words yet God's covenant was unfulfilled. Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, these were of David's house; but the just king was not there. God had promised, "I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever, and his throne shall be established for evermore." (1 Chron. xvii. 11—14.) With this David is satisfied. It is beautiful to see the faith of the dying king stayed upon God's word. He looks forward not because he discerns in his son a promise of the coming brightness, but because God had told him the light should shine. Sorrowful must it have been to his heart to own his sons were not so with God, but comforting to remember God's covenant which nothing, not even the sinfulness

of his family, could annul. (Ps. lxxxix. 35—37.)

Hence he can sing, and how beautifully! If the thought of his family introduces a vein of sadness, the description of Him that shall come sheds a beauty and brilliancy over everything. "He shall be as a light," &c. Brightness, freshness would characterize him. What is brighter than a morning without clouds? What is fresher than the young grass after rain?

Following this we have the work he will accomplish: punishing the wicked and rewarding the faithful. The first, David sings of as future; he never could effect it. The second he did in his measure, and thus it has its place here as a foreshadowing of what the Lord will do when He comes. For to Him only will the dominion over *men* (Adam) belong. "The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands." Useless as thorns, whose only power is to injure, David had often smarted under their thralldom. Joab, whose hands were twice stained

with innocent blood, was still captain of the host. David knew well that such could not be taken with hands. His efforts to remove him were fruitless. "But the man that shall touch them must be fenced (or filled, i. e., fully provided) with iron and the staff of a spear; they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." To one only of David's offspring will this apply—Him of whom it is written, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." (Psalm ii. 9.) "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as the fiery oven in the time of thine anger, the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, the fire shall devour them." (Psalm xxi. 8, 9.) "He will baptize with fire," "and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. iii.) The punishment of the wicked is the Lord's "strange work" (Isaiah xxviii. 21); yet He will do it. (Matt. xiii. 41.) To David it was a work of insuperable difficulty. For with the exception of the Amalekite, killed

for having asserted he had slain Saul, the Lord's anointed, and Sheba the son of Bichri, who lifted up the standard of rebellion against David, none of the others in Israel, whose deeds of iniquity have been recorded, are spoken of as punished by the king's commandment. So the language of Psalm ci. can only fully apply to the time yet to come. David's impotency appears in the pathetic exclamation, "I am this day weak though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me; the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness." (2 Sam. iii. 39.) Against the enemies inside and outside the land of Canaan, within the limits of his kingdom, he prevails; but against the sons of Belial among the people, he owns himself impotent. He had felt their power and knew his weakness.

The rest of the chapter gives us a different subject closely connected with the kingdom—the reward of those who had been faithful. Viewed historically, this catalogue of mighty men might

have been placed much earlier in the narrative, for these were they "whom he had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel." (1 Chron. xi. 10.) They had owned, and fought for, and with him, when Saul hunted him as a partridge in the mountains, the Ziphites discovered his retreat, and the men of Keilah were willing to deliver him up. They had shared his dangers and owned him when in rejection, so their names are now mentioned with honour. It is very interesting to trace the moral order of events as given us in God's word. Long before David uttered his last words, two, certainly, of these mighty men had passed away. Asahel slain by Abner when Ishbosheth yet divided the land with David, and Uriah slain by David before the birth of Solomon. Yet the catalogue has its place here as completing the picture of the kingdom.

Of the deeds of many here recorded we have no account. But, whilst all of

them are classed as the mighty men of David, we see each one is rewarded with his place, according to his work. Such is the law of the kingdom. (Matt. xvi. 27.) Is it asked what qualified the first three for their place of pre-eminence, the sacred record informs us, boldness in the wars of the Lord, and personal devotedness to their king. But among these three there was an order. The Tachmonite sat chief, qualified by having killed 800 (in 1 Chron. 300) at one time. Eliezer comes next for his bravery in retrieving the day single-handed, when the men of Israel had gone away, and "the people returned after him only to spoil." Shammah has his place next for defending a portion of God's land against the Philistines, when the people's courage had failed, and they fled away. In these the claims to place were different. In what follows they had a claim for distinction in common. (2 Sam. xxiii. 17; 1 Chron. xi. 19.) These three mightiest hazarded their lives, and broke through the hosts of the uncircumcised to draw water for

their king from the well of Bethlehem. Death was braved by these men, perils were encountered, the enemy defied and overcome. Numbers were as nothing when God's honour and power were in question. Difficulties could be overcome, dangers met, when the desire of the king had been expressed. Against God's enemies they would fight, even if they fought alone. For the Lord's anointed they would break through the Philistines' hosts, if only to get him a drink of water. What cannot boldness for God achieve when acting according to His mind? What will not attachment to the king effect?

The Philistines, who dwelt in the land; the Moabites, who often invaded it; the Egyptians, from whom God's arm had delivered Israel; such are the enemies they encountered and overcame, and these the enemies of Israel were likewise the enemies of the Lord. Thus they entered, with what measure of intelligence we know not, somewhat into God's thoughts about the kingdom. The time was approaching when a king

of Israel should reign over all the land, and the different kings and kingdoms between the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates should own his sway. By their acts they seem to anticipate this, and they did what they could to forward it. The acts of Benaiah were numerous; three only are singled out: the combat with two mighty men of Moab, the slaughter of the Egyptian with his own weapon, the destruction of the lion in a pit in the time of snow. Nothing stood in his way when conflict was necessary. In season, out of season, such seemed his motto. Few, too, would like in such a position to meet a wild beast. Death or victory would be the only alternative. There could be no escape. He went forward and conquered. Confidence in God, and fellowship with God's thoughts, seem the two features that characterize these mighty men. None had a place in this list who was not mighty in warfare. The time to sheath the sword had not then arrived. Each was active, and was rewarded according to his deeds. And God remem-

bered them. David gave them a place in his kingdom, God recorded their acts in His word.

But in all parallels between God's saints and the Lord Jesus, there will be contrasts also. We have David in his last words as an example of faith in the word of God. We have him too in his acts as a type of the Lord in rewarding those faithful to him. It has been noticed how he was not a type in punishing the wicked. There is one other contrast to be noticed ere closing. He could reward his faithful adherents with a name and place at his court, but he could not preserve them from death, or ensure their beholding the reign of the Prince of Peace. And if he gave them a place before him, to sit in his presence, he could give to none a place on his throne. What he could not do, the King of kings can and will. It is now the time to be associated with the Lord as the rejected of the world: by and by we shall reign with Him. Asahel never saw David king over all Israel. Uriah never witnessed the capture of Rabbah,

and the final subjection of Ammon. We, through His grace, shall witness our Lord's glory, and share in His triumph.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER III.

NOAH.

Long before the death of Methuselah the building of the ark had begun, and Noah had thereby inaugurated the new and peculiar testimony committed to him. How long before the flood this took place we cannot determine, for if it were for 120 years, as some have supposed, how can we understand the word of God to Noah, when directing him to build: "And thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee?" For 120 years before the date of the flood, Noah's sons were not born. Moreover, it is not

material to fix the date when the building commenced, it is only important to bear in mind that long before the death of Methuselah, who was the continuing link from Enoch, Noah, a "preacher of righteousness," had begun by word and act to announce to the world that God was about to deal with it, and that righteousness must be manifested when evil is dealt with, and while condemning the world on the one hand, he, according to divine instruction, prepared an ark for the saving of his house. The evil of man had now betrayed itself in wanton disregard of the line of holy separation which was due to God. Man allied himself as he chose; his lust was the arbiter of his actions. God's claims he set at defiance, his violence was great upon the earth, and every imagination of his heart was evil continually. The terrible character of man's nature was now exposed. It is manifested to God, and it grieved Him to His heart that He had set man, that which He had formed like unto Himself, on the earth. A most momentous moment is this for us to ponder on,

and then gather up at this early date, on the one hand, the inconceivable repulsion with which God now viewed man, and, on the other, what He, notwithstanding, in His eternal goodness, purposes to do with man.

Noah is chosen of God to be the witness of His mind, and as such God directs him to build an ark, gives him the measurements of it, details who and what the occupants of it shall be, and announces, "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven, and everything that is in the earth shall die." Noah and his house alone of mankind are to be saved, and that through means of the ark. The testimony to be maintained is, that God will destroy all men except one whom, with his house, He will save out of the overwhelming judgment, to take his place again on the restored earth. Noah, accepting what is worthy of God touching the earth and man on it, maintains this testimony, which, as is evident, is twofold; one

relating to the judgment and the time of it; and the other, after the judgment has passed away. One, comprising the building of the ark, and Noah's leaving it after the waters had dried up; the other, dating from Noah's occupancy of the restored earth.

First let us trace out how Noah maintained the testimony connected with judgment. Before there were any indications of judgment, nay, when men eat and drank, bought and sold, married wives, &c., and did as they pleased, apprehending no special catastrophe, Noah, walking with God, and having learnt His mind, practically avows what is worthy of Him; and while maintaining his true place *for God*, at the same time and by the same act maintains the true place *for himself*. "Moved with fear" he prepares an ark—for how many years I do not say, but for many—testifying by every hammer-stroke he gave to it that his hopes from earth in its then condition were at an end; announcing thereby to all his belief in the coming judgment, and, in God's pur-

pose, to save himself out of it. If he falters, he has lost his own true place, and his true place for God; for it was worthy of God that all here should come to an end. And this was necessarily the first part of his testimony, as a preacher of righteousness and a witness against those who gave no heed to him and his preparations. How he must have looked on everything around him, all soon to be submerged in judgment, while his own hopes rested in God's provision for him out of it all! He carried out distinctly and fully the divine measurements. His *all* he knew would be there. His expectations, completely turned from the earth, all centred in the ark, where all that was valuable to him, all that of God he could surround himself with, was to be. This he declared, and this in practice he maintained. Many were the years, and much must have been the toil and exercise of mind, while, like another Paul (in Philippians), he had not yet attained, but yet this "one thing" he did in order to attain. He presented to an unbe-

lieving world, that the ark would not only save him and his house, but contain in it every order of creature. No work of the Creator's hand would be lost, and none would he be deprived of, but it was all to be *within* the enclosure which God was providing for it; and from earth he ceased to expect anything. On he worked towards the completion of that which comprised, confined, and concentrated all his thoughts and energies. God had done with the earth, and man as he then was on it; and this Noah strictly and unequivocally bore witness of. If he had betrayed any hope from the earth, as it then was, he would have failed in being a witness of God's mind, for he could neither have prepared the ark nor condemned the world. He must not flinch or falter, or deviate from one of God's instructions to him. The testimony, to be maintained at all, must be perfect in all its parts. What a life was his! What a position he held! One singularly apart from all human hopes and desires, which were centred, and all his labours ex-

pended, on that which alone was worthy of God, and in which he had been instructed through God's revelation to him. What a testimony at this early date ! Even that God could sustain a man on the earth, not as Abel, in acceptance, and persecuted to death because of it; nor as Enoch, walking with God, apart from everything on it, and in the hope of being translated out of it; but, as in Noah's case, assured of judgment coming on the earth—nay, more, knowing that, as under sentence, it was already judged in the sight of God—yet equally assured of a place of inviolable security for himself in the ark; thus simply and definitely presenting to us, even now, how we should rest in Christ in a world under judgment because of His death; for in Him, our ark, we are in spirit out of this world, while the Holy Ghost convicts it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

The second part in this the first line of Noah's testimony now follows (chap. vii. 16). God has shut him in ! and there, amid the overwhelming judgment, re-

lentless in its course, he testifies to the heavenly hosts, knowing in himself full and perfect security, though death and judgment reign universally and without restriction. For a year, which comprises all the vicissitudes of season and climate, and this typifies one natural life, Noah remains in the ark floating on the waters. For many years he had testified to men on earth of his hope of safety, and entirely apart from their hopes, had occupied himself solely and exclusively with the ark, but now he is *in* that which he had for so long been preparing, and through it he surmounts the waters of desolation of which he had predicted, and which now prevail upon the earth. How wondrous is this two-fold testimony to us when read in the light of the glory of Christ? How beautifully and significantly these two parts of the first line of Noah's testimony come out and unite in their application to ourselves! For though with Noah the two lines were successive, with us they exist at one and the same time, even as Paul in Philippians and Paul in Ephe-

sians. In the one he is building the ark, counting everything but dross to win Christ; his hopes as to earth are at an end, and Christ, whose death sealed the judgment of this world, is simply and entirely his object. In the other he is *in* the ark—"seated in heavenly places in Christ," in whom he is blessed with every spiritual blessing.

Noah, therefore, while personally a type of the remnant of the latter day, who will be borne scathless through the time of judgment, and possess the renewed earth, presents a testimony which in a still more comprehensive way in its two-fold features, answers to what our own should be. The saints now fulfil the Noahic testimony by witnessing on the one hand that while *waiting* for the judgment Christ is their only object and hope, and on the other that the judgment of the earth being sealed by His death, we are *in Him* above all the ruin and death here. If we do any other thing than seek to win Christ, we are not in our own true place, nor are we in our true place for God; and if I am not

sensibly in Him, "*shut in*," knowing that all that is valuable to me from the Creator's hand is *there*—inside—and not looking outside for anything, I am denying what is worthy of God in ending all flesh. I am not a witness for Him, or rejoicing in His grace towards me. I may have light enough to see my place, but failing to maintain it, I cannot be happy in myself, or a witness for Him; for I do not accept that which alone is worthy of Him. Noah in heart, life, aim, and position, declared that it was worthy of God that the end of all flesh should come before Him, and he himself be saved in the ark. In like manner it is for us to declare that the judgment of this world is come, and that we through grace shall not come into judgment; that it is worthy of God that in Adam all should die, and in Christ all should be made alive; and that He is the depository and centre of every blessing, so that it is as vain for us to look for anything outside Him as it was for Noah to look outside the ark, when all that belonged to him, or that

he needed, had been brought into it, and the waters of judgment were overwhelming all the rest. And so we shall find as we go on, every faithful servant of God, from Noah down, is ruled in his walk and finds his own blessing in maintaining what is worthy of God; and thus their own souls grew and were enlarged in the greatness and goodness of God to themselves. For as we maintain what is worthy of Him, so do we enjoy it in ourselves; and as we enjoy it, so do we maintain it.

After a full year, after patience and hope had been exercised and proved, Noah leaves the ark for the restored earth, and here the second line of his testimony commences. On the purged earth he takes his place in type of the millennial saints, and he sets forth by offerings of every clean beast and fowl (Chap. viii. 20) on the altar, man's true place with God's as to worship, and the relation in which through sacrifice and redemption man should stand with God. This infantine expression of man's true place is acknowledged by God, and

He renews man's term on the earth with a large mitigation of the original penalty and in the sweet savour of the sacrifice, man becomes the object of fresh and multiplied blessings, while a second trial is ensured for Adam's race and that with the promise, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, neither will I again smite any more every living thing as I have done; while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." God blesses Noah and his sons, and makes him the representative of government. Every created thing is delivered into his hand, and every moving thing was to be for meat, while it is also added, "and surely your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man; whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." It is important to gather up the elements of the testi-

mony which Noah was called to support. Man is on his trial again, and for a moment fills the place appointed of God. The bow in the cloud is the token from God of His new arrangement with man, as He said, "I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood. Neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." Noah for a moment maintains this testimony, a faint expression of that time when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." And very interesting is it to connect ourselves with God's great purpose at such an early date, and to discern how the things unfolded now, or which are about to be manifested, had an existence, and had been witnessed of characteristically by man ages ago; thus intimating the nature of God's purpose eventually.

But it was only for a moment that Noah maintained this testimony untarnished. Man's sufficiency in this his new trial and under new circumstances,

is again found wanting. He drops into nature, and is exposed by his own son, who, in proclaiming his father's shame, shows man's advance in evil, and that man's nature is not only weak and foolish in itself, but that it is insensible to its shame.

Noah lives 349 years on the earth after leaving the ark, and this period embraces the building of Babel (man's effort to make for himself a name on the earth), little more than 100 years after the flood! This new form of man's evil—systematic and combined purpose—to be independent of God, and to make a name for himself, takes place on the earth so lately cleared of all that was of man, and under the very eyes of him who had been the witness of its destruction, and, with his house, was the sole survivor. So great and universal had been the judgment that for a whole year or more no man had set foot upon the earth; yet now, on the new earth, how rapidly man's evil and presumption had sprung up and ripened. Man's purpose now is in advance of and

very different from that of Cain, who acknowledged a claim from God, yet being ignorant of what that, His claim, was; not understanding the distance between himself and God, he proposed to meet it by a work of his own. But here, the builders of Babel assume entire independence, and seek to effect it by systematic combination. The terms of the new covenant are entirely overlooked, and Noah, like Paul, survived to see the total failure of the testimony entrusted to him. How chequered was his life, and yet how fine the line of his testimony! Nor did he pass away from the earth till another and new order of testimony was ready to be revealed. For more than 200 years after the division of the earth, in the days of Peleg, did Noah live. He died two years before the birth of Abram, and whose father, Terah, was then 128 years old. God always continues one line of testimony until there is a full manifestation of man setting it aside. Noah's does not terminate at the building of Babel, where first the great full purpose of

man's independence was developed; for he who had seen and witnessed of God's dealings and purposes respecting man, is continued on the earth for more than 200 years after the judgment on Babel. God's witness on the earth is still Noah; he who had demonstrated in such a terrible way God's judgment, and who had commenced again when God made a new trial of man on the earth; even he lives to see the development of man's evil in a more independent form than ever; and that mercy from God only exposed the more the estrangement of man's heart. God has no other testimony for the earth at such a time. Noah's is the suited one during the action and course of this evil. From the confusion of languages the various kingdoms were first formed; but the point for us to bear in mind, is that God vouchsafed no new line of testimony until the evil of man in the judged earth, which every one knew had been judged (no event was ever so universally known or admitted under heaven as the flood), was fully developed.

The faithful had still Noah to look to and rest in as their guide from God; but after his death Terah, I conclude, in faith calls his son Abram the "great father," as the expected one to lead the people of God into the line for him, suited to the evil which had now grown to its height universally on the earth.

Before the death of Noah the two great kingdoms of the earth were founded—the kingdom of Egypt and that of Assyria. Thus we see of what long continuance was the Noahic testimony, and it is most interesting and instructive for us to bear in mind the moral conveyed in its continuance for such a period without any addition. Nothing else could God present to the faithful until the independence of man was fully developed and until as kings they had laid hold of the earth, and were governing it *without Him*. Then Noah dies, and two years after Abram is born, who is called to set forth a new line of testimony, which I reserve for the next chapter.

FRAGMENT.

Daniel iii.

When God had tried man, as the Jews by the law, and they failed, He puts absolute power in the hands of one man, and instead of his using it in serving God, he sets up an image and commands all men to worship it. And what do we find? God's people abstain from it in the character of the remnant—they will not submit. They do not do it, and it is a great crime of course, upsetting the whole thing. Then comes persecution, and to that they do submit. However God might allow His people to suffer, nothing ought to alter their reliance on Himself. Faith was as simple a thing in Babylon as in Jerusalem. God is the God of heaven and earth at all times, and none can hinder His power nor the exercise of it in grace towards His people. He may suffer them to be in trial. He may not always give outward deliverance, but patience is always the same, and the ground of confidence the same here in Babylon as in Jerusalem. If the circumstances and trials are different and great, the Lord's power of interfering is always the same—it is never hindered a bit. The outward trial may hinder God's power from our eyes, but He is always the same. I doubt not in this day many a heart is feeling discouraged and ready to say, "Who will show us any good?" "Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!" And what would you get more? For what is better or mightier than the light of God's countenance? However sorrowful we may be about things, that is not to weaken our confidence in God. It was when all seemed hopeless in Israel that Immanuel was found among them, and however hopeless the condition of God's people may seem when a false god is set up, God remains the same.

REVELATION XXI. 1—4.

These verses of God's word speak of the everlasting state, regarding which so little is revealed in Scripture. That period will necessarily follow the millennial kingdom, when, as written in 1 Corinthians xv. 24, 25, "Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father," that "God may be all in all"—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God. In the kingdom it will be God in government—a vast sphere of glory administered by the Son of man. In the eternal state it will be the perfection of the nature of God, displayed and enjoyed by the Church and all the redeemed—the vessels of mercy. How very sweetly this truth falls on the ear of the renewed and *wrapt* soul:—"Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God!" But if the blessed God will thus take delight in men, thus redeemed and in that unclouded glory,

vessels full of the Holy Ghost in unhindered power of joy and praise, what does the whole current of the revealed word, from Genesis iii. to the end of Revelation, convey to us but the same blessed display of the heart of the God of all grace? We shall find that all along, in each dispensation, and with every hindrance to it on man's part, there is the delight of the Lord to dwell with men according to the measure in which he could reveal Himself. His good pleasure was that they should know Him, come to Him, walk with Him, worship Him, and fear Him, that there should be communion together. The glory had to vindicate its own title, had to withdraw from evil, even to remove from the earth (as in Ezek. x. 18); but, oh! in dealing with self-will and rebellion in the creature, in what ways did the blessed Lord God act for restoration, for recovery of the loss to His people of His presence and mercies! What were all God's appointed means under the law, for the cleansing and restoring of His people? What the same gracious

care for the Church and each member of the body of Christ revealed in the New Testament?—The priesthood of Christ, the washing of water by the word, the working of the Spirit of God in the souls of the elect—what does all this make manifest to us but the unfolding of the affections of God (I speak as a man), the revelation of the heart of Him, who calls Himself Love? He does not call Himself Holiness—that is His nature—but He calls Himself, Love, His nature likewise. And what a powerful way of attracting our affections and drawing out our hearts to Him who first loved us, is this revealing to our souls through Scripture, in the Spirit's energy, the depths of the love of God! As we sing at times—

“In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found:
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy—
All His grace shall there abound.”

It is an easy and delightful work to gather vivid illustrations, both from the Old and New Testament, of this blessed truth—the good pleasure of our God to

dwell with and have intercourse with His people. The first place in which a people are seen in relationship with God, such as Israel then had, occurs in Exodus xl., to which I would advert. But I would pause for a moment over Genesis iii., though it be but an individual, "the first man, Adam;" because at the hour of the fall and the entrance of sin and death into the world, there is a most blessed exhibition of what mercy and grace could do. The voice in verse 9, "Where art thou?" is not one of judgment and anger, but a voice of love, pleading with guilty man and opening an ear in his soul to hear of the coming One, the seed of the woman! What a display of what God is in Himself, acting worthily of Himself, and what a pledge and pattern to His people, that the first man fallen, ruined, and dead in sin, should be brought out to seek and follow God and holiness (it was innocence before), not in a life that could be, and was forfeited, but according to the power of eternal life through "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven!"

In the chapter of Exodus we find a striking exemplification of our subject. The sin of the people had risen to its height. His voice from the glory had to say, "that I may consume them," the stiff-necked people! The magnificent pleading of Moses (type of a greater Intercessor) had cried, "Let my Lord go among us, for it is a stiffnecked people:" the very reason why the riches of grace should flow out. The tabernacle had been set up and we read (ver. 34), "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, and Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." The cloud showed the Shekinah, symbol of majesty, as God could then reveal Himself; but, oh! the grace, the long-suffering, the tender care and mercies (ver. 36—38) of the Lord, who only waited for the opportunity to testify of what He was to them! May our hearts learn more of His ways. "He made known His ways

unto Moses, his ACTS unto the children of Israel." (Psalm ciii.) 2 Samuel vii. affords a still fuller and richer illustration. King David's intention seemed good even to Nathan (ver. 3), but it was not according to God. And what a word have we in verses 6, 7, expressive of the Lord God's tender living grace to that poor people! "Whereas I have not dwelt in any house, since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt *even to this day*, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle." Let His people be moving from place to place, *He will move with them*. Let them be stationed, He will have a house built for His name (ver 13), to be dwelling with His people! David, type of Christ as a warrior king, could not do this work; and the Lord turns to David's personal history with much beauty and wondrous grace, "also the Lord telleth thee *that he will make thee an house!*" No wonder king David could pour out his heart in worship. (Ver. 18.) When the temple was built (1 Kings viii. 10, 11,) we find how the "glory of the Lord had

filled the house of the Lord," testifying of God's good pleasure to dwell among His people. What a serious weighty consideration for conscience, that *we* in the fuller light, in "the habitation of God in Spirit," realize so feebly the power of the presence of the Lord; that worship is so inadequate, that walking in the light is so little known in power. Alas! *it is so*. But it is not according to God, and His revealed good pleasure. It is man who has soiled and corrupted everything his hand has touched from the beginning! And since, when we come to the New Testament, the God who inspired the prophets and servants, Himself stood on this earth, the lowly humbled Man, and came to tabernacle amongst men, we do, indeed, discover in a more blessed way the heart of God. We come to the cross, and we behold that blessed One bearing all the wrath of God, undergoing death (and destroying that stronghold of the enemy), and accomplishing redemption by putting away sin for ever from God's sight—eternally glorifying

God. The moral nature and being of God everlastingly glorified in the putting away of sin! We go on to see Him raised from the dead—the Head and Creator of a new creation, till by faith we behold Him as Man in heaven, from whose face shines out the living glory of God. Oh, what a reconciliation! what a way for God to dwell with men. Every ray of that glory on which we love to gaze tells of the power of His mighty, efficacious work for us—of the full and infinite love of God. And when we approach the Pentecostal hour, we reach the strength and glory of the matter, as far as earth could then show it. God the Holy Ghost descends from the ascended Son of God, the glorious and victorious Man. And what does this signify? “He shall glorify me,” Jesus said. He quickens, He gathers together the children of God, the co-heirs, He forms the Body, the Church: He dwells there—“the habitation of God in Spirit.”

Tremendous responsibility to man! Unspeakable blessing, condescension, and

grace from God. What the quick entrance of apostacy—what the more and more ripened condition of apostacy—judgment on the churches—the word amply reveals to us. But God's love and purpose cannot be frustrated. Where He fixes His affections there can be no disappointment. Jesus comes to take the Church, to present it to Himself (as God), "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," to introduce it to the Father's house, that *inner shrine* of glory which, I believe, cannot be manifested. It is the place of the communion, the joys of the heavenly Father's children. Then the kingdom and manifestation of glory on the earth, which leads on to our subject of a new heaven and a new earth in Rev. xxi. God's delight to dwell with men. "The tabernacle," doubtless, will be the Church itself, and God will dwell with men. And, oh! what words for the soul, "God *himself* shall be with them and be their God."

Oh! that the hearts of the saints could be more occupied with God—

what He is to us; more breathe of that spirit and that scene into which they may be so very quickly introduced. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

A S E R I E S.

No. 15.

THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The first impression, and the one to which we must hold most simply in coming to the study of Scripture is, that in them alone is God's mind and will revealed to us. Creation, to a certain extent, is a revelation of God; it sets forth the quality of His being, but it does not disclose His mind. Even with regard to our equals, their acts only can give us a clue to their minds; but of one much greater than ourselves, in nature as well as in power, we can know nothing whatever save as such an one is pleased to divulge His mind to us. This God, in His wondrous grace, has been pleased to do. Not only has

He communicated His mind to individuals now and again, but He has had it written out for us in connection with those whom He used for the time as witnesses of what He revealed. Consequently, the Scriptures are for the most part a record of God's ways with men on the earth, and men in relation to God with respect to Himself as made known or revealed. So that as I read the Scriptures, I am in a certain sense reading of myself, in the state of things in which the revelation has reached my fellow-men. I see how natural it is. Man becomes the medium to me by which the mind of God, as unfolded, is presented to me. I am reading in the Scriptures as it were, a history of myself under different phases. I am made to feel the exactitude of the nature of the characters there delineated to my own, and yet the wonderful thing to me is how man, so weak and frail in himself, as is so often seen in the divine record, should be so great at times through the power and mercy of God towards him. The very fact of all this

lends a charm to the Scriptures, which, while it seems too simple, and a mere fragmentary history of man to the wise and learned, who always look for something mysterious and outside the mind of man generally, is full of beauty and power to the simple, as in the most touching and familiar way bringing down God's revelation of Himself to the general routine of man's daily life; as one reads it, one reads oneself in it, and always as one would have been in the circumstances given. The mind of God is communicated to me as I am in myself, learned or unlearned, and it is received and comprehended by me independently of my ignorance or knowledge of anything else.

We must, therefore, address ourselves to the study of the Scriptures, as the writings in which the mind of God in the most simple and familiar way is disclosed to us. God can bring down the greatest thing with Him, so close and near as to be at home with us, and yet all the time retaining in itself all its essential and unfathomable greatness.

Who can explain the commonest thing in creation, and yet it is near enough, and its uses palpable enough. Light or air for example, who can adequately explain them? and if not these, how the deep things of God?

But in this disclosure of God's mind to us, God must use His *own* words, for no words save His own, can rightly divulge and express to me the mind of one greater than myself. Even with men I have no full conception of their communications, but as I accept them verbatim, and this in proportion to the largeness of the subject on which they treat. The very words used are always important, and my receiving them verbatim is evidence of my acceptance of the full idea as expressed. How much more so with regard to any communication from God! If He will express His mind to me, He must use His own words, and I must accept them *implicitly*.

The Scriptures are divided commonly into two volumes, respectively called the Old and the New Testament. We may accept this division, and it will help us

when we see the main difference between the two with reference to ourselves. The Old Testament is the history of God's ways and purposes towards man as man, in all his feebleness and frailty; maintaining His claim on him, and putting him under law, when man assumed to meet the claim, yet always making bare His hand and openly blessing, in the most distinct and remarkable way, any one who turned to Him and sought His help. In the New Testament you have pre-eminently how God brings man to Himself through His own Son, and by Him sets him above all the power and difficulty by which He could be assailed. This very briefly sketches the difference between the Old Testament and the New; but it is very important that the distinction should be clearly established in our minds; because from not understanding the distinction, simple as it is to state it, much confusion has arisen, and consequent inability to interpret the word of God. We must read ourselves as addressed all the way down. We must put ourselves in the

place of our fellows through all the revelations from God; and as we do, we shall come to apprehend how appropriate and perfect is the manner and scope of the whole.

Let us now examine for a little what will characterize a soul truly set on the study of the Scriptures in a divine way. For the sake of clearness, I shall divide the characteristics into five heads.

The first must surely be a readiness to receive what God communicates. "The meek he will teach his way." If I am satisfied with my own thoughts and ideas, I cannot truly pay attention to God's. It is because I have discovered my ignorance, and therefore my incompetency or inability to see things in their true light, that I seek the Scriptures. But if I come to them as God's revelation of His mind to man, I must come without any preconceived ideas. I must allow God, who is infinitely above me, to reveal His mind to me (and He alone knows it), *as He is pleased* to do so. I must, in a sense, be passive. I am ignorant; I

need to be instructed in the most momentous instructions ever vouchsafed to man; and hence it becomes me to take my true place as meek before Him, and therefore quite ready and waiting for Him to make His own impression on me in the natural force of the words He uses to instruct me. In fact, according to my meekness, freedom from preconception or opinions of my own of any kind, the more truly am I prepared and in a condition to receive the word of God. This is the first and most important characteristic; for it is only in proportion to the extent of it that there is any acquisition of God's mind in the study of the Scriptures. There is no real disposition to learn otherwise. There may be a desire to acquire the knowledge of passages of Scripture to support one's own views; but it is so simple and easily understood, that in dealing with One supremely above me I must be in complete readiness to receive His mind, and that I must not, in any measure, put my own on a level with His. For if I do, how could I expect Him to

divulge His deep and peculiar counsels to one pre-occupied with thoughts of his own? We may rest assured that herein lies the solution of the question so often asked, "Why do not I get more out of the Scriptures?" It is because you do not come to them meek and unprepossessed and ready to receive just as the words of God would impart to you.

The next characteristic, I may describe as the retention of the word in the soul. This is the "good ground," the "honest and good heart," which, having heard the word, keeps it and brings forth fruit with patience. I must have been in a true disposition to hear the word, or I should not have heard it truly; but, besides this, I require to be intelligent as to the claims which God's truth has on me. I then not only hear it, but I understand it; and because I have purpose of heart to accord to all that God will say to me, the word will find in me a suited soil for itself. If I am in any position and would in any way prescribe a limit to the word, as to

how far I must be subject to it, I am not prepared to receive from it; and thus souls are often hindered in the study of God's word. They do not come to it with an honest and true heart, in simple purpose to accord to everything there communicated. Where the heart makes any reservation, there is a barrier to the force and application to the word of God. It is possible to be quite sensible of one's ignorance, and in that sense truly desirous of learning and in the true disposition to learn, and yet not prepared to act on *everything* which the word of God might demand of me. Now if we are not prepared for this, we must necessarily be unprepared for the study of the Scriptures, because we, in effect, prescribe limits to where the truth must reach us; and, surely, it is plain to everyone, *that* can be no proper state for the study of the word of God.

Thirdly. I must study the Scripture not as a matter of ordinary concern, or as a casual thing, but with a daily increasing and deepening sense of the importance and value of the communi-

cations made to me there; that in very deed God's mind is there revealed to me; and what could be more important? I must, then, prize it; and as I prize it, I seek for it as for hid treasure. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, *then* shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." "My son if thou wilt receive my words and hide my commandments with thee," &c. A valuable thing is not committed by the wise but to one who will value it; and therefore God never commits anything of His to anyone but in proportion as they value it. Whatever is most valuable ought to be most valued; and if you really value anything, you will be devoted in your pursuit of it, and use every endeavour to acquire it. Look at all the servants of God from Enoch down, and you will observe this. See Elijah forty days in Horeb, or Daniel three weeks without pleasant food, or Paul in prison at Rome,

or John at Patmos, and we shall see that the divine communications were only made to those who, because of their interest therein, were entitled to receive them. Who would like to communicate what was precious to him unless it were valued? And will God communicate the counsel of His heart to one who is not entirely devoted to Him, and simply engrossed with acquiring what He values? Do we ever see any one acquire but in proportion as he proves his value of the mind of God by the devotedness of his application in the acquisition of it? In all labour there is profit, and especially so here. Even in ordinary learning, a man progresses only as he applies himself to it. But when we learn from *God*, we must remember that we are in mind carnally at enmity with Him, and therefore we require, I may say, a double application; one to keep the natural mind in subjection, and the other to receive and apprehend the mind of God communicated to us in His word.

Fourthly. There must be meditation

—"meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them." The more you meditate on anything, the more you deepen it in your mind, and place yourself under the control of it. The word "meditate" is used in the Old Testament Scriptures to express any deeply-engaging sentiment: a lion *roaring* after his prey, and a dove *mourning* sore. The deep continual occupation with the mind of God has not only the effect of deepening it, which is very important, but also, the more you keep before your mind (i.e., meditate on) the ways of God particularly or generally, the more will you find that you are acquiring development of the purpose of them; and what was at first simply a sentiment, has become by meditation a large subject with manifold ramifications and deductions. And you will observe that the man who has meditated much on a divine sentiment can develop it as one conversant with the scope and range of it; while another who has but caught the idea, has as yet acquired no history or sense of its power or quality, and

therefore cannot invest it with any development. When a subject deeply engages you, it is before your mind day and night, and you give it *size*, if I may so say, while you find on one side that which is contrary to it; and then, as what engages you is divine, you make a front against the enemy, and when you find anything congenial, you appropriate it as belonging to your subject; so that in every way through meditation the subject is deepening in yourself, and acquiring strength and body by the continued and sustained engagement which it obtains from you; and thus in measure one becomes a "tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

The last characteristic that I shall notice is that where there is a free and simple readiness and heart to communicate for the good of others what has been acquired from the study of the Scriptures, there always according to the unalterable rule of God, the "liberal soul shall be made fat." He that water-

eth shall be watered himself. That which he hath given shall be repaid unto him again. "God loves the cheerful giver." It is in keeping with his own mind and if we do not lovingly and heartily impart the truth that has been committed to us, we cannot expect more from God, or have a heart to look to Him for it. We have not freely given that which we have freely received; and hence in the study of the Scriptures, as in any thing else, if we are not free and cordial in imparting it as we have received it, there is a sensible check to one receiving more from God. Even when the study may be continued and laborious—where there is not a ready and cheerful sharing of the acquisition with others, it will be observed that the acquisitions are more of a critical intellectual character than of the living and intimate communications of one receiving from the heart of Christ, and ministering from the same. Nay, it will be observed that the ministry or expression is indicative of the kind of intimacy and nearness which he has had himself with

the Lord; and hence, I can understand how, when there has been the most blessed and sustained ministry, the servant of Christ has said, that he never read Scripture for others save as he had read it first for himself. I believe it is of great importance to remember that now the Spirit of God first feeds our own souls with Christ, before we can truly impart of Him; and that it is in proportion as I have believed on Him and have derived from Him that there flow from me rivers of living water. In a word, that no one can impart beyond what he has received in his soul. I allow that there is a certain amount of interpretation of Scripture which many may receive, but the living ministry of the word I believe does not go beyond what one has received for oneself, possibly in its fulness and freshness at the very time of communicating it. Yet he is not a mere instrument. The ministry is more from a member of the body to the other members; and therefore living to all, and from a soul to souls. Hence there is advance in the intelligence of truth, as there is

devotedness and zeal in sharing it according to the mind and purpose of Christ.

May we in these days of difficulty wait on Him with true meekness of heart and readiness to impart that we may be through the Scriptures thoroughly furnished unto every good work! Amen.

NOTES ON 1 JOHN II. 8.

“Again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth.” We here get a very important principle of the divine life: what is our life, and whence its source. There are two parts of the manifestation of the divine life: what He was in His own person down here, and, now that He is exalted, what He manifests through and in us of the divine life. First. Christ the source of it for us: “the Word was made flesh,” &c. Secondly. The manifestation through and in us. There we can correct every estimate we form of our own lives, be-

cause we have the perfect and wonderful model of it in Christ Himself, who is the power of it. He is the very eternal life that was with the Father, and He has given us that eternal life. He was the Creator as shown in John's gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him," &c. He was eternally with God before He created; "and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" and he adds, "of his fulness have we all received." Two things are here. First. "The Word was made flesh;" as also in the Hebrews, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" as in Colossians, "the image of the invisible God," the perfect representation of what God was. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." We get in His person the life itself that was with the Father from the beginning. He was the life—it was in Him. It is

never said eternal life is in us, but it is given to us; that is a different thing. He Himself is our life. He has life in Himself. "God has *given* us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." But the Son has life in Himself. My hand is alive, but my life is not in my hand. My hand lives by virtue of its union with my body; take it off and I shall live still. So the Church, or an individual soul, lives by virtue of its union with Christ, the Head. It is in Him the reality of the life is. Secondly. When Christ was down here, all His instructions were the expressions of this life. It was not like a commandment given by the law, because the law exacted from man what was becoming, and what man ought to be in relation to God. It took the responsibility that attached to man's character as man, and did not go beyond it. But we get in Christ the manifestation of what God was to man; love acting in the midst of evil. It was no part of the law to love sinners; but it was the part of the Lord; He came down to love. Another thing is this;

that in all His thoughts and tones of feeling for us, He went far beyond the mere letter of the law, for the law could not say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that must arise from an estimate of God. The law could not notice "Blessed are the peacemakers;" but Christ was Himself the Prince of Peace, showing there was peace to be made. So the duties. There was a spirituality in the law beyond what we see, but there was a power of good in Christ that went beyond the evil. The law never manifested power over evil in the shape of love; but there was manifested in Christ the power of good over evil, and that was Christ's life. We get in all His actings the character and expression of what God was in man when on earth, and that is so lovely; He was the eternal life that was with the Father. John the Baptist who was next to Christ, and immediately preceded Him, of whom the Lord testified, "of them that are born of woman there has not been a greater than John the Baptist," came in the way of righteousness; and therefore

went away from men altogether, and was in the desert and kept no company with any; was a herald before Christ to announce Him; had nothing to say to any; ate locusts and wild honey. But God, being the person who was offended, could come in grace near to them, and speak to them in the spirit of grace, which rises above and over-rides the evil and expresses what God is; and they said, "Never man spake like this man." Then it is said, "He went about doing good." In Him was found the activity of good, the suffering for righteousness' sake, the exercise of love, "love your brethren." There is another thing which specially characterizes the divine life of Christ, the discernment of it in those who possess this life, the power of discerning the Spirit of life in another. It has been said there requires much grace in oneself to discern little grace in another. There is an attractive power in grace which recognizes the Spirit of Christ in another. He could say, "for as much as this man also is a child of Abraham." There was that

which attracted in Christ. The moment a Christian recognizes divine life in another, in spite of difference of education, rank, and many other things, he will be drawn towards him, it is characteristic, he cannot help it. The moment a man discerns the spirit of Christ in another, there is a necessary attraction to it; at once they are united together in love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The instant the spirit and character of Christ is manifested, there is necessarily an attraction where the spirit of Christ is. Then there is the blessed discernment of the traits of it. It is discerning Christ. "Love your enemies," that was manifest in Christ as a man; "If you love them that love you, what thank have ye?" You must be above your enemies, and love those that are good for nothing. In Christ we see God coming down and manifesting this life in a man on the earth so as to attract towards Him, and to bring into His presence in rest; and He says, "As I have loved you, you

ought also to love one another." "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." He overcometh evil with good; you must do as God does—love your enemies. It was that proved Him to be God, in that He could love that in which there was nothing loveable. In God, the spring of love is from Himself, but we need something to attract us. I am referring to the primary revelation, "that which was from the beginning;" and however much we may go on, we must come back after all to it; it is always perfect because it is God Himself that is manifested. You never can bring me to anything where God was manifested but to the living word of Christ, or the written word of Scripture. We have only to ask—is it that which you have heard from the beginning? if not, "it is evil seducers." If it is that which we have had from the beginning, that is God; and that must test everything, and that is the character of the word. Bring a sinner opposite the word and you learn what he is, as in the case of the poor Samaritan woman. The writ-

ten word is the manifestation of Christ, and is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is not that man can judge God's word without judging himself, so if he judges it wrong, he is judged himself. You may talk about colours or light to a blind man, but if he is blind he will not understand you. It is his non-perception of light and colour that proves he is blind. "He that believeth not is condemned already," he is incapable of seeing Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and the word judges himself. It must be so where God is manifested. If I am incapable of discerning what manifests Christ, and the word does not reach my soul, it is that which judges me. "The word that I speak the same shall judge you in the last day." All God's ways now are presenting His *moral* manifestation. It will next be His *judicial* manifestation. If the moral manifestation is not received, "the word that I have spoken shall judge him at the last day."

(To be continued.)

THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

Whatever means God in His wisdom may take to send us to a renewed independent study of His word, it will always issue, if rightly used, in renewed blessing and enlargement to our souls. If it be carried on in humility and with quiet waiting upon God, it will result not only in clearer apprehensions of the divine word, but also in, that which is the end of all divine teaching, increased acquaintance with God and Christ.

With this conviction I take occasion from some brief remarks presented in a single page of a recent number of a cognate publication, entitled, "The Table of the Lord," to go over again the testimony of Scripture on this subject, for my own profit, and, if the Lord so please, for the profit of my readers also.

With the remarks, so far as they refer to a point of Scripture, I entirely agree; not however that I think the communion of Christians is to be restricted to the correctness of their exegesis, nor that it is regulated by it, however important

that in its place may be. For communion to be possible—at least “communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”—whether at the table of the Lord or elsewhere, there must be the possession of a life that is divine. But connected with that, as with all life, *there are aspirations and energies which go far beyond the utmost illumination of the mind and understanding, and are surely met and responded to by Him who is its giver and its source.* Scripture teaches us expressly that deep in the heart of the believer there are unutterable groanings, which the Holy Spirit produces and so takes up as to become intercession to God, which, it is declared, He fully understands; albeit they receive not from us either the mouldings of intelligence or the utterance of words. Moreover, it must not be forgotten, in our desire for scriptural knowledge (and that desire cannot be too strong), that in the history of the Church, the men who have left the deepest impress of their labours upon it, and who have carried with them most

unequivocally the stamp and seal of God in connection with their service for Christ and souls, have not always been the most consistent expositors of Scripture, nor pre-eminently distinguished for the clearness of their views. It is well for us to remember an observation of Bengel, in reference to those who in the early ages of Christianity sought to escape from its worldliness and the incoming tide of its corruptions, that "Secluded separatists are seen generally to have more light than life." But above all, it becomes us to remember the words of Him who, not without reason, said to His disciples, "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Errors of the most opposite character are ever ready, through the malice of the enemy, to entangle our souls; and we are secure only as we are kept in lowly subjection to the Lord, taking the yoke of Christ, and habitually judging ourselves in the light of the Word. For, if ignorance of Scripture exposes us to the shafts of Satan and cripples us in

our souls, both as to communion, and service, and walk, as it surely does, there is danger of error also from the opposite side. To souls emancipated from the trammels and systems of men and alive to the darkness and corruptions which, through the practical disregard of Scripture, deform so large a portion of the professing church, there is no error nearer, especially to minds possessing a certain degree of activity and intelligence, than that of mistaking the mental perceptions of truth for its living power—apart from which most surely Christ will never be graven on the heart. This mistake—such are our hearts!—is by no means uncommon; though no two things can well be more unlike, as all will acknowledge who are ever so little versed in the opposite actings of the enemy and of the blessed Spirit of our God.

As to the table of the Lord, the name of *Christ* is confessedly connected with the communion there, which is its happiest and most distinctive part. “Lord” is the title of dignity and authority;

necessary in its place, but, if we think of its correlative, suggesting the idea of *subjection*, not that of communion. Both titles are employed (1 Cor. x., xi.) in reference to the table, and both in their legitimate and distinctive force; and it should have been observed that the title which bespeaks communion is as much in contrast with the evil of idolatry as that which marks the table as a place of dignity and judgment is in contrast with the table of demons, &c. And the question is, not whether the table could exist and Christianity remain if Christ were not Lord; but whether the title connected with communion having been once changed for that of authority, because evil was there, is resumed, when the continuous character of the ordinance is given, and of course its communion implied, which it is not.

In the gospels we find the first institution of this memorial of self-sacrificing love, which, in its accomplishment and results, for God's glory and man's blessing, stands out in eternal relief from the hoary chronicles of time, and is the

single and only inscriptive pillar in the wide universe, where all created intelligences can plainly read the full moral character of God—where all created intelligences may learn what evil is and what is goodness. From it *the principalities and powers* in heavenly places receive their instruction in “the manifold wisdom of God;” *angels* stoop down, desiring to look into its holy mysteries; while as to *man*, it binds with eternal ties to God and Christ the soul that has learnt, though in feeblest measure, the story of the grace which is there inscribed.

To the record of Luke I now turn, that we may be cheered by the living freshness of the gospel narrative as well as instructed in the intrinsic character of the divine institution, which is the subject of our enquiry. In Luke xxii. 14—24 we read, “And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more

eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread and gave thanks, and break it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest."

It needs that little be added to this touching narrative, which produces its own effect; while the simplicity of its terms like the light is unnoticed and

unthought of as it fixes our intensive gaze on the objects it reveals. We not only read the narrative, but are transported by it into the midst of the scene that is described. But before further remark I will present in a synoptic view the words of the institution of the supper as given in the three gospels.

MATT. XXVI. 26—28.

MARK XIV. 22—24.

LUKE XXII. 19, 20.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given (διδόμενον) for you; this do in remembrance of me (εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν). Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament (ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη) in my blood which is shed for you."

It might *a priori* be assumed that, in its first institution, every essential characteristic of the Lord's Supper and Table would be found. The truth of

this conclusion subsequent scripture confirms. In its first institution, the ruling feature, that which alone gave it its gracious and authoritative character, was the presence and the command of Christ. In the midst of His disciples He is presented as Lord and Master of the table, and in infinite grace and condescension, its willing *servitor* too. This gives it its essential character. Its significance must be read in the death in all its bearings and issues, He was about to undergo—the death of the *founder* of the feast, which it then prefigured, and ever after recalls. Now Christ's bodily and earthly presence with His disciples, when the supper received its indelible character, at once destroys the figment of any "real presence" in the elements of bread and wine; and negatives, at the same moment, the dogma that the ordinance receives validity from its administration, by consecrated or other hands. Christ Himself, at its institution, *was* the administrator (who will deny it?), if place for an administrator can be

found in the naked and sublime simplicity of this monumental act. Christ *was*, and *is*, the sole administrator at His table, and *will be* to the end. For when I turn to the special revelation which was received by Paul, from a risen and ascended Christ, in reference to this cardinal expression and symbol of Christianity, what do I find but a simple repetition of the words of the original institution? But was this special revelation given to Paul merely to attest the truth of the gospel narrative, and certify the Church of a *past*, barren, historical fact, which he could well have learnt by other means, and have received from other hands? It was not. The intention of the Lord in giving it (I speak with unhesitating words and adoring heart), the *intention of the Lord* in giving it was to show that, while circumstances necessary to be changed are changed, in all other respects its essentiality remains. These are His words: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which

he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Thus far the revelation is but a recapitulation of what is presented historically in the gospels, and almost in the literal terms of Luke, where alone the particular expressions "*εις την εμην αναμνησιν*" are found. All that is added by Paul, substantively, or in literal words, as a new revelation, is that which stamps its unchanging character on the supper as instituted by the Lord as long as it is destined to be observed: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." (Ver. 26.) And this is the place to ask, Was there any *personation* of the Lord Jesus by Paul? that *he* now, instead of Christ, should pronounce the words that alone authenticate to the

faith of him who eats the supper, his *title* to be there, and from which alone is derived the validity of his act? Do I hear the voice of *man*—apostle! bishop! priest! minister! in the words, “this do ye in remembrance of me?” No; but the words of Him “who loved me and gave *himself* for me,” and who says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”—words that echo through the chambers of my soul, where, as a wretched sinner, they speak to me of cancelled guilt, of judgment passed, of “death abolished,” of “life and incorruptibility brought to light”—words that give me power to obey, and stamp validity on my act, when I so obey—if indeed I be not a wretched despiser of “the precious blood of Christ,” or a formal hypocrite at best. Paul’s presence or absence, and the presence or absence of any other, never for a moment was essential to the celebration of the supper, nor affected in the remotest degree the validity of the act. If it did, let it from Scripture be shown. In the simplicity of Scripture history I read, “Upon the first day of the week;

when the *disciples* came together to *break bread* [the normal character and object of their meeting] *Paul preached* to them." (Acts xx. 7.)

That which takes the place of Christ's *bodily* presence, at the supper (His spiritual presence is never vacated), is the living, continuous authority of His word, given power to, in the soul of the communicant, through faith, by the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit. This, as it will at once be seen, explodes the miserable assumption of anything in the ordinance being dependent on priestly "*intention*" in its administration. For administration there is none, save, as I have shown, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.* And what is this but a part,

* Any supposed administration in the act of one who breaks the bread and hands the cup is set aside at once, if we think that the breaking of Christ's body, if it is supposed to be expressed in this act, was accomplished through the power of Satan by the hands of the Jews: and it is of His body as already "*broken*" that we partake. It is a mere circumstance, because the bread cannot break itself, nor the cup hand itself. Moreover, in communion the blessing of the cup

and only a part, of the fulfilment of His word of promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world?" Or, apart from all connection with official position, of the apostles or their boasted successors, "Where *two or three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?"

The notice of the table of the Lord in the Acts does not call for much remark. It is seen in chapter ii. as an essential feature of Christianity, where it is recorded, after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Of the three thousand who were pricked in the heart and received the testimony of grace through the word of Peter, it is said, after they were baptized, that "they

is not an *individual*, much less a ministerial, act. It is declared by the apostle to be the corporate act of the believers, gathered to the table. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it *not* the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 16, 17.)

continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Ver. 42.) In chapter xx. we are brought into the midst of the sphere of Paul's labours amongst the Gentiles, and find a recurrence of "the breaking of bread," which chapter ii. had already shown us was the characteristic practice of the Church when composed only of Jewish converts. Here the mind is at once arrested by the simplicity of the historical account, and, I might almost say, the *homeliness* of the aspect in which the supper is presented: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together TO BREAK BREAD!"—that is all. From this it is at once seen that it was for this object, in special, that the disciples came together, whatever subsidiary ministrations or services might grow out of it and be connected with it; as we find here Paul *preaching* to them, and in Corinthians the gifts of the Spirit in exercise. But all that is presented in the narrative is the normal practice of the disciples on the first day of the week.

In 1 Corinthians x. 16 we get the grounds and nature of the believer's communion at the table of the Lord. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Yet this is not pursued nor dwelt upon, as if it were the apostle's primary object. For as the title of Lord is introduced in contrast and conflict with the power of demons, so the *communion*, the believer's most precious part, in the supper, is presented in contrast and conflict with the communion connected with the idolatrous sacrifices of the heathen. He introduces it in connection with warnings drawn from the proofs of Israel's apostasy; and commences his direct instruction as to communion with the words, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." And that there might be no vagueness in the exhortation, he shows by the example of Israel that those who eat of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar (Jehovah's altar), and so far had communion with the God of Israel; and

that in like manner a participation in the heathen sacrifices involved communion with the idols to whom they were offered. And after the declaration that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, not to God," he adds, "and I would not that ye should have fellowship [or be *κοινωνοις*] with devils." He then introduces the title of authority in contrast with the power of these demons. Still the communion is there. And how well may the heart linger over the wondrous words in which it is expressed—"the communion of the *blood* of Christ!"—"the communion of the *body* of Christ!" What elements are here! What thoughts do they open out to the soul! What worship do they awaken in the heart! It is not possible for the spirit of a believer to be under the living power of the truths these words express, and not be lifted up above all the beggarly elements of the world and, for the time at least, emancipated from the influence alike of its joys and sorrows; while it echoes back the language that broke eighteen hun-

dred years ago from the apostle's lips, while dwelling on this theme, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is the *death* of Christ that is before our souls in the communion of the supper. It is His voice of love in agony and death that at His table speaks to our hearts. And while yielding up the soul to the controlling power of the words, "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come," how does it yearn for some better embodiment of its emotions than is sometimes sought to be presented in our united worship, by a half-mechanical reading of certain scriptures referring to the death and passion of our Lord, and by the singing of hymns fitted to the same. Oh! how far is this from the just consequences of the living guidance of the Holy Spirit! But our God is gracious. And who can measure the extent of His forbearing love? Albeit it must not be forgotten, that "they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

In chapter x. 21 we have the introduction of the title of "Lord," which is continued without a change all through the instructions in relation to the supper,* from verse 23 to the close of chapter xi. This title is unquestionably connected with the presence of evil, and is brought in as its corrective. Still in the standing designation of the supper and table, which Christians have adopted, and the Scriptures have supplied, it is manifest that the aspect of the Lord's dignity and claim to subjection, presented in its observance, are not to be allowed to fade from our minds. The title itself, however, is far from resting on the narrow basis of this chapter, as has been attempted to be shewn, in a practical way, in a paper in the February number of this work, entitled, "The authority of Christ as Lord." The pre-

* I do not draw any practical distinction between "the table" and "the supper." There is a difference, of course, in the natural figures; but any conclusions of a practical kind drawn from this must, I think, be deemed precarious, if the truth of the deductions be not in other scriptures plainly expressed.

sence of evil and disorder, it is conceded, gave occasion for the introduction of the title, but divine wisdom saw fit to continue it unchanged, as the designative mark of the observance of the supper until the end.

Besides, in the communion of the table it is plain that our condition may be such, spiritually I mean, (our chapter is an example in point, though followed with grosser disorder than is to be looked for now), that the Lord must not only present Himself in our midst with the touching expressions, as it were, of "behold my hands and my feet!" but also with the solemn overshadowing of His dignity and authority too. So that—if our souls contract a too careless familiarity with the grace which cost Him His precious blood, and His body broken on the cross, in order that He might manifest it to us, wretched sinners that we were!—we might, at least, be bowed and awed by the dignity of His mien and by the glancing of the diadem seen upon His brow.

I well remember, many years ago,

when amidst the activities of an anxious life, and of service in the gospel, made arduous by its being among a rural population, and in widely distant places, before the facilities of railroads, that my soul, having lost the freshness of its communion, was recalled to it, with intense humiliation and thankfulness, by pressing upon others Job xxxviii. and the three following chapters. It might seem to many to be a portion of truth very remote from containing in it the elements of communion, and yet I believe it is very intimately connected with ~~it~~. For if the heart, familiarized with the thoughts of grace and liberty, carries itself carelessly before the Lord—and, alas! how often is it so—He must needs unveil His majesty that we may learn that it is God with whom we have to do. But it may be objected, you could not then have known the liberty of the gospel and your standing in Christ as dead and risen in Him. Far from it. It was the main topic of my ministry and the sheet-anchor of my soul. But I was made to feel that the “strange fire” of

the priests, who had unquestioned right of approach to Him, was met by the fire of God's judgment. And I was taught by it the meaning of the solemn oracle that came forth from the ark of God's presence, explanatory of His act of judgment, "I will be sanctified of them that draw near unto me!"

There is another passage in the Corinthians I would refer to as throwing light on the table of the Lord, and as presenting the personal, practical holiness required in those who are associated with it. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our pass-over is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) This passage, it is true, does not refer directly and exclusively to the table of the Lord, but to the discipline that is called for in the assembly of believers, that their practical condition may correspond to their character in grace. But,

“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,” brings before the soul the full redemption which is ours by the sacrifice of Christ. “Let us keep the feast,” &c., refers to the feast of unleavened bread, which the passover introduced to, and is the expressive type of the holiness that is to characterize a redeemed people. But the passover cannot be restricted to that which was eaten in Egypt with bitter herbs, &c. For in that there was no peaceful *communion*; because God was acting as a judge, and the blood upon the doorposts, while it gave security to those within the house, shut God out of it. Yet cannot the table of the Lord be separated from this aspect of redemption, since on the cross the Lord Jesus was indeed bearing the judgment of God for our sins. But the instructed mind is led by the expression to that memorable passover which Israel kept, after they had crossed the waters of Jordan, in the plains of Jericho, as described with all its significant circumstances in Joshua v. But in the passage before us it is the feast of unleavened

bread, which lasted seven days, after the passover, that is in prominence. This is the feast that was to be kept, "not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The application is plain. In our lives and associations and all the circumstances of life, as redeemed by the blood of Christ, we are to be distinguished not by the principles and habits of our old nature, much less by the activity of actual evil—"malice and wickedness," but by the uncorrupted principles of "sincerity [or pureness] and truth." God grant it may be so with us and with all His people!

What is presented, then, and represented in the two distinctive ordinances of Christianity is *the death* of Christ. Baptism, as a figure, reaches only to death—the death of the old man in the death of Christ. "We are buried with him by baptism into *death*." But resurrection comes not in baptism, neither is it represented by it. This comes "through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him [Christ] from

the dead." But baptism, in its significance, is the closing of the grave of Christ on the old man, which is not, in principle, and ought not to be in practice, raised again. "We are buried with him by baptism into death: 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." (Rom. vi. 4.) So also as to the table of the Lord, what is expressly said of it is, "Ye do show the Lord's *death* till he come." But, as in baptism, the believer is not lost in death, which is but the death and burial of the old man, but rises again in the resurrection of Christ to a new life; so also at the table of the Lord, we show the death of One who though He stood in the breach for us and bore the judgment of our sins, yet was He not lost in death (that were immitigable sorrow, supposing redemption were possible to us so), but was raised from the dead, and ascended on high, is coming again to take His people to Himself.

In the Lord's table the Church is not viewed in its abstract perfectness as

the body and bride of Christ. This aspect of it is not, cannot be, represented in an ordinance which is designed for earth, however blessedly it may be true of those who are true partakers of it. It is for the body of actual believers in the world, who, as partakers of redemption through Christ's death and bitter sufferings, confess their allegiance to Him whom the world, to its condemnation, has rejected. No ordinance can reach up to the height of the Church as seated in the heavenly places in Christ. Hence it is not in connection with Ephesian doctrine that the table of the Lord is presented, but Corinthian; and the absence of reference to it in the Epistle to the Ephesians may be accounted for on the same principle as the absence from it of the coming of the Lord, as the hope of the Church, is accounted for. But is it by this denied that the coming of the Lord is the hope of the Church? Far from it. It is but giving to Ephesian and Thessalonian doctrine their just aspect and bearing.

In Ephesians we have the revelation

of the mystery and the Church presented in its divine perfectness in the counsels of God as the body and bride of Christ, and also presented on earth as "the habitation of God through the Spirit." In the Corinthians we have the Church in its witness on earth, and the ordering of its gifts and ministries by the Spirit unto this end; and moreover, presenting a sufficient reason (if one were needed) for insisting on truths fundamental to Christianity, and without which neither it nor the table of the Lord could be. For it is in this Epistle especially that Christ's title of Lord is insisted on; and the doctrine of the resurrection is elaborately argued, and argued on the precise ground that without it Christianity would cease to exist. Philippians gives us the position of believers in this world, i.e., of pilgrims going through it, to join a risen Christ in heaven (by the cross and suffering, if God see good), but having no other object for their affections and no other hope. In Thessalonians the fulness of instruction is given concerning the truth of the coming of

the Lord, guarding it also against all the perversions of the enemy; while it presents too the responsibilities of the kingdom and its rewards. Hence the nature of its exhortations. "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory," (1 Thess. ii. 11, 12,) and "that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In the Colossians the apostle tells us that he was a minister of the gospel "which was preached in the whole creation which is under heaven." He says also that he was made a minister of the Church to fulfil [complete, if you please] the word of God. And here we find him in the intensity of his zeal and labours seeking to make known "the glory of the mystery amongst the Gentiles . . . warning every man and teaching every man, that he might present every man perfect in Christ." In like manner in the Ephesians he declares his mission to be to "preach among the

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things." (Chap. iii. 8, 9.) In his leave-taking of the elders of Ephesus, with a tinge of unutterable sadness he gives this remarkable description of his active ministry. "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts xx. 25—27.) To Timothy he says, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," and then adds, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall

shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." (1 Tim. vi. 13—15.) The contemplation of the wondrous scene of our Lord at the bar of Pilate is necessary to show what the "good confession" of a Christian is.

But why do I enlarge? The truth that is to be formative of our souls, as belonging to God and Christ, is as various as "the manifold wisdom of God," and is as various in its application as the varied relationships in which the believer can be placed; as *varied*, in reality, as are the varied exigencies of the saints as seen by Him who has marked, in His wisdom, their course on earth, and who best knows the fitted training for them as heirs of the glory with Him, which is yet to be revealed. Our wisdom, therefore, in the ministration of truth, is to find a place for all for which Scripture finds a place—"rightly dividing the word of truth." There is no antagonism in truth. The whole of Scripture, not a part, is essential to the apprehension of the due range of practical min-

istrations amongst the saints, that they may "build themselves up in their most holy faith," and be taught "to walk and please God." And if the Holy Spirit be leant on for this, He will guide to its discriminative use, for these ends of God, in His church. Truths justly esteemed to be fundamental, and so not enlarged upon, by one whose labours for the Church may be doctorial, and so mainly engaged in evolving the truth from the divine records for its enlightenment, may, and must be, insisted on again and again in their practical bearing, in pastoral ministrations, by any who are in a position to heed the words of the apostle, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28): and who are guided by the example of the Apostle Peter, who said, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea,

I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." (2 Peter i. 12, 13.)

The undue or exclusive insistence upon any truth, however important in itself and unquestionable, not only sins against the example of Scripture, but also (through the infirmity of our nature and the ever-watchful craft of the enemy) almost invariably awakens in the mind a feeling of opposition against it. And if this feeling, once awakened, be not watched against, and the Lord sought to about it, the transition is most easy to the rejection of the particular truth altogether and the adoption of its opposite error.

But before I dismiss this paper, which has already passed the ordinary bounds of such contributions, I return briefly to the accounts presented in the gospels of the institution of the supper, and more especially to that which has been quoted in full from Luke.

In what are called the synoptical gospels, it is given with its distinctive groupings of subordinate truths and

circumstances (infinitely interesting to trace) accordant with the distinctive character and purport of each, while the grand central truth is given in its divine essentiality by them all. In the account presented by Luke we have the Lord giving to His disciples the paschal cup saying, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until *the kingdom of God shall come.*" In Matthew it is, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until the day *when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" The world and Israel had rejected Him in the grace in which He came, and had rejected "the kingdom of God" in His person; and now until it be established by judgment and power (as in Daniel vii.), there is nothing left to Him but Nazarite separation from the world—separation to suffering and to heavenly glory. But this is not the cup of *communion*: that comes afterwards. While the heart is occupied with the infinite grace of this scene, and is melted by the sorrows of

Him who is saying in ineffable love, "this is my *body* which is given for you," and "this cup is the new testament *in my blood*," with what harshness and dissonance do the words break upon the ear, "and there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted greatest!" Alas! for human nature, at its best! But they loved the Lord—and they loved themselves too; and one blushes at the incongruity of their thoughts and feelings so out of harmony with the love that was here displayed. But are *we* quite prepared that the same hand should remove the vail from our bosoms and our assemblies? "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

The Gospel of John, it has been long since observed, is the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in His essential glory as the Son of God, and so above all dispensation, and also stamping with their relative worth all the official titles and offices which, in the accomplishment of redemption, He sustains. Hence there is no mount of transfiguration in

John, nor garden of Gethsemane. So also there is a striking absence of all reference to the institution of the supper in it. We only know from this gospel that there was any supper at all in the most incidental way. It is simply said, "supper being ended," &c. There is nothing to distinguish it from the pass-over—no breaking of the bread; no blessing, and giving the cup. Not that these were absent; but our Lord being presented in this gospel as the eternal life—the Son quickening whom He will, and giving eternal life to those whom the Father hath given Him, it is not the continuance of an ordinance on earth that is in prominence, but the association with Himself in that life which had been displayed on earth in the accomplishment of redemption, and which was now to be resumed in heaven and in heavenly communion. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and went to God; he riseth from supper," &c. The passover here is simply viewed as the point of exit of our Lord

from this world, necessary to His return to the Father. And all that we find connected with the supper, is not its institution as a commemorative ordinance on earth, but the unfolding of what grace would do in putting into association with Himself in the communion and the heavenly glory to which He was going, those whom He could acknowledge as "His own which were in the world;" and whom having loved, "He loved unto the end." All that is intermediate between the expression "supper being ended," &c., and "arise, let us go hence," is the washing of the disciples' feet, and the expression of that grace which would be in exercise on high on their behalf, until His coming again to receive them to Himself. Every part of Scripture has its place.

Divested of the corruptions and incumbrances that have been heaped upon it, the table of the Lord is the social ordinance of Christianity, designed for the collective communion of those that are His. It is the rallying point of the soldiers of the cross. The continuous

living monument of that which is the central truth and foundation of the gospel and of Christianity. It is the place, too, of holy communion, from which all leaven of evil is to be banished; and where nothing in doctrine or practice is to be allowed that will not sort with the ends of Christ's death. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are, unleavened." The grace that has set believers before God in Christ in unleavened perfectness, is urged as the obligation to separate from all that practically would contradict that position. The consequence of the neglect of this is declared in the words, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" In the simple narration of Scripture we read, "Upon the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." And this first day of the week received its indelible character from its being the day of the resurrection of the Lord. And still further, it was the day especially selected by Him, after His resurrection, to renew

His intercourse with His disciples, appearing in their midst and saying, "Peace be unto you." Whatever disorders might exist in the church of Corinth, disorders that were corrected by apostolic authority, it is plain that it was the *primal* meeting of believers. The apostle notices it thus, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper," &c. But then connected with this we have the unfailing promise of the Lord, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This I do not limit to the presence of the Spirit in the Church, nor confound with it, however it is only by His power and presence that it can be realized. Neither do I limit the accomplishment of this blessed promise of the Lord to the gathering of believers around the table of the Lord; though I do expect pre-eminently to find its fulfilment there: and I do not think that the true elements of worship and communion remain where this is not apprehended. I need not insist on all the blessed consequences of the realization of the Lord's presence. He will surely not be present to *do nothing*. And if the disciples in their journey to Emmaus said "one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked

with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32) will it be less so with His saints now? It is not, I fear, enough borne in mind that the absolutely distinctive characteristic of the world and of His people is given in the expressive words of our Lord, "*The world seeth me no more, but ye see me.*" And again, "I will not leave you orphans, *I will come to you.*" And once more, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest myself to him.*" And if the individual heart ought not to be, cannot be, if taught aright, satisfied without these manifestations of the Lord, which the world cannot know, are they to be less realized when meeting in His name, to which His pledge and promise are especially attached?

One moment more I snatch, to urge from the apostle's example this practical corollary: If I am called to this communion of the body and blood of Christ—if I am thus in constant, habitual contact with the unspeakable grace and love of the cross, there is surely a correspondent obligation to confess before the world the Master whom I serve, the Lord to whom I belong. In the apostle's touching appeal at the close of the Galatians, when he had brought to an issue his conflict with the corrupters of

the gospel and the boasters in human ordinances, he teaches us what alone we ought to value in the world, and what character in it we should always bear. He says, "They desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi. 13, 14.) He then adds, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Ver. 17.) All that he valued in the world was the cross. All that he cared to be known by amongst men was by the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the wounds and lacerations of His body in the service of the gospel, he would have men plainly see whose servant and bondsman he was. For these *στίγματα* were the marks branded on slaves to indicate their owners.

May our hearts be so intent on confessing and serving the Lord Jesus, that if we are permitted to carry with us in our bodies or in our spirits any impress of the opposition of the enemy's power, we may be able to see in this the marks of the Lord Jesus, and so be able to say in the profound quiet of our souls, "Let no man trouble me," conscious to ourselves whose initials we bear.

"ΜΝΑΣΩΝ."

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER IV.

A B R A M.

We have seen that Noah continued until within two years of the birth of Abram; and we learn from Joshua xxiv. 2, that Terah* and his fathers "served other gods," thus proving that before the death of Noah man had fallen into idolatry. Not only were they independent of God, but they worshipped those "who by nature are no gods."

It is important for us to preserve a view of the earth as it was morally at the time of Noah's death. Ham (the cursed) takes the lead in occupying the earth, especially that part which should eventually belong to the descendants of Shem, of whom it was said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem;" and from whom the people of God should spring.

* We must bear in mind that Jacob speaks of God as the God of the father of Abraham and Nahor (even Terah), in Genesis xxxi. 53.

I have already called attention to the fact, that God allows man to expose the full opposition of his heart in contrast to His revelation (the maintenance of which is the only true testimony) before He sets up another; and when He does set up another, it is manifestly and peculiarly distinct and in contrast to the features of the declension then prevailing. Most interesting, therefore, and helpful is it for us, to keep before our minds the condition of things on which the sun of testimony (at least that particular phase of it) sets, and in which the light has not been comprehended; man having proved that the greater the revelation to him, the greater his natural repugnance to yield himself to it, and therefore he has studiously presented the converse of the divine mind, instead of the reflection of it, which the light of testimony vouchsafed by God, as suited to the condition of things, would have produced if comprehended. The manifestation of good calls forth, according to its order and quality, a correlative evil from man, because of his

innate corruption. Strikingly is this exemplified in the days of which we are treating; for before the death of Noah, the then vessel of God's testimony, independence of God and idolatry had become a confirmed characteristic of man; and this notwithstanding the testimony committed to Noah, and maintained by him, having circulated through his children into all the earth; for by the families of the sons of Noah after their generations were the nations divided throughout the earth after the flood, and in every ancient record or monument we find traces of the testimony, though almost lost in the perversion in which man always represents divine things.

As to locality, it is generally admitted that Ham and his descendants eventually occupied Africa, for the most part; Japhet Europe, and Shem Asia; but the important point for us to keep in mind, is the moral state of man when Abram, about 74 years of age, is addressed by the God of glory in the words, "Get thee out of thy country

and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that *I will show thee.*" This call embodied an entirely new principle. Abel by faith had offered; Enoch by faith had been translated; Noah by faith had prepared an ark for salvation; but now the earth on which man was is set under another covenant, and God's witness in the person of Abram is called to hold no place in it but in dependence on God and on His word. All he had naturally he must surrender, and assert or maintain no title or right to any place but by faith. Abram is to come into the land that God would show him, not to get possession in it, as we shall see, but to maintain this unique position, holding everything that he held, not by right of possession, but by faith in God. In a word, that he had no place on earth as a man, or after man by the rights of man, to whom the earth was given on new terms after the flood. Man had proved himself unworthy of those terms and unfit for them, and now God raises up, in the person of Abram, a new tes-

timony, viz., that His people on the earth hold no place on it by the right of possession or inheritance, but by the word of God and in dependence on it; for it is not the land that I have acquired or have by inheritance succeeded to, but the land that *He will show*.

This testimony was most significant and needed, because man, to whom the earth had been committed by God on new terms, had entirely forgotten his allegiance to Him; and had not only denied dependence on Him, but had served devils ("other gods"). The full exposure of the principles of man's independence of, and alienation from, God demanded a testimony, which would declare that everything on the earth was to be held solely by the word of God and in the most complete dependence on Him (and this in addition to the surrender of every natural tie and association); and would disclaim and rebuke the rebellion and presumptuousness into which man had wandered and which he, without remorse, arrogantly maintained; now to be a witness of this

truth, God calls out Abram. It is evident that Babel was the first kingdom founded. Here the seeds of man's presumption, independence, and self-confidence, were first sown; hence, Babel, called afterwards Babylon, represents and embodies all the evil workings of man; and it is in the face of all those workings, and as a witness against them, that Abram is called out of Ur of the Chaldees from the scene of the tower of Babel, to declare that he had no place on the earth but in dependence on God; and therefore he gave up all he had by birth, and went out not knowing whither he went. Truly he looked for a city which hath foundations; he knew that God would not call him from anything without guaranteeing to him a superior; and he rested in the assurance that the builder and maker was God.

It would appear that Abram was a man of considerable consequence and means in the world, and his move must have been well known. His father, Terah, whether believing or not, accords with his son's call, for we read, "And

Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go unto the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haron and dwelt there." After the death of Terah, as we read further, "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son and went forth to go into the land of Canaan: and into the land of Canaan they came." Abram's move had in it a voice to all the world. He had left the place he had in it by birth and association, and went forth dependent on the word of God. This was the testimony. He "passed through the land unto the place of Sichem unto the plain of Moreh, and the Canaanite (the descendants of Ham) was then in the land." Now the Lord appears to him again and says, "Unto thy seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him." He holds his place on the earth by faith, builds his altar where the Lord appears to

him in acknowledgment of his homage and link unto Him, asserts no claim to anything of the earth, but lets the Lord determine everything for him. What a remarkable testimony must this have been in contrast to all that was passing around! Man in full independence was seeking and maintaining government on the earth as possessors of it, owning no allegiance to God, worshipping them who are no gods. And here was a great man—a prince as known among men—leaving all his inherited or acknowledged rights, and following the word of God, dependent only on that word, “not knowing whither he went,” and owning the unseen God by an altar of sacrifice *where* He appeared unto him. How instructive and interesting to grasp the nature and power of the faith which worked in Abram, and made him a fit witness for God in that evil day, declaring to us the true instincts of divine grace when brought in contact with the same order and character of evil. And this is essentially and particularly what we ought

to learn and become imbued with while studying the testimony of God. The testimony is suited and in direct divine contrast with the form of evil rife, and working; and because it is of God, who is thus vindicating Himself while the enemy comes in like a flood, though the enemy be the more exasperated, and so on to the close; and therefore he comes with a more fearful opposition and evil virus in proportion to the manifestation of the purpose of God in His grace toward man.

Abram fails for a moment to maintain this testimony, and goes down into Egypt. The failure only showed how impossible it was to maintain it but in divine power. The more simply divine our path is, the more absolutely must we be kept there by divine power, and therefore there is oftener failure in that which is most divine than in that which is not. And the failure always has, through God's grace, this effect on us, that of making us distrustful of ourselves and reliant on Him, so that we return to the true path, more assured

than ever that it is the only true and right one, "my reformation glittering over my faults." Abram, however, returns out of Egypt "unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first, and there Abram called on the name of the Lord." Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is constrained by God to send away Abram and his wife and all that he had. Egypt was of Ham, and Abram, yielding to it and seeking from it countenance and support, intimates to us the nature of the temptation to which a soul seeking to stand for God like Abram is exposed, and so often yields to. If we walk in faith we must always see here a famine at first, or it would be no faith. The famine tests our faith, for it is not only that I have come into a place by faith; but the question arises, Can I stay there in faith? Egypt *here* gets its moral relation to the people of God; and sets forth that particular form of the world which offers us aid when God does not appear to do so, assuming that *it* is better for us than *He* is. That is what Egypt is

morally; the world as a system. Abram is delivered from it and is a witness to it in his very deliverance, and is also better established in himself; for the testimony committed to him, though a thorn entailed by the failure, is, as we shall see, never removed.

Abram, now restored, and invigorated by his restoration, is called to move in a more distinct and self-sacrificing way than before, to prove his confidence in the principles which placed him in his present position, not to the world in general, as he did when he left his own country, not to the world in its use and service to himself as in Egypt; but now to Lot, the one who had borne him company and shared his trials in his walk with regard to the world in both aspects. From Lot he must now separate; but this separation, necessary (as marking the divergence in principle) on account of the path of testimony which Abram was re-entering with renewed energy, comes about as a consequence of the principles of that testimony being the rule of Abram's action and conduct.

Again declaring thus practically that he will assume no right or possession here, and that not only with regard to the world but to his brother, he says, "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; and if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." It is necessary in studying the history of testimony to mark the incidents which disclose the virtues displayed and incumbent on one who truly supports it. True restoration, because it is grace confirmed, obliges one to be more faithful than before. Abram, depending on God, can submit all to Lot's election, and thus be a witness to his own immediate circle, where the sacrifice is always the greatest.

For his faithfulness Abram is given more; he is confirmed in the truth of the position which he had maintained. "The Lord said unto him, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee

will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." Thus had he traversed the centre of the land, taking a survey of it, though as yet asserting no claim to it.

In the next chapter of Abram's path (chap. xiv.), we have another characteristic belonging to this testimony—even that when I am depending on God and looking to him for everything here, the moral consequence must be, that I devote myself to what concerns Him here, and seek to extricate His people from the toils in which they are taken. Before it had been separation, now it is service rendered to the very one he had separated from.

* I doubt not that the circumstances

* I hope, when these papers are completed, to give, in an appendix, a general outline of the antitypes to events mentioned in the text, as far as I am able.

related in this chapter (xiv.) are typical of the closing scenes in the earth's history, and are presented to us to exhibit the nature of the testimony which should be borne by the faithful at such a time. This conflict of kings has in it the elements of the final conflict; and the supremacy sought to be maintained by Chedorlaomer indicates that which the wilful king will assert and assume in the latter day. The character of the passions working among men, and the way in which men were using their power, is presented to us in the scene here described, not so much to give an idea of the ultimate struggles for power, but as embodying a state of things which required a certain testimony for God, and which, in such a state, Abram is enabled to render. "Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled." Lot—representing God's people who have sought a present portion on the earth—is carried away by this successful power. What is the testimony for God at such a juncture? Why, to do as Abram did.

We must bear in mind that God is disclosing the characteristics of His own grace, in opposition to the violence and pride of man; and we are learning, not the history of Abram, but the grace of God, and how it calls on one, standing for God on earth, to act, and this in testimony for God with reference to the current state of things; and thus ever (for God's principles are unchangeable) in a similar state of things at any time.

Abram, though personally, entirely aloof from the scene of conflict, musters all his resources, and without reserve or personal consideration devotes all to the rescue of his brother Lot. By night (and night it was to *them*) he smote them and pursued them, and brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother. The reigning powers of the earth are in one way or another made to know the strength by which God's witness is sustained in his peculiar path. And God, as He is, is testified of as a truth. To Abram, returning from the slaughter of the kings is vouchsafed a revelation of the grace of

God in the person of Melchisedec, which strengthens his soul in God and enables him still more distinctly to walk independently of man, or of his gifts on the earth. It is hard to live here and assert no claim to any place here. It is harder still to devote all our resources, at every risk, for the service of others, and yet receive no reward for it; nay, because of our dependence on God to refuse all acknowledgment from man, for the beneficial results to man from your services to the people of God. Doubtless, service rendered to the individual (as to the legion), confers a general benefit on the community at large. But as dependent on God, I must refuse all acknowledgment for it from man. When the Lord saw that the people would take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain by Himself alone. But God acknowledges the service. Abram's soul is enriched and strengthened, even as is the fruit-bearing disciple in John xv. 5—16.

Melchisedec meets Abram, and so in-

vigorates him that he is strong to refuse all the offers of the king of Sodom, whereby he displays another principle of the testimony committed to him; and the king of Sodom hears from his lips how the blessing of God, and the sure word of His promise, though the fulfilment of it be still future, can make a soul proof against even those things which are everything to the natural man.

(To be continued.)

A THOUGHT ON COLOSSIANS.

There are four great epochs in the world's history, as unfolded in the word of God, at each of which a great and radical change is introduced, viz., the fall of man, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the establishment of His kingdom in power on the earth, and the delivering up of the kingdom to God, even the Father.

By the fall of man, a change, both moral and physical, took place. Moral, inasmuch as his heart was then alienated from God, and his powers devoted un-

consciously to himself to the service of Satan; physical, inasmuch as the earth, which but recently at the word of the Creator brought forth the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, fell under God's curse on account of man's sin.

By the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, another great change has taken place, this time moral only. Man (Israel in profession excepted), in the vanity of his mind and ignorance of heart, had served the devil as his master and lord. But when the Lord arose from the dead, conqueror over "death, and him that had the power of it," another Lord was presented, a kingdom was declared to be set up, in a mystery, indeed, yet really set up, on the earth, and its King, the Lord Jesus, was announced as the One to whom the sovereignty of the universe belonged. "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ." (Acts ii. 36.) "He is Lord of all." (Acts x. 36.) It is true, His claims as King and Lord are recognized but by few.

The god of this world still successfully blinds the minds of them that believe not. But His claims are real though Satan now, as it were, divides the authority with Him.

When next He comes to this earth, riding on a white horse, with the armies of heaven following, divided authority in the earth will cease. The claims of the Lord, as universal king, will be acknowledged *professedly* by all. The curse, too, will no longer weigh down creation. (Rev. xxii. 3.) The wilderness will be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Enmity between man and beast will disappear (Isaiah xxxv. 1; xi. 8; lxxv. 25); peace and plenty abound, and judgment be administered in righteousness and truth. (Psalm lxxii. 7; xciv. 15; xcvi. 13.)

When the end comes, and He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, a further change will take place. As at the fall, a change both moral and physical was introduced, so will it be at the close. "Behold I make all things new," is the word of the living

God. What this means Peter unfolds: "A new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Pet. iii. 13.) Evil in that creation will not be repressed as during the millennium. It will not exist.

Placed as we are in the providence of God between the second and third of these epochs, what is presented to us? The kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, not yet established in power, but set up in a mystery, to be owned by all the faithful. Before He came Israel were bound (though they failed, as God's word shows us) to acknowledge the claims of the Lord Jehovah, their Redeemer from Egypt, according to His promise to Abraham, despite their murmurings and rebellions by the way. For Israel, and Israel alone, had this mighty work been accomplished; and with them, and them alone, did God enter into a covenant, which they bound themselves to observe. After the death and resurrection of the Lord, redemption, not from Egypt for one nation, but from death and judgment

for all who would receive it having been accomplished and announced, the Lordship of Christ, though first declared to God's ancient people, is proclaimed far and wide. All that in every place received the word, believed it, and called "upon the name of the Lord, both theirs and ours," are declared subjects of the kingdom. By and by God will command the obedience of His creatures on the ground of creation. (Rev. xiv. 6.) Now conformity to His will is urged, on the basis of an accomplished redemption (Romans xii. 1, 2; Titus ii. 11, 12; 1 John iv. 14), and His will, is that the claims of the Lord Jesus should be owned and submitted to. So the Philipian jailor is told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And in Romans x. confession is to be made of the Lordship of Jesus. That the Lord Jehovah was to be obeyed the Jews professedly admitted. That the crucified One, the virgin's Son, Jesus, should in all things have the pre-eminence, and be owned as the Lord, was a new, and to many ears, a novel doctrine. To the Jews Christ

crucified was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to those who believed, He was the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is in the Epistle to the Colossians that we have brought out in the fullest and clearest way the preeminence of the Lord, and the great moral change which has taken place consequent on His death and resurrection.

After the salutation to all the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse, from God the Father [for the chief critical editors agree in the omission of the words, "and the Lord Jesus Christ," an omission peculiar to this epistle], Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, with Timothy, gives thanks for them to God the Father of the Lord Jesus, having heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, and prays that they may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Observe, the object of their faith is the lowly one Jesus, God's anointed one—Christ. But faith, if real, is evidenced by walk. When that is mentioned, the claim of Jesus as Lord

is set forth. "Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," into whose kingdom we have been translated, delivered from the power of darkness by the Father. But who is this one, and what has He done, that He should be Lord? He is God's Son, the image of the invisible God. By Him all things were created, and by Him they all consist. He has therefore a place as head of all creation. He has a place too as head of the Church, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. As Creator, then, He could command our obedience. But He is presented here with another claim on His people, for in Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And now "you," says the apostle, "that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, God has reconciled to himself in the body of his flesh through death;" [and how perfectly reconciled] "to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight." Furthermore, in Him all fulness pleased to dwell, and in Him also are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Having thus brought forward the excellency of His person and the ground of His claim to the allegiance of His people—and what excellency could surpass it, what claim could be greater?—the apostle goes on to show, in chapter ii., how the excellency and fulness in Him may be denied; and in chapter iii. how His claim as Lord should be owned and obeyed. Since all fulness dwelt in Him, they could not get beyond Christ. He was not only the foundation on which they must rest, but the One in whom they must be built up, “Rooted and built up in him.” The truth about him had been revealed and received. There was nothing fresh to look for. “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” But why this caution? They were in danger, and this was not confined to that day, of being drawn aside (1) by philosophy, (2) by a recurrence to ordinances, and (3) by the corruption which had already been developed of Christianity itself.

1. To some, human philosophy might prove a snare. Would they reject (it might be asked) the teaching of the

sages for the doctrine of this most recent of schools? Was all the wisdom and learning of the ancients to be put aside for the dogmas and novelties of the sect of the Nazarenes? What is the answer? Philosophy and vain deceit were indeed after the traditions of men, suited to the world, but they were opposed to Christ. What were the philosophers when compared with Him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily? What were the rudiments of the world when weighed against Him who is the head of all principality and power? Between these they had to choose, and they had chosen Christ. He was henceforth to be everything to them. The cravings of the heart, which the philosophy of the schools could not satisfy, He could. The all-important question of the soul's future, which man's wisdom could not solve nor his reasonings stifle, found an answer in the good news of the finished work of Christ on the cross, and His resurrection by the power of God on the third day. They were filled full in Him.

(Chap. ii. 10.) “Not after Christ,” is the short but effective answer supplied by the Spirit of God. Has not this a voice for us in these days? Man’s wisdom and researches are brought forward to discredit Scripture. Man’s intellect, liable to err, is to sit in judgment on the unerring word of God. His discoveries in science, his researches in the kingdom of nature, his discernment and power of dissecting the Scriptures to show the small residuum of truth, imbedded in the mass of documents compiled by some scribe of a far later age than the record would assume, and men till now have believed, are brought forward as sufficient to outweigh and discredit what has been received as the word of God. To all this we have a ready answer here supplied: “Not after Christ.” It is the exaltation of human intellect, the deification of human wisdom, not subjection to God and His word.

2. Were any troubled by teachers insisting on the need of circumcision, and the return to a religion of ordinances? They had been circumcised in Christ, in

putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Moreover, they had been buried with Him by baptism into death, and risen with Him, brought into a new condition altogether, where a religion of ordinances had no place. Had not God appointed them, it might be urged? Would they renounce that which had been ushered in with such solemnity amid the thunders of Sinai? Would they turn their backs on the sign of the covenant made between God and Abraham, "an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee?" (Gen. xvii. 7.) Was He not allowed to be the Father of the faithful? were not all believers children of Abraham? would they not lose the blessing if they refused to adopt the sign of the everlasting covenant? how could they meet this form of evil? Again the Spirit of God gives a very short but clear and decisive answer. All that these teachers were battling for were shadows of things to come, but the body is of Christ. Christ had been set before them as the One who had

“blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” Were they to go back to that which existed by God’s appointment before the cross? From that the great change which had come in took its date. Who would pursue the shadow when they had grasped the substance? How real, then, and great was the change introduced by the death and resurrection of the Lord.

3. Another form of evil might draw away unstable souls: an appearance of humility and worshipping of angels. If they followed this they would cease to hold the Head. The forms of evil already spoken of had regard to what men had been occupied with before. This seems more a corruption of Christianity, not a return to that which they had left. The correction for this, as for the other, is found in but one—Christ the Head. Holding the Head, cleaving to Him, was their business now. Besides, this apparent neglect of the body, this humility, was, after all, a satisfying of the

flesh. But they had died with Christ. What place then could there be for such doctrines among them ?

These three forms of evil, so needful to guard the Colossians against, whilst differing in many things, had this in common—they were all connected with the world, and regarded man as alive in the flesh before God. But believers were dead and risen with Christ. The heavenlies was their place, and the things above God would have their hearts occupied with. The heavenlies, however, is a wide place. Satan is there with his angels, as well as believers. Whither, then, should their thoughts be directed ? Where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Their security, too, was bound up with Him, and their hope was to appear with Him in the glory. Associated thus with Him, one with Him, He Himself their life, a heavenward direction given to their thoughts, they were nevertheless still in the world, and had to do individually with one another. So, after speaking of the desires of the flesh and of the mind (chap.

iii. 5—8), the apostle proceeds: "Lie not one to another seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." However the Jew or the Greek might have attempted to take advantage by deceit of any one placed in conscious inferiority to themselves, that would not become the Christian. National distinction or social position could no longer give an apparent liberty for such practices, for a change had been introduced. Christ was all now, and, moreover, in all. Would they seek to take advantage of one in whom Christ was? And, further, there would be the need of forbearance and the exercise of forgiveness, and the reason is stated: "even as Christ forgave you."

As pilgrims here below, other difficulties must be met than those incidental to intercourse with their brethren. So

the apostle speaks next of the provision made for such, and turns their thoughts once more to the Lord. "Let the peace of Christ (for so the critical editors read) rule in your hearts." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;" and to maintain consistency of walk, it is added, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Here the authority and title of Jesus as Lord comes in.

But comprehensive as this precept is, the Spirit of God does not stop here. To make it plain how completely it accords with the Father's good pleasure, that in all things the Son should have the pre-eminence, relative duties are next enumerated. Now these existed from the days of Adam and Eve. The special relations of individual believers to one another in Christ were new, and were not the subject of divine admonition till the body was formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But the relative duties of life existed long before. The subjection of the wife to the husband, the child to the father, the servant to the master, were acknowledged and enforced from very early days. But now that Jesus is risen, these duties are to be done to the Lord. (Chap. iii. 18, 20, 22, 24.) In verse 22 the critical editors sanction another change, reading the "Lord" for "God"—"fearing the Lord;" a change in perfect harmony with the thought of the whole passage.

What a change, then, has taken place since the Lord died and rose! A change of which the world is unconscious, but yet a most important, a real change. "Not after Christ"—"The body is of Christ"—"Holding the head"—"Christ is all and in all"—"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"—"Fearing the Lord," Such are the statements of the Spirit, indicating the reality and greatness of the change. Ephesians unfolds God's counsels about the Lord Jesus and the Church. Philippians sets before us the Lord as the example and object of His people. Hebrews unfolds His offices, and proves the finished character of His work; whilst Colossians displays to our eye the mighty moral change brought about by His death and resurrection. It is the Lord whom we are exhorted to walk worthy of. In Him we are to walk. Where He is, there our affections are to be set. His word is to dwell in us, as His peace is to rule in our hearts. Wives, children, servants are each to obey as it is fit in the Lord. Throughout we see it is Christ that is set before us. The Lord grant we may not stop here. May the writer and reader ever know not only what it is to have the truth displayed before the eye, but to have it really acting on the heart.

A S E R I E S .

No. 16.

PROPHECY.

Having in No. 15 of this series treated of the study of the Scriptures as a whole, we now come to a particular subject of them, one that is largely presented therein and of special importance.

“The prophetic word now made surer,” we are (in 2 Peter i. 19) exhorted to take heed to, as to “a light which shineth in a dark place.” The character of this exhortation instructs us as to the effect and usefulness of prophecy or the prophetic part of the Scriptures. It is a light for a dark place. It was first given when darkness set in; early indeed in man’s history, for it was his sin that created the darkness, into which the light of prophecy was sent as a relief from it. To Adam after his fall was the first prophetic word given. It is a word from God to His people to carry them forward into scenes superior to the present. This is its primary object. Times of great tribulation may be shewn to intervene,

or to be necessary as judgment, before the better thing comes in (man's sin has required this), but the end of prophecy is to shew out the goodness of God, and how He will triumph over all evil and ruin, and bring in His own gracious purposes. Thus it is expressly a "light shining in a dark place." The darkness is in the place, and the prophetic word is given of God as a light in the dark place. The one who yields himself to the prophetic word has got light for himself in the darkness; the one who does not has his eyes blinded, and cleaves to the dust, not knowing whither he goeth. If we examine the Scriptures we shall find how prophecy was given, and what was its effect and usefulness when received.

The first prophecy, as we have said, was given to Adam when he fell. The terms of it were, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." No communication could be more suitable or valuable at such a juncture. Satan had triumphed over man, but now when the gloom of death and distance from

God reigned, a light from the prophetic word springs up, and the heart that received it, saw the way according to God out of the thickening darkness.

It is evident that according as Adam and Eve embraced this light, so was each able to rise up and soar beyond the dark clouds now resting on their souls. We know that man in every age, in proportion as he took a lead of his fellows in intelligence, did forecast scenes of a better state. Now this, in the natural mind, was poetry, which carried the mind into imaginations that responded to sentiments and cravings which existed, and which found themselves interpreted and intensified in the poet's words. It was the fact of darkness being felt which provoked the intelligent and reflecting one to forecast scenes and feelings which would give form and strength to the cravings of the natural mind after something better. According to the power with which this was done, so was the man's power as a poet esteemed. Thus man in himself admitted that he needed light to escape from the oppression which

weighed on his heart and mind. This felt-need God graciously met in His own people, and in His own way, by presenting to them, not the imaginations or any superior intelligence of the natural mind, but the prophetic word, which necessarily led the soul that received it out of itself and its then condition into dependence on God, carrying it into scenes entirely in contrast to those in which it moved, and fraught with the very relief which at the moment was required. How welcome such a light in a dark place.

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, by faith being translated that he should not see death. He, too, had the prophetic word when he prophesied, "My Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment," &c. That was the "light" to him, as to the growing confusion and ungodliness of the earth which he was leaving, and it shone in a dark place. Not only was he to be personally removed from the scene, but the prophetic word by which he foresaw the time when the Lord would come and be in the full

exercise of His power, gave him a true estimate of the darkness with which he was surrounded and led him to walk more distinctly with God. A "light" indeed it was to him, and, as he walked in it, it necessarily separated him from the darkness.

✓ The blessing of Melchizedek was a prophetic word to Abram. It revealed to him the Lord God as the "possessor of heaven and earth" in such power that receiving it by faith, and entering into what was yet future, he could refuse the offers of the king of Sodom. Abram's own circumstances in the dark place were an apparent contradiction to this belief (for the Canaanite was in full power in the land), but in the light of prophetic truth he was translated from the darkness of man's day unto the day when the Lord God should rule. Nay more, the Lord says of him, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." The prophetic word always conducted the receiver of it into the scenes of which it spoke. It carried him out of the place where he was, and

was given on purpose to set him free from the present confusion and disorder, and to establish him in that order of things which eventually would be.

When Jacob fled from his brother Esau, and, wearied, lay down on a pillow of stone, it is by the prophetic word in a dream that the Lord ministers cheer and hope to His suffering saint. "He dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." Surely this was a light in a dark place, now made a "Bethel" to him; and in spirit the houseless, homeless, friendless Jacob was transferred to the greatest of all manifestations on earth, even the manifestation of the Son of God in His glory. He saw that which the Lord announced to Nathaniel (John i.) as among the "greater things" to come, when, in the free communication between heaven and earth, the angels of God would be seen in ministry on the Son of man in His millennial glory. Again, in the light of the prophetic word, Jacob

when a dying blesses the sons of Joseph and all his sons. He would conduct them in the spirit of their minds into scenes and a condition of things at the moment not existing, and of which there was nothing to indicate their future existence, no more than there was to Joseph that his bones should at a distant day be removed from Egypt to the land of Canaan; but faith carried him forward into that distant moment, and it was thus a light to him in his then circumstances.

When Moses was worn out by the continued failure and perverseness of the children of Israel, his cry to God was, "Show me thy glory." He desired a light to shine in the dreariness around him, and the light disclosed, led him in spirit unto the Holy Mount, where he was afterwards quite at home. Prophecy, as we have seen, properly belongs to, and is given of, God to relieve the heart here oppressed by the darkness and difficulty of the way; so much so, that the more the darkness increased, and the more man's

evil obtained, the more fully and constantly the prophetic word was given to warn the unruly, and cheer the faithful. For while it fully declared the righteousness of God in judgment, it failed not to disclose the purpose of God in His kindness and love to His people, and on this His people could ever rest. Thus the song which Moses taught the children of Israel, while it warned them of the consequences of forsaking the Lord, reminded them also of His love to them, and therefore comforted the faithful and assured them that in the darkest hour of trial and judgment He would be "merciful to his land and unto his people."

When Israel is set in the land, there is at first little or no prophetic word. It was a trial of man, *as man*, on earth, to be seen again in the millennial day, when the Lord will be present in person to sustain man therein. Until it was proved that man was incompetent to maintain this standing, there was no need, so to speak, for a prophetic word which would carry him in spirit out of,

and beyond it. If Israel had acted up to their covenant, all would have gone on cheerfully and blessedly on earth. When failure had fully set in, when the priesthood, represented by Eli's sons, was corrupted, and a new line is adopted by God in the person of Samuel, then the prophet became, as I may say, an institution from God, "For he that is now called a prophet was before time called a seer." (1 Sam. ix. 9.) From henceforth the prophet is the distinct and peculiar minister of God. He by his word shed a light in a dark place; and though he might tell of intervening sorrows and trials yet he always conducted the believer in hope to the bright day of God's kingdom. I repeat, that the prophet became an ordinance of God when man was proved a failure under every trial. "Yea," says the apostle and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, "as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." (Acts iii. 24.) The prophetic word was of the grace of God, to lead His believing but suffering people into the day

of blessing, and their hardness of heart was that they had not "believed all that the prophets had spoken." The Psalms, many of which were indited during Saul's reign and David's rejection, distinctly and vividly look beyond all trouble to the day of Christ's glory; and thus the prophetic word was a light to David. Thus in the prophets, one and all of them, the greater the ruin, as in Ezekiel and Daniel, the more vividly the grace of God traces for His people the times of refreshing which would come from the presence of Christ.

How blessed and animating the prophetic word, in scenes and times when everything of God was marred and defaced; the temple dismantled, the carved work broken down with axes and hammers, a wild boar out of the wood devouring the vine of God, and Jerusalem trodden down of His enemies! Then it was that the prophetic word poured out its helpful and salutary light to the suffering people of God. And so does it now for us, though the character of it

is of course varied according to the different times and need. Then the great burden of the prophetic testimony was Christ as "the mighty one on whom God would lay help," the arm of the Lord by which salvation should be wrought. "Behold thy king cometh" was the light which the prophetic word shed into the heart of many a way-worn, afflicted one in Israel. Hence to the shepherds it is announced, "This day is born to you a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" and Simeon dwells on the fact that it was revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. What we have to understand is the effect and usefulness of the prophetic word, and how God in His lovingkindness vouchsafed it to His people in all dark times as a light. He in His grace and tender mercy communicated what would be, in order that the heart of each suffering saint might pass through the present affliction sustained by the future, and therefore reckoning himself of it, and not of the present.

When Christ came prophecy ceased, for He was the fulfilment of it. He was here to make good, if He had been received, all the promises made to the fathers, and all that the prophets had foretold. He was the Light to which they had pointed, and therefore for the interval that elapsed between Christ's coming and His rejection there was no prophecy. But immediately on His rejection prophecy again came in to cheer the hearts of saints, while also depicting to them the terrible sorrows they would have to pass through. The Lord Himself, when virtually rejected and on the eve of His death and departure from the world, announces to His own the "days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled." (Luke xxi. 22.) The prophetic word is a light in a dark place; and, therefore, as light, it sets forth everything as it is, not to discourage and overwhelm but to disclose and forewarn, in order that the souls of the faithful may, while anticipating the glorious end, be prepared for the trial in the way.

On the ascension of our Lord, and consequent on His rejection, two subjects of prophecy were committed to the servants of Christ: the one as touching His coming glory and kingdom which simply was "things to come;" the other, a disclosure of the secret of God, the Church, as not of the world but given to Christ out of the world. This structure He had Himself announced in Matthew xvi. 18, that He would build. But it was not till after His final rejection, and after the rejection by the Jew of the testimony of the Holy Ghost about Him, that it was fully disclosed; the disclosure being especially committed to Paul, who announces that the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, "now is made manifest, and by the prophetic scriptures according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known," &c. (Rom. xvi.) The Church he also tells us, is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." "And he gave some apostles and some prophets." This at first sight may not appear to be prophecy,

but it is of the same nature, and effects the same as prophecy proper. It is a light, nay, how great a light, shining in a dark place. The Lord being absent, rejected from the earth, the Holy Ghost down here revealeth the deep things of God—the great mystery, the secret of His heart, determined on before the world began, but never divulged until now. It was the subject for the new prophets to divulge, and in doing so they did not declare a thing manifested, but a position which had not entered into the heart of man, now to be occupied by faith, and therefore in a marvellous way to be a light to them in the darkness of this world. The Lord saying, “I go to prepare a place for you,” and the Spirit’s desire that we may “Know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance,” both conspire to show the nature and the usefulness of the prophetic word, which carried the saints forward from the scene of misrule and sorrow, in a world which the Lord was waiting to judge. And this was the light peculiarly needed

in their circumstances and ours. Who can understand his true and divine place here, if he have not this light in his soul and on his pathway? In one sense it is not so much a matter of prophecy now, but in another it is; for prophecy, by presenting how God will place and order things, must always be a light, because it makes manifest what is opposed to this order. The secrets of the hearts are made manifest by one speaking with a prophet's power. But, not only this, the prophetic word is to carry souls forward, and connect them with the mind and purpose of God, and set them in it apart from and above the *actual* circumstances in which they are found. Surely no prophetic word more perfectly effects this than the truth of my place with Christ in heaven. Yea, the moment I receive it, I know how great a light it is to me in this dark place; that is, it carries me by faith, outside it altogether. It is however revealed and known, though not yet manifested. The marriage of the Lamb is not yet celebrated, but it has been revealed by the

prophets, and we know, as we enter into the light of it, the momentous value it is to us.

Now while this subject, this mystery is of the nature of a prophetic word because it discloses to us at the present moment what we shall be in by and by, and therefore now by faith sets us in; the *other* subject of prophecy relates to the earth, and sets before us what will transpire on it, the great and wondrous events which shall take place here; how different and how according to God, this earth shall yet be. It must first be swept by the besom of destruction, and then the Lord will reign. The *one* subject carries me in spirit into my place with Christ; so that now through the light of the prophetic word I am out of the darkness here. The *other* shows me the glorious alterations which God will effect here; and in the light of it, I pass through the wreck and confusion around me. My mind imbued and carried forward by the power and intelligence of the prophetic word which is to me a light in a dark place. The *one* relates

peculiarly to the status of the saint himself; the other, to the earth, as the sphere of God's glory. Both are God's light to us, and the souls which are not enlightened by the prophetic word have really no true light to guide them in the darkness. Thus is it explained why so many earnest souls know so little where their path is, amid the confusion so increasingly pressing now from every side. It is the light, as we have seen that God has given from the beginning; and now in the consummation of ages, He vouchsafes to the Church, the body of Christ, a two-fold prophetic word. By the one, the word of God is fulfilled (Col. i. 25), and the saints are now by faith therein placed in heaven with Christ, a fact absolutely future, but now by the Spirit through the prophetic word known to faith; and the light of this sets the saints free as to spirit and position from this evil world. By the other, which is also fully declared, so that "blessed are they that hear the word of this prophecy," the nature of God's purposes on the earth are disclosed, and the saint in

the power and intelligence of it walks through it, instructed in the judgment of God about it. Apart from it in spirit he views it in fellowship with God's mind, and is empowered to do so, because he knows and rests in what God is about to do with it.

How blessed and gracious of our God thus to enlighten us! May we indeed take heed unto the prophetic word, now made surer, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts!

The force of the word "*until*" I shall hope to examine in a future paper.

THE WATER AND THE BLOOD.

(1 John v.)

"This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus (the) Christ; not by the water only, but by (the) water and (by the) blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is (the) truth."

There is no point in which the blessing of the way of God by faith fails. But then there must be the reality of faith in regard to each distinctive point of the divine testimony. It is not enough that the word of God should not be disbelieved, or that it should remain a matter of consideration on our minds. Its objects presented in Christ must, in simplicity and directness of faith, be received as the objects of faith. It is thus alone that we can "know (in the (ac)knowledge(ment) of Him) what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe according to the working of the power of his might, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places." It is in faith the blessing is transferred to our souls, and by which we are made partakers of it; and "it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is (the) truth." We enjoy the power in the blessing of faith, energised by love, for the accomplishment of the ends and thoughts of God toward us in Christ Jesus.

Such is the wonderful way of grace, inconceivable in the goodness and greatness of love: God takes the manhood into Himself, that through death and resurrection, the manhood, as in us, might partake by faith of God in Christ. And it is in the way of "faith, that it might be by grace;" as it must be if sinners are to be partakers of it. "By *man* came death, by *man* came also the resurrection of the dead," even by Him who is "the resurrection and the life." How can the soul fail to bow in worship at the thought? "The first Adam was a living soul, the last Adam is a quickening spirit." How sad is it when the condescension of God becomes the ground of dishonour with His creatures! The name of the SON OF GOD, therefore, becomes, by the marvellous grace of God, resurrection to me and eternal life, which are in Him and in me, by grace through faith: for "he loved me, and gave himself for me."

Christ, then, the object of all God's thoughts, is presented to us in various characters, with a peculiar power attached

to each. He Himself is this peculiar power. To enumerate some that attach more especially to His person : Christ—Christ Jesus—Jesus Christ—Jesus the Christ—Son of God—the power of God—the wisdom of God—Lord—in the various power applicable to the use of the word in Scripture. May we think with reverence of these wonders ! For there is danger of failing in reverence.

The simplicity of the word that reveals God in the Son, and the blessings that are in Him and by Him, would render explanation unnecessary, except for others, were Christ more simply and directly the object of faith and love. It was given me to make the following observations in a letter to an individual, intended as a communication to a particular assembly :—

“That the righteousness of God is imputed in every separate object of God’s appointment believed on. If we believe any one such object—and they are as diverse as the objects presented to us by the word of God, being such as we are to receive blessing by—the believer is

accounted righteous, and is the accepted object of God for the blessing and power that God has given in it, or by it. The one case we ordinarily hear of is, that if we believe on Christ, the Son of God, the righteousness of God is imputed to us. We thank God for the clearness this has daily received of late. Now, Christ believed on, contains everything that God has to give in Christ. The case in which the righteousness of God is ordinarily looked on as imputed, is in the remission of sins and the acceptance of the believer in the presence of God. We are not to confine this grace, and the manner of the grace, to this singly. Faith in the resurrection of Christ, by the glory of the Father, is counted for righteousness. By Him we believe in God that raiseth the dead. We are counted righteous unto justification of life. Righteousness is equally imputed unto us in this case as in the former; for it is written, Righteousness shall be imputed unto us, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, who died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification

(Δικαιωσις*). Abraham believed God as to the life of his body, though dead, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and God fulfilled His grace in his begetting a son in his old age.

“As to forgiveness, it is applied to us in the sprinkling of our hearts from an evil conscience. Now, the whole circle of things presented to our faith by God, in the several ends of them, stand on the same ground, and the results are offered to the faith of them as of Him. Faith in the Holy Ghost is faith in God, as faith in the Son is faith in God. Faith in the Son, His person and offices, is necessary to enter into the blessings of the Son. Faith in the Holy Ghost, His person and offices, is necessary, if we would enter into the blessings of the Holy Ghost. I mean faith working by love. To fail to possess ourselves of that which we might, which is necessary to our spiritual well-being and completion in the way of Christ and the manifesting of His grace, is

* Διὰ δικαιοσιν, for the end of justification as results; in fact, of δικαιοσιν ζωης.

chargeable before God ; for all that should be worked out in the way of blessing is lost through the faith not being directed to the object as of God." *

So in this place : " This is he that came by water and by blood." (1 John v.) The emphasis is peculiar with which the water and the blood out of the side of Christ is mentioned in John xix. 34, 35. It is mentioned apparently with a different intent and in relation to the certainty of His death ; but here it is taken up on the ground of the *doctrine* of it, and as it respects the blessing by the water and the blood.

The water is not, I think, the Spirit, as in several other places in Scripture, but the new nature. But this could not be alone—redemption is conjoined with it. The world knoweth it not, but it is *our* life. It is not fitted to be of the world, nor to live in conjunction with it, but to God, and according to the calling we have received in Christ. It is true that, though having the new nature, the world is our

* Letter to Mr. C——, Dublin. (Dunne.)

place for a while ; but in that nature we overcome the world, being redeemed out of it by the blood. It is redemption *out of the world* that is here the work of "the blood," and it is the object of our faith. It is not His death as our substitute that is here presented, nor our cleansing, but the overcoming the world as purchased out of it ; and this with a new nature (the water out of His side), as fitting us for our new position as strangers and pilgrims in the world, and to be perfected in it.

This, however, would not avail were there not such a faith of His person as the very Son : for " who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?"

" By weakness and defeat
He won the meed and crown,
Trode all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down."

A wondrous way, indeed, of overcoming !
" Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

* Τον κόσμον and τον αιωνα του κόσμου too ; i. e., the ordered world which lieth in the power of the wicked one, and the course of its precepts and actions.

This chapter begins with another declaration as to the faith, which is prior, in the order of the Spirit, to that just noticed. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"—Christ the anointed One of God—"anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power." Again: "No man saith Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Thus it is here; but we advance one step farther. It is the essential character of SON that carries all with it both in nature and circumstance; and so heirship of God and eternal life is in the SON. By this He is heir of the world and of all things: and we sons of God and co-heirs in our place in and with Him.

To those who are subject to Christ none of the commandments of God are grievous. "His commandments are not grievous." For if "love is the fulfilling of the law," we also read, in chapter ii. 7 of this epistle, of "an old commandment" that the apostle had written, and "a new commandment," in close alliance with the old, "*which* (says he) *is true in him and in you.*" How could His commandments be grievous where the

love of God is; where its fulfilment is in the identity of the source of its fulfilment? "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, as (*καθ—ως* after the same manner as) he is righteous." It is "Christ in you;" and, "The *life* is the light of men." "I have written unto you fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." He then adds, in address to the "young men," "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.....and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The love of those only that are begotten of God can be in this kind and in this faith.

This chapter, as I observed, begins with the faith that "Jesus is the Christ," i.e., He that was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. I must own His place as the Christ, and a description of such as own Him is that "they overcome the world"—the world in its present form, order, objects, desires, obedience, and own Him and His commandments. The victory

that overcometh the world is even our faith. But here we advance a step. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the SON OF GOD?"

I need present instrumentality and condition of being in order to overcome the world. "The water and the blood" from the side of Christ present this condition and this instrumentality. I overcome in the power of them. I accept them as my power of overcoming; and the consequence is that the world, through the love of God, has lost its hold. I am a partaker of Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "This is he that came by water and by blood:"

"And death by dying slew."

Christ and the world are diametrically opposed. "The prince of this world" is the rival of Christ; and the question is, Who shall rule and reign? This question is answered by the *faith*. Nothing can now sanctify the world; but (as it is expressed by the prophet) "In the midst of

it shall be a tenth, and the holy seed is the substance thereof." These alone are accounted of God, and called above to be with Christ and to come with Him. Ye are "risen with Christ"..... therefore "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." *

All the peculiarities of the apostle are markedly in this chapter, and its general abstraction is manifest. But the divine principle of it is evident; as also in the gospel of the same apostle, as practically applied, in chapter xv., to servants.

This chapter relates to the ministry and service of Christ; and the "Father is the husbandman" who prunes the branches. And I cannot but think that the word He spake unto them which made them "clean" (ver. 3), was clean for this end, viz., service and ministry. This, I think, is shown by the connexion of the terms *αιρει, καθαιρει*,

* It is written we "have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens." The Greek is *διεληλυθοτα τους ουρανους*. Wickliffe's translation is "persed the heavens." I should humbly think that we have passed through the heavens to the highest, by the excellency of His confession.

and καθαροί. (Ver. 2, 3.) It was the live coal from off the altar, of Isaiah vi., which the seraph laid on his mouth and said, "Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged." So that he that had said, "Woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," now said, "Here am I; *send me.*" "Ye have not chosen me (saith the Lord), but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.* If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen

* In 1 John v. 3 it is said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." And chapter iii. 23, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." He sent the Comforter: "*My peace give I unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you.*" The command was to love one another in the sympathy of both not being of the world that hated them, because it hated Him and the Father. How can the Spirit rest where the world is, or anything of it, and which "could not receive him?" Thence comes the question, "Is the Comforter come, and is He gone?" Christ was in a world contrary to His Father. In the same world we confess Christ. The Holy Ghost testifies to the glory of Christ, and His glory rested on His not being of the world. "Ye are not of the world, as I am not of the world." "As my Father sent me, so send I you." As I live by the Father so shall ye live by me. On whom will the Spirit of God and of glory rest?

The testimony from 1 Timothy vi. 12 must not here be omitted: "Fight the good fight of THE faith, lay hold on *eternal* life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast confessed a good confession before

many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; ['Now my kingdom is not of this world'] that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing (επιφανεia) of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We must however say a few words as bringing us plainly back to the individual consideration (though the truth of the Church makes all ministrants one to another in the faith, in the grace which is to every man according to the gift of Christ). Dying we must die where we are dead, even on the cross; that living, we might live where we have life even *in Him risen*. We have the water and the blood and the Comforter, and are partakers of Christ.* He witnesses to the truth. In advancing let us never leave the place from which we start, binding ourselves to Him or the cross, and in whom we are risen, that nothing may escape us by the way. Amen.

* What others were the reproach of *Christ* which Moses esteemed?

WALKING BY FAITH.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (Read 2 Cor. iv. 6 – v. 9.)

To a certain extent it is, doubtless, true, that every real Christian may be said to walk by faith, and not by sight. But the largest charity will not allow us to think that, all Christians at all times, in their course through this world, are, according to the force of the principle enunciated by the apostle, as gathered from the connexion in which it stands, practically and characteristically, walking by faith, and not by sight. Nay, if we turn in upon our own consciousness, it may be asked which of us is found, day by day, and in all the varying circumstances of life, so giving to the things which are unseen and eternal their due and controlling power in the soul over the things which are seen and temporal, as to be habitually, and in the sense of the apostle, walking by faith, and not by sight?

To be *saved* by faith is one thing, to *walk* by faith is another. And Scripture does not present these things as so

conjoined that where the one exists the other, without our care and concern, and without our watchfulness and warfare, will necessarily follow. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." This casts us upon God as the gracious and sole author of our salvation, thus endearing His character to our hearts while it gives them their sure and eternal ground of confidence in His favour. But Scripture also speaks to us thus: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more." This throws the soul inward upon *itself*, to see how far its habits and principles, its conduct and feelings, or, as Scripture beautifully expresses it, "The issues of life," are in accordance with the will of God. "For (adds the apostle) ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification," &c.

The balance of Scripture is destroyed where the mind is occupied alone with privilege and grace, and is impatient of the aspect of duty and obligation. And it is to be feared on the part of those who profess to be separated from the general corruption of Christianity, but whose separation is a thing of nought if it be not a separation to *God* and holiness, that there may be springing up amongst them a new and subtle kind of Antinomianism, in constantly looking at the Church's abstract position and perfectness in Christ, as if the mere mental recognition of that secured to each individual a position and acceptance with God which could never be forfeited, and beyond which it was impossible he should be advanced. Every word of God is true; but it is true in application only so far as it is truly applied. Truth is not truth to *me* until it is reduced to living act. Every distinct proposition of the word of God asks for itself a definite reception by faith, "faith which works by love." The ends of a divine revelation are not

accomplished in us except as it brings the soul and God together, in the harmony of truth communicated and truth obeyed. This, and not a light kind of second-hand dealing with the terms in which truth is expressed either in Scripture or by men whose hearts have felt its power, is the obedience of faith.

“We walk by faith (says the apostle) not by sight.” This is not equivalent to the thought that we are saved by faith, however true that may be. To *walk* is indicative not of a point but a progress. Neither can walking by faith be reduced to the vagueness of a general principle, leaving it to the individual mind to fill up the undefined outline of its application. Nothing, I think, can give more definiteness and force to this simple but comprehensive proposition, “For we walk by faith not by sight,” than the way in which it is interjected by the apostle in the passage under consideration. It is presented in connection with the most wonderful unfolding of the character and consequences that mark the reception of the Gospel by the

soul which are traced onward through all the vicissitudes of our earthly course, giving a victory over every trial and even over death itself; linking every sorrow and suffering, that is met in the power of faith, with eternal glory; pointing the soul, in the dissolution of all its present associations, to a "building of God, a house not made with hands;" and intermediately giving to death this simple character of being absent from the body and present with the Lord; in issue landing the soul in this simple purpose of life, "endeavouring, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to him."

In the first place he glances at the condition of the world, of men who are in estrangement from this gospel, and in a few emphatic words presents a melancholy picture to the mind. He says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (Chap. iv. 3, 4.)

He connects a veiled or hidden gospel and lost souls and Satan's power, whatever men may think to the contrary or say. But while this should stir our pity and rouse our energies to make this gospel known, it comes in here in the way of enhancement of that work of God which it is his object to unfold. He says, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (Ver. 6.)

There is an overwhelming kind of feeling produced by the realization of this aspect of the gospel. It brings God so near to the soul. It shows Him who, in His sovereign power in creation said, "Let there be light, and there was light," bringing in by a power and agency, as direct and immediate, the light of that revelation by which He is made known in grace to the heart. "It is *He* who has shined in our hearts;" not to reveal something already existent there, but to make Himself known where all was darkness and estrangement from Himself before.

To dwell only upon the effects of the gospel in its saving power toward men, is to lose sight of the true and substantive character of the gospel itself. That which is hidden from men, to whom the gospel is hidden, and which leaves them in a lost condition, is the good tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. And that which is revealed by the light shining in the heart, is to give the light of the knowledge of *God's glory* in the face of Jesus Christ, whether this be in its apprehension in the soul, or for its outshining in testimony in the darkness of this world. And at this point, as throughout, how necessary it is to bear in mind the principle, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Faith only will keep the soul in companionship, if I may so speak, with this wondrous disclosure of what God is, and how near He is to us, in this gospel which we all profess.

The next point which is presented is the effect of this revelation in us, and the purpose of God in the conditions of its display in the circumstances of this

world. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." If the knowledge of God is introduced into the heart, it produces a permanent effect there. As the Lord Jesus says, "*This is life eternal*, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." It is the in-shining of God to the soul; but then we must remember that it is characteristic of the nature of God that He is light. Doubtless, He is love also; but it is said, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." And when the eternal life is manifested in this world in the person of Him of whom it is said, "He is the brightness of His glory and the express image of his person," it is declared, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men;" or, reciprocally, "the light of men was the life." Again, the Apostle John, speaking of a new commandment which he was writing to them, says, "which thing is true *in him* and *in you*, because the darkness is past, and the *true light* now shineth." He refers

to what is expressed by the Lord in John xiii. 34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you (*καθὼς*), that ye also love one another." This, as the apostle recognizes, necessitated a participation in the nature from which this love flows, which is the nature of God Himself. Hence, as already quoted, in repeating this new commandment, he says, "which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth." It is the linking together the two statements of his gospel, "the light shineth in darkness," &c., and "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Thus far to rescue the expression, "we have this *treasure*," &c., from any vagueness of meaning. If God shines in our hearts, it is to produce there, through the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, a specific and eternal result. It is to produce His own image there, to impart His own nature. Doctrinally it is stated, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this

life is in his Son." "The true light now shineth." But if the rays of this light shine into the soul, it is not to leave there a mere photographic image, a fixed and dead shadow of the living object it represents. It first gives the life—"the *life* was the light of men"—and eventually it will change its objects into the glory, which is the proper home of the life. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (Chap. iii. 18.) "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." And farther, the Apostle John, "We shall be like him: *for* we shall *see* him as he is." This is the final transformative power.

I again repeat, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." And if it be not so, I ask, wherein does the common familiarity with the statements of Scripture, which is not lacking amongst us, differ from a cold and uninfluential dealing with the terminology of some obscure

and obsolete record? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." "If we believe not, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself."

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." And this not simply and of necessity from the condition of our nature here in this world, but in order to illustrate the divine power. This brings in the necessity of our knowledge of God's purpose concerning us in our daily walk as Christians in the world, and in our testimony for Christ; and also the concurrence of our souls in the conditions in which the divine power is to be displayed. Doubtless, the apostle made a great advance in his personal knowledge of this, when, in answer to his prayer concerning his "thorn in the flesh," he got this reply from the Lord Jesus, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And the immediate concurrence of his soul in these conditions of the display of divine power in a human vessel, an "earthen vessel," is seen in

his subjoined declaration: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," &c. It was the personal, individual illustration of the truth before us, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (Ver. 10.)

There is a proportion and correspondence between the manifestation of the life of Jesus, and our bearing about in the body His dying. If this be entered into in the energy of divine grace, and in enlarged and self-denying service for Christ, as in the case of the apostle, it displays, as from within, the power of this life. But it is not dissociated from the divine care, and watchful ordering of external circumstances for this issue by the Lord, as he says, "For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (Ver. 11.) There is the purpose of heart which, by a voluntary consecration to the service of Christ, seeks to

be made conformable to His death; a voluntary "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." But there is also the weakness of nature, together with a lack of full spiritual apprehension, which, if unchecked, would induce in the most energetic servants of the Lord a not unfrequent turning away from the constant pressure of the cross; and, to that extent, would defeat the desire to manifest the life of Jesus. To counteract this, therefore, and that the desire for Christ's glory may be divinely accomplished in His servants, there is the ordering, variously by the Lord, of outward circumstances, so that, as the apostle says, there should be a delivering up unto death for Jesus' sake: the ordering of the Lord coming in, in aid of the weakness of the earthen vessel in which this divine treasure is deposited. Hence, especially, in the service of the gospel, the apostle had to say, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

But the secret of all this willingness to meet death—death not outwardly only, but in all the inward purposes and

principles and objects of a man in the flesh—what is this? It is the conscious possession of a life that death cannot touch; a life whose triumphs are now seen in the moral death of all that nature, apart from God, must needs value and cherish; a life sustained by its alliance with God amidst “deaths oft” in its course through this world; and a life, finally, that resurrection will give its triumph to when even the earthen vessel that contained it is broken, and lying like a dishonoured potsherd in the grave. It was this which urged the apostle onward in his fervid course, as he says, “We have the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you” (ver. 13, 14); and then adds, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” (Ver. 16.)

But here again how needful is it, if

these things are not to be to us mere empty words—words of *Scripture*, it is true, but to us wholly uninfluential—to remember the declaration of the apostle, “For we walk by faith not by sight.” How otherwise is it possible that the summing up of the apostle’s estimate of his whole course of suffering and sorrow and affliction in this world should appear to us to be anything but a mere rhapsody, instead of the utterances of a man soberly weighing up the issues of time, with its passing and chequered scenes, and of eternity with its impending glory? “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (Ver. 17, 18.)

The eye that is steadily directed to the world that is unseen and eternal, will bring home to the soul a thousand intimations of coming glory and of at-

tractive goodness, which are missed entirely by the Christian even that is unduly occupied by the things of this world and time. The spectacle of the starry heavens and all the glory of the celestial sphere may be alike the object of the contemplation of the astronomer in his observatory, and the midnight traveller as he lifts his transient glance ever and anon to the spangled canopy on high. But while the one gazes with wrapt wonder on the limitless fields of space, and has his senses bathed in all the glory of revolving suns and spheres, as through his telescope they are seen to thread their mazy way through never-ending galaxies of brightness; the other beholds little more than an outstretched pavilion of blue hung with its tiny lamps, which, twinkling with glowworm brightness, shed their feeble rays to guide him in the bewilderment of his steps. The objects of contemplation are the same to both, but how different are the emotions awakened by them in the mind of each ! So is it with the Christian that steadily gazes with the

eye of faith into the disclosures of that world which faith alone can apprehend, and the Christian that does not indeed *disbelieve* the record of those things which God has prepared for them that love Him, but who, in a practical sense, could hardly—at least in the apostle's application of the phrase—be said to “Walk by faith and not by sight.”

In infinite grace, we know that God so watches over the feeblest and faultiest of His children, in their course, as to make all things work together for their good. But this is far wide of the truth which was before the apostle's mind in the passage now before us. Here the scope and purpose and entire bent of the soul, whether in active labour or in patient suffering, are directed to the things which are unseen and which are eternal, to the exclusion, as to any dominancy over the soul, of the things which are seen and temporal. Nor can it be said, I think, where Christ and His service, His cross and coming again are not the ruling objects of the heart, that the language of these verses can

suitably be applied. Though if human estimation be regarded, it is granted that in this respect "the first may be last and the last first."

There is nothing more wonderful than the calm and confident way in which each point is explained and disposed of in the questions that are discussed in the verses on which we now enter, chapter v. 1—9. If we think of what death is, what conquests it has made, what is involved in the dissolution of the ties that bind us to the present scene of existence, what utter powerlessness there is in nature to meet the approach of death, what darkness and uncertainty mark all the reasonings of philosophy concerning what is hidden from us in the future by the veil of mortality, we cannot but see and wonder at the love that opens out such a vista of glory and triumph through the regions of death and discomfiture of all human power and hope. The body which we now possess, and which is subject to decay and dissolution, is but an earthly tent that death takes down, to be replaced

by a "building of God," an eternal habitation, in those heavens where Jesus finds His home and where God's glory eternally reigns. There may be groaning now because of the weakness of nature, and because of our association with a creation that, through sin, is itself made to groan; but this only compels the more earnest out-look of the soul, and the more longing desire to be "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." But where this is not the object of desire, and where the soul has not a title to this provision of God, what is there for it but the most terrible unpreparedness for a scene on which it is compelled to enter? For what pregnant sorrow is there in the expression, "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." This heavenly house must be ours, the soul must be clothed upon with this, or else we must "be found naked." But this is an interjected thought; and the apostle returns again to the "groaning" which characterizes our dwelling in this taber-

nacle, showing that the very burden we now feel through corrupted mortality, awakens, not simply a desire for the deliverance that death might bring, but for that which goes far beyond—"that mortality might be swallowed up of life." It is *life*, and not *death*, that Scripture always presents to the believer as the proper object of his hope. It is for life and glory that Christ has redeemed us, and not for death and corruption. And God has wrought us for the self-same thing; and the earnest of the Spirit, is the witness and earnest of the inheritance and of glory.

But, come life or death, there is always a ground for confidence. Death *may* come. Be it so. If we are at home in the body, there is so far a necessitated absence from the Lord. If we are absent from the body, it lands us with Him who is the object of our desire. "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." And the issue of all, where it can be truly said "We

walk by faith not by sight," is summed up in the words "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." (Ver. 9.) Amen.

WHAT IS MY OBJECT?

(Judges vii.)

The greater the difficulty of the time in which I am, the more have I to learn that the only true regulator of my course, is the Lord Himself as my object. When I know Him thus, I am "holding the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." When Christ is my object, He is both my guide and my support. He not only occupies my heart, but He nourishes me with His own strength, in order that I may accompany Him in His mind and counsel.

Gideon is presented to us in this chapter as the centre and rallying-point

of the true hearts in Israel in a time of difficulty. Midian and Amalek were to be overcome. 32,000 gather around his standard; of these, 22,000 are fearful and afraid, and there remain 10,000. But these are now to be tested as to whether they are fit and prepared to go forth with Gideon; and the Lord's mode of testing them is "Bring them down to the water and I will try them for thee there." *Why to the water?*

Now there are two phases in man's history; one is adversity, or, as we may call it, difficulty; the other, prosperity; and each is placed before us in its moral effects in Deuteronomy viii. The wilderness was the time of difficulty. There the soul was learning God; there the strait became the occasion of God's help when the soul had found out that it had no other resource, and thus was truly strengthened; for the real measure of our strength is the measure of the strait we have passed through with God. God's great purpose in leading me through the straits of the wilderness, is to lead my soul into the simple depen-

dance of hanging on His word apart from and beyond any provision or arrangement. Thus difficulty or adversity differs much from prosperity. In difficulty I am thrown on God, and any strength that I have must be in Him; if I have any it will come out then. In the day of adversity all my resources according to the strain bearing on me, will be pressed into use; and if I fail, it is a proof that my strength is small. But in prosperity my resources are not so necessarily in God, and if I have a weakness I have an opportunity of gratifying it. Hence, the Lord warns Israel lest, in the prosperity of Canaan, they should forget Him.

And now we may understand the nature of the test to which Gideon's army were subjected. The water represents prosperity or mercies, it may be any thing which addresses ourselves, and which, though provided or allowed of God, is, as addressed to ourselves, in no way connected with Gideon and his work. *But it is the test.* If Christ be not simply and definitely my object, things,

good things, which address and suit myself, and for which I may be thankful as mercies, will engross my attention, and Christ as my distinct object is lost. And not only so; but if He be not my distinct object, I am not "holding the Head," and, as a consequence, am not nourished or enabled to hold on and accompany Him in *His* objects and purpose. And here it is where so many true-hearted ones are turned aside. The water tests them, and it assumes such specious forms that they see not that they are tested by it, and so are often found wanting. Various are the forms it takes. One great test is our own usefulness. This is Martha-like: she was full of serving Christ, and, in a measure, it became her as mistress of the house; but her heart was more in her work than in the Lord, and she was not one of the 300. 9,700 threw themselves on their knees to drink water—were engrossed by it. The 300 did not deny the existence of the mercy, they lapped it—took just what was necessary and no more, for they had another object. Gideon

was their object, who doubtless was looking on to see who would be able to stand the test. And any who *did* stand it, he not only equipped suitably for the conflict, but put them in the blessed place of imitators of himself. "As I do so shall ye do," are his words to them; they were to be similar to himself in place and action. What more blessed, more honourable for a soul in this day of difficulty; and how fully answering to us now. If our Lord be simply our object, we are *as He is* in place and action; we are "holding the Head," and He nourishes us up into His own mind and ways at the time.

Another test may be our reputation among men, which Paul calls "loss for Christ." His own righteousness, which would have given him a place among men, he counts as dung, something not to be touched.

Another test (as in Col. ii.) is the effort the heart makes to set itself off by will-worship, &c., and is thus turned from Christ. It is as I surrender the water—prosperity—that I am devoted,

fit for Gideon. Every one ordinarily is seeking some prosperity, but our devotedness to Christ is in proportion as we surrender it. Yet, *in the surrender it is that we receive an "hundredfold more!"* The Lord in the same breath in which He tells the young ruler that he must leave all and follow him, and when Peter retorts, "*We have left all and followed thee,*" replies, "*You will have an hundredfold more.*" Had not the 300?

The Lord be thanked that He has given us such an object as Himself, and that as our hearts make Him such, so are we helped, nourished, and guided according to His very mind.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."—Matt. xi. 12.

When the kingdom was first announced to the Jew, there was no question of taking it by force. He was told to repent because the kingdom of

heaven was near. It was his birthright to inherit the kingdom. But he would not repent, despised the King, sold his birthright, and so lost for ever his title to enter the kingdom of the heavens upon that ground. The kingdom therefore could not be then established: and such was the opposition and enmity of the Jew, even from the very beginning, that Jesus said, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force."

This was a condition of things which could only exist while the Lord Jesus was a rejected man upon earth. It could not have been before, for it is evidently consequent upon the Jew rejecting the king, and thereby selling his birthright. Nor can it be specially applicable after the ascension of our Lord, for then the *mysteries* of the kingdom began, and are now running their course, in which time the grace of God is proclaiming, "To him that worketh not," &c. To take the kingdom by force, supposes a condition somewhat different, and in some

points, quite the opposite of "not working."

There may be an analogy between that time, and the present; i.e, between the energy required then to break through all opposition, and the faith *now* needed to leave the traditions of men; but not in the way that God now brings sinners of the Gentiles to know and believe in Jesus.

We see that taking the kingdom by force was the necessary result of Christ's rejection. Could the Jew have received Him, there would have been the establishment of the kingdom in power. But now all the learning, wealth and authority of the nation were in antagonism to the Lord Jesus. All that the Jew was accustomed to reverence was, in appearance, contrary to the position now taken by the Lord. All then to whom he looked for instruction had denounced Him. They had called Him Beelzebub. Further than this they could not go. Now if a Jew became the disciple of Jesus, he would find himself cast out and despised by all whom he considered

to be teachers and instructors, "cast out of the synagogue," and exposed to the persecution and hatred, of those whom he had been accustomed to reverence. More, he must break with his friends; father, mother and all beside must be forsaken, to be worthy of Christ. And therefore the closest ties would not prevent hatred, his "enemies will be they of his own household." Indeed not a habit, not an association of his old life, but must be broken off, and sundered, if he would have the kingdom of heaven. The most useful and necessary things, right feet, right eyes, all must be parted with if it come in the way. He must patiently submit to persecution, be content to have his name cast out as evil; in short to seize upon the kingdom, would be for a Jew at the cost of all that he held sacred and dear. This was taking the kingdom by force. Nationally the kingdom was refused, and therefore individuals had to struggle against everything in order to enter it. Nothing short of the most determined energy (which could only be given by the Spirit of

God) could sustain a Jew through the terrible ordeal.

I have said that there may be an analogy between a Jew breaking through old and revered associations in order to follow the rejected Messiah, and Christians now, who, led by the Spirit and word of God alone, leave the traditions of men and the bondage of human systems, and gather round the name of Jesus; as also between the rejecting Jew, and those who now, taking the place of Christians, prefer the good opinion of the world and its smile, to the despised place outside the camp.

The Jew, in a certain sense, was in the position of the people of God (though really disowned). There was an external semblance of obedience to Him. But when the Lord came, when God applied the moral test whether they would receive Jesus, humble and lowly, they utterly failed: they preferred the world.

Even the amiable young man whom Jesus loved, would not part with his riches for the sake of Jesus.

Do we not see at this present time something analogous to this? Do we not see among those who profess and call themselves Christians, some who shrink from that close following of the Lord Jesus which necessitates a thorough break with the world? Is there not a clinging to the world and a dread of its frown? Ah! it is as true *now* as it was *then*, true discipleship is sure to bring the hatred and enmity of the world; the hatred and enmity of all who are not with Jesus. And family ties are no more able to bear the strain *now* than *then*. The name of Jesus turns the warmest natural affection into coldness and indifference. If we would follow Him, we must do violence to all that connects us with the world. I do not mean that only those are saved who have broken away from human tradition and circle round the name of Jesus; but I do mean that they alone are in the true path, and, notwithstanding the broken condition of the Church, are in its true and normal position.

In such a day as the present, when

infidelity and superstition are advancing apace, it becomes those who love the Lord Jesus, to stand firm for Him, "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and to manifest faithfulness to Christ, true heartedness; and a standing apart from all that is of the world, whether the corrupt or the religious world, for His name's sake. For this, the divine energy and power of the Spirit is as much needed by us as it was then by the Jew to seize upon the kingdom of heaven.

May we understand our calling and responsibility.

C. B. B.

"Jesus! thou art enough
The mind and heart to fill;
Thy life—to calm the anxious soul;
Thy love—its fear dispel.

"O fix our earnest gaze,
So wholly, Lord, on thee,
That with thy beauty occupied
We elsewhere none may see."

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER V.

A B R A M.

(Concluded from page 249.)

We have seen what was the nature and scope of the testimony committed to Abram, as relating to man on the earth; that is, how the witness for God must conduct himself in relation to man on the earth, when independence of God and idolatry were man's principles; and how Abram is required and enabled to observe a line which would distinctly disavow such principles, not only to the thoroughly worldly man, but also to the unfaithful saint.

Now we come to another phase in the testimony, and one which has respect to the hope and status of the people of God *on the earth*. It is not enough in this order of testimony to disavow the principles of man, or to assert that the Lord is "possessor of heaven and earth;" but it is of God's grace that there should also be a testimony of the future blessed-

ness of His own people on the earth. And thus it follows that the "one seed," the source and channel of all such blessedness, was *now* to be the great subject of testimony.

It is incumbent on us not only to know every line and phase of testimony as connected with the interests and purposes of God, but now, as in the light and grace of Christ, to maintain all and every line which, as worthy of Himself, was required of His faithful ones, according as He was made known to them. God's will has been perfectly accomplished by Him, in whom we are, and therefore we are responsible to gather up and embody in our practice here all the lines of testimony enjoined on, and maintained by, God's servants in any time.

Abram's desire for posterity—for a continuation as to himself here, gives occasion to that word of the Lord which embodies the new line on which he was entering. "Behold," he says, "to me thou hast given no seed, and lo! one born in my house is mine heir." Hence the word of the Lord to him: "This

shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." And He brought him forth abroad and said, "Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." Abram has now a new testimony to maintain, namely, that the seed springing from him, of which there was no natural hope, would be as numerous as the stars of the firmament; and his belief in this, through grace, secured to him the position of righteousness before God. Faith in the fruit and issue of God's work, which He would do by Him, who would do His will and finish His work, enabled God to count Abram in the righteousness in and through which He would eventually bring about this glorious consummation, even that his seed should be as the stars of heaven. Abraham has now to journey on maintaining this. How fine! How blessed! He himself accounted righteous before

God. He, in the spirit of his mind, having reached the day when God can, in His own righteousness, fill the face of the earth with sons and daughters of Abraham's seed, which is Christ.

And it is by the covenantal sacrifice that this truth, of which he is now the witness, is secured to him; and it becomes the basis and surety of all to him, even though a prolonged darkness rests on his path, and the night be dreary before the promised issue comes—before the earth bears in its bosom what the heavens in their starry myriads illustrate. All this is declared in chapter xv. 9—21. When, in answer to Abram's query, "Whereby shall I *know* that I shall inherit it?" God directs him as to the sacrifices he was to offer, after which a deep sleep and a horror of great darkness falls upon Abram, in which the history of his seed is revealed to him, and the extent and limits of his future inheritance detailed and defined, all on the ground of the covenant.

The testimony now is that man, believing in the issue of God's seed, is

counted righteous; and this with a defined inheritance on earth is secured to him by a covenantal sacrifice. Abram in fact in this testimony stands outside man as he is, his faith connecting him with God's work, and he himself in righteousness thereby, depending on God through the covenant made by sacrifice for the consummation of His promise. Abram in this testimony is in the righteousness of God by faith and therefore outside of things seen; for faith is the evidence of things not seen, and while he so walks all is well.

It must be borne in mind that with every phase of testimony there is always a by-path, a "wile," by which the enemy would lead us, in order to remove us from the *true* line, and from which we should have been preserved had we truly and conscientiously abode by the *terms* on which we had been set on it. Abram, now set on the true line outside everything here, depending on God for the seed and the issue of it, the by-path or "wile," which would divert and allure him from this, would be one which

would propose to accomplish the desired end, through a merely *human* means. This Satan finds and achieves through Hagar the bondwoman; and Abram falls from faith to sight, and is *in the flesh*; so that we find it written that "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." Eleven years after Abram had come into Canaan, Ishmael was born. That which is after nature precedes that which is after the Spirit. Ishmael is born fourteen years before Isaac. The testimony suffered on account of this failure, and Abram as the witness suffers also; but God overrules all in His mercy. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, and within one year of the birth of Isaac, the testimony receives another addition, and at the same time a correction for the flesh. The Lord appears unto Abram (chap. xvii.) and unfolds to him two things—the one that where sin abounded grace superabounded, there being no other way open for God to act, therefore his name is changed to *Abraham*, with the reiterated assurance that,

notwithstanding his failure, he should be a father of many nations; and, secondly, he is taught that, if God confers in grace, man must surrender, and deny himself in the flesh through which sin acts. Hence circumcision is required and enjoined. The cause of his having turned aside from the testimony, in the faith of which righteousness was reckoned to him was the *flesh*. He had been accounted righteous for believing in the future of his seed, which God had revealed unto him; but instead of walking simply and restfully in this hope through faith, he is drawn aside to seek an heir in a carnal manner, and that which had been entrusted to him (the testimony) suffers. How needful for him to be taught that the evil of the flesh *must* be set aside; that flesh to which he had lent himself and by which he had been drawn aside from the simple testimony of waiting by faith for the seed promised of God. And this is what circumcision signified, as we see in Philippians iii. 3, 4, &c. It prefigured the entire renunciation and putting away

of the flesh. Therefore Abraham must be circumcised and his seed after him throughout their generations. A great addition was now given to the testimony. The Lord has revealed Himself more fully as He is in Himself, and on the ground of this by covenant He gives Abram the name of Abraham. This declared the manner of His grace; but if His grace be full and blessed, there must be a setting aside in man of that which called for the grace. Can I require and receive grace from God and yet retain that which, because of its evil and weakness, required it? Nay, if grace comes in, flesh retires; and hence circumcision is enjoined, being a "seal of the righteousness of the faith he had, yet being uncircumcised." The greater the grace, the more needful the abrogation of the flesh; and this is taught here in figure. It is as *Abraham* that he circumcises. It is the one who is in grace that can endure circumcision, who can afford to have "no confidence in the flesh," and to deny it, because he is on better ground. This was now the

testimony for Abraham; "and the self-same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael, and all the men of his house, born in his house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him."

Abraham now in his new position is shown the judgment on the flesh in its corruptions and lusts, out of which the uncircumcised one is delivered so as by fire, for Lot was uncircumcised. Abraham is shown in Sodom and Gomorrah the extent to which the flesh of man runs; and circumcision has its value as indicating the renunciation of the flesh. Lot, righteous in himself, is delivered from the judgment that overtakes Sodom, only to sink into positive crime, when, lost to sense, an advantage can be taken of him; while Abraham sees it all as one apart from it, and in company with God.

But though blessed and circumcised, Abraham is not unswerving in his path of testimony. He has still a tendency to go south, and dwelling at Gerar he learns that he is not in the power of the truth he professes; for in Canaan he

fears to avow what is truth. These failures point out to us what the testimony would preserve us from and by what temptations it is damaged and spoiled, and for this purpose it is recorded. Therefore, I make this passing remark on the sojourn at Gerar.

When Abraham is an hundred years old, the promised seed is born; and now comes the open and manifest casting out of the bondwoman and her son. The counsel of God, of which Abraham is called to be the witness, is the promised seed; and, this being come, that which was born of the flesh must not continue in the same house or standing with him. And (how full and blessed is the testimony conferred on Abraham!) not only is the one born after the flesh (antitypically the Jew) to be cast out, but Abraham is still further taught that the promised seed does not depend on natural existence, but on resurrection—on Him who raises the dead. What an element! What a strength this imparts to the testimony. How line upon line the purpose of God is disclosed, and Abraham

made personally a witness of it ! Not only is Ishmael cast out, but in Isaac resurrection from the dead is in figure known by him, thus filling up his testimony ; and then all the purposes of God, as conveyed to him in former promises, are enlarged and secured anew to him, founded on resurrection. God confirms all by an oath, as through faith in the day of glory. Abraham is accounted righteous, and takes this new standing. So now, having reached to the resurrection, God, by oath, confirms to him all previous promises.

The more we bring together and set forth in order the great principles of truth, which Abraham was called to exemplify, the more must we be charmed and edified by the beauty and greatness of the whole. Like the fir-tree among the trees, faith is the leading shoot ; but as the tree grows, great branches are superadded on this side and on that, to furnish the tree and support it in its greatness. Thus Abraham grew up, and on ; and, as we survey him in the testimony to which he is called, we won-

deringly see what grace can do in a man, while we also see the tendencies to which man is exposed, and to which he yields. But, at the same time, because grace is acting, opportunity is given to God to call that out in His servant which would preserve him from those tendencies. Consequently, Abraham's failures are given to us in order that we may see how God empowers him to rise above, and be superior to them. Before the birth of Isaac he had failed in the land from fear of the Philistines who were in the land. Here we get the moral relation of the Philistines to the people of God. It is the fear of man which bringeth a snare. Egypt was not in the land, and therefore the world; and *there* the fear of man is also. But Gerar was *in the land*, and Abraham, the circumcised Abraham, the Abraham who had passed through the experience of seeing the judgment on Sodom, even he fears the king of Gerar. After the birth of Isaac this self-same king makes a covenant with Abraham, and then comes in the resurrection as the true

and stable ground for all this blessing, from which neither the Philistines nor Ishmael can displace him.

Three "branches" more remain to complete Abraham's testimony. One, his conduct and way on the death of Sarah; the second, with regard to the marriage of his son; and the third, the way in which he distinguishes between Isaac and his other children. It was in his hundred and thirty-seventh year that Sarah died, and she died at Hebron. Abraham had latterly resided at Beer-sheba. (See Gen. xxii. 19.) Hebron is a distinguished place; it was where the promise was first given; the promise of future blessing to the earth, and here it is that Sarah, the mother of Isaac, dies and is buried: thus testifying that nature in itself must end, when the grace of God and its accomplishment is manifested. In its highest sense, we may say, when Christ comes in. I can afford to part with mere nature however dear to me, when I am where God will establish the better than nature according to His own will. (Phil. iii.) The be-

reaved Jacob buried his Rachel at Bethlehem; Sarah is buried at Hebron. Abraham, while living in the land, and traversing it by faith as his own, obtains no possession in it but a burying-place, and that he obtains not from God, but from man by purchase. He buys it. He does not buy from man a place to live in, but a place to be buried in. A striking but expressive testimony! Living by faith, seeking no acquisition here to remain in, but when death supervenes, becoming a possessor of a burial place, an earnest of resurrection; for surely, as to inheritance, it was the only earnest he had; therefore his first actual possession was a burial place. He would tell the people of the land, "I have no possession here but a grave. I anticipate my right and buy a grave that my dead may rest securely till the day of glory." Beautiful and emphatic testimony.

The next line in this comprehensive testimony, following immediately on the death of Sarah, is the manner in which a bride and co-heiress is provided for Isaac. I am aware that Genesis xxiv. is

generally interpreted as in figure presenting the Church, the body of Christ and the bride of the Lamb spoken of in Revelation xxi.; but though there may be some touches in the scene described there, which can only be fulfilled by the Church, yet I am inclined to think that it is more consistent with the testimony and purpose of God that we should here be presented with the earthly bride, the queen referred to in Psalm xlv., the one who shares with the promised seed His rights and inheritance on earth. The sphere of the heavenly bride is in heaven, though exhibited to earth; that of the earthly bride, the queen, is simply the earth, and in partnership with Him who reigns here as the heir of all things. This is just and consistent with the testimony set forth in Abraham, and with this view we at once see the place of the nations presented to us in his children by Keturah. These children—six sons—Abraham sent away eastward into the east country after giving them gifts; and surely they must have carried with them some knowledge,

at least, of the testimony which their father had maintained.

Here this wondrous and remarkable testimony is brought to a close. Isaac having been already called and used of God, to set forth His name and purpose on the earth, will engage our attention in the next chapter.

THE PLACE WHICH CONSCIENCE HOLDS IN THE SERVICE OF THE GOSPEL.

“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.”—2 Cor. i. 12.

By conscience it is plain that the apostle here refers to that inward principle or power of the soul which takes notice of our motives and springs of action, and pronounces its secret judgment upon them. In this respect he declares himself to be perfectly free and clear, both as regards the world at large and the saints also, with whom he had a more intimate association.

There is, of course, another aspect of conscience, and which is of vast moment in the question of the soul's acceptance before God. This the apostle speaks of, when declaring the inadequacy of the Jewish sacrifices and ordinances. He says, "They could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the *conscience*." (Heb. ix. 9.) In relation to its cognizance of sin he shows that the claims of conscience can only be met by that which, in this respect, meets the judgment of God. The effect of Christ's work, therefore, on the conscience, in giving it peace before God, is necessarily based on the accomplishment of redemption. The two are presented in connection in Hebrews ix. 12—14. But redemption comes first. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." This as meeting the holy requirements of God in regard to sin. Then follows the effect on the conscience of him who believes. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered

himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Here the voice of conscience is met by the value of the blood of Christ, as before it was presented as meeting the judgment of God; and the blessed result is that the soul is put into recognized relationship and intercourse with God.

This is an immense privilege, and under the law an inconceivable blessing, that the conscience of the worshipper and the claims of God's holiness should be brought into perfect harmony. It is this harmony between conscience in us and the claims of God's holiness that is the wonderful thing in the gospel. But the ground of it is plain. It is thus energetically expressed in the language of this epistle: "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." It is plain that there can be no rest for conscience here. But that which faith rests upon is this: "Now *once* in the end of the world (or the ages) Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of him-

self." This work He has accomplished; and on the ground of this it is argued, that "the worshipper once purged should have no more conscience of sins." The desert of sin having been met in God's presence in the sacrifice of Christ for sin, of which the sacrifices of the law were but dim and indistinct shadows, the blessed effect upon the conscience in us through faith, is correspondent to the efficacy of the work accomplished before God. That is, the worshipper is brought to see, through the testimony of the Spirit to the work of Christ, that sin has been so entirely judged in God's presence—where, of necessity, it must be judged, if judged at all—that there is nothing left for his faith but entire acceptance in the grace of God, who in infinite love gave His only-begotten Son for the express purpose of the accomplishment of this work. It is the difference between the sense of *responsibility* under the holy requirements of God, which is only the more oppressive and confounding the more the sensibilities of conscience are alive, and the liberty of *grace*, which

points to an accomplished righteousness and an *eternal redemption* wrought by the death of the Lord Jesus, that Lamb of God's providing! "Thanks be unto God for this unspeakable gift."

The Apostle Peter, too, speaks of "the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." It is the same thing in effect with that which has been already considered, i.e., that the conscience meets what is needed for its peace in the expiation of Christ's death, of which His resurrection was the grand pledge and proof. Conscience gets its answer by seeing Christ going down to death bearing our sins; and then seeing Him not only raised again from the dead, but "gone into heaven, and *on the right hand of God*, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

But, in the place we are considering, conscience is presented in a very different aspect. It is not here conscience having its claims once and for ever met by the redemption which is by Jesus Christ, but conscience holding its daily court to

try the correspondence between the testimony of the gospel believed or proclaimed, and the inward feelings and aims of him by whom it is believed or proclaimed. In this view it is essential that conscience should be kept bright and unsullied by our constantly walking in the light as God is in the light, and having our daily course tested by the divine word and by the living example of the Lord Jesus. The apostle tells us it was his rejoicing, or boast, to have such a conscience; and it is exceedingly important for us to mark the force of this principle, and how entirely it is through God's grace our responsibility to maintain. Other things, as the apostle shows, in his service might be denied him, and may be denied to us, such as the measure of success he desired in the ministry of the gospel, or the satisfaction he could not but covet in the conduct or walk of those amongst whom his word had been received; but a good conscience, through grace, he could maintain, and thus find a rest to his spirit amidst all his sorrows and

disappointments. And how serious a business this was with him is shown in his address to king Agrippa, where he says, "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." It was a thing that did not come to him without his care; nor will it *so* come to us. But it was what he cultivated with earnest diligence. He says he "exercised himself (i.e., practised himself in a sort of gymnasium) in order to maintain this, of which he might otherwise have been despoiled by the subtilty of the enemy, using to this end the circumstances and trials and temptations by which he was surrounded. Everything that we meet with is, or may be, an occasion for the exercise of conscience either toward God or toward men. On the other hand, he shows, in his address to Timothy, the danger in other things to which it exposes us if we fail to maintain a good conscience. "Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." The practical power

of faith cannot be maintained in the soul where a good conscience is not maintained. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things; if our heart condemn us *not*, then have we confidence toward God." Hence we see the secret spring of all apostacy or departure from the Lord. The man who does not "add to his faith virtue," &c., will soon become blind, and not able to see afar off; i. e., beyond the horizon of this world. His *faith* will go, and he will "forget that he was purged from his old sins." His confidence toward God will give way, his faith will suffer shipwreck.

This then is what we see so strikingly exemplified in the apostle's course. I do not now allude to his earnest zeal and patient labours, and entire devotedness to the one cause he had espoused. These are manifest. I speak of this, that whatever might be the result of his labours, or whatever might be the estimate of men concerning them or him, he always maintained the consciousness of the most entire integrity and simplicity

in his own bosom to fall back upon. As he appeals to the Thessalonians, "ye are witnesses and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." There it is not the testimony of his conscience only, but that which is the result of a good conscience, the collateral testimony to the truth itself, which is found in the consistency of those who present it.

It was not, however, that he did not recognize a higher standard, in the truth itself, to which conscience was to be conformed; or that he did not appeal to a deeper judgment of himself than conscience would reach. This he plainly shows where he says, "I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself [I am conscious of nothing, i. e., of no fault]; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." That is as to faithfulness or unfaithfulness and the ultimate awards of Christ to His servants (for this is the point of his argument), it is not a matter of human judgment at all, but of the final judgment of the Lord. And he adds,

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” It will not be human approval at all, nor appointed by human judgment, but praise to each one, who will then be the subject of praise, will be from God. Still, as he owns, he could not look on to this judgment if he had not been clear in his conscience now.

It is remarkable the place which the apostle gives to the possession of a good conscience, in a practical sense, in his request to the Hebrews for their prayers on his behalf. He says, “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” (Heb. xiii. 18.) This seems very humble ground to take; too humble for the spirit of fanaticism, but not for the quiet, healthful spirit of the gospel. In truth there is everything in it. Given that the gospel is true, and that its revelations are directly from heaven,

what is there left for those by whom it is ministered or professed, but the maintenance of that simplicity of purpose and inward conformity of feeling in relation to it which makes its appeal to the scrutiny of Him who is light, and who has called us to walk in the light? Success is not at our bidding. Circumstances are not under our control, but under the control of God. The sphere of *His* service is not in our own choice, but in His appointment. But, in all these conditions, the one thing to be maintained—and it is all that rightly can be done—is the possession of a good conscience. Even an apostle could do no more. Hence, Peter exhorts Christians generally as to their conduct in the world, and amidst persecutions and suffering and calumnies of enemies, thus, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed

that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." (1 Peter iii. 15, 16.)

In writing to Timothy, the apostle says, "Now the end of the commandment [or, charge, for he is referring to the words of versè 3, "that thou mightest *charge* some that they teach no other doctrine," &c.] is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned." *Love* was to be the spring and the issue of all his service. But we cannot fail to see how this love is guarded, and by what holy and conservative principles its integrity is to be maintained. It is love indeed. But it is "love out of a pure heart"—a heart that, in the exercise of love, connects itself with the truth; that remembers the declaration that God is light as well as love. It is love out of a good conscience too. Love that must be controlled, not by the softness of natural feeling, but by uprightness of heart as subject at all times and in all things to the will of God. It is love also "with faith unfeigned"—that is, a faith that honestly looks to

God's word and Spirit for its foundation and its guide. He adds, "from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling," &c. In a word, the apostle shows that if right moral feelings be absent from our walk and service, no amount of knowledge or zeal will keep us from being turned aside from the right path.

So far conscience: but what was this inward testimony of conscience to? To this, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," the apostle had his conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward those who believed. His whole course in the world, in connection with the gospel, exhibited these characteristics, simplicity and singleness of aim. He was *sincere* as a persecutor, but that is not our point. Genuine and unmixed, as examined in the light of God, was the purport of his heart; and there was nothing covert or tortuous in his ways. There was a wisdom, a practical wisdom, I mean, which strongly marked his course in many instances.

But it was not the politic wisdom of men which seeks to bend the minds of others to its purpose by acting on their natural feelings, and which is ready to seize upon their weaknesses and prejudices, even, in order to carry its point. The wisdom of the apostle was the reverse of this. It was not "fleshly wisdom," but the grace of God which marked and controlled his path. I know but of one seeming exception to this, when he said before the council, "I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee." But this did not turn to very good account. What he sought was not a place for himself in the estimation of others—not even amongst those who were most his debtors in the truth. In all his labours prosecuted with all his zeal and ardency of affection, he desired only a place for Christ, and for the power of the truth with which he was entrusted. This is abundantly seen in his appeal to the Corinthians. "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Cor. xii. 15.)

The apostle's conscience was not occupied with the foolish punctilios which marked the Church of a later age, but took its character from the fulness of the grace which he proclaimed, and was the reflex of his association with Christ and God. It was a *heavenly* conscience, though dealing with his path on earth; and this is the *kind* of conscience which the perfect revelation of the Christian's place and portion in Christ demands. Hence nothing can be more important than to realize the place in which divine grace has set us, because our walk here in the world and our conscience in all its exercises is to accord with our relationship to God, and the full and perfect disclosure which He has made to us of His counsels and will. May we learn more and more what it is to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." (Phil. ii. 15, 16.)

"I WILL COME AGAIN."

Read John xiv. 1—3.

In this passage, which every Christian's heart must often have dwelt upon, we get the whole chasm of time bridged over from the moment of the Lord's anticipated departure, which was then the occasion of His disciples' sorrow, until He comes again, which is presented to them as the simple and only object of their hope. What might be intermediate in their circumstances is not presented. What would be intermediate in His own is given for their comfort. For a season they must know Him as separated from them—gone to the Father's house, but there as much interested about them and occupied for them as ever He had been on earth. But then He would come again and receive them to Himself. He had been with them on earth. He knew the place He held in their affections, and what He was to them here. It is well. He would come again and they should be with Him in *His* home, as He had been with them in theirs. This was to soothe their sorrow; this was to inspire their hope. It was enough. All that they had ever valued on earth they had given up and had been separated from, in order to be with Him. If it was little they had to surrender, they had found their all in Him. What was He not to them here? What could fill up the blank in their affections when He was gone? Nothing—nothing but being restored to the object of their affections again. It was not earth's anticipated sorrows that made them sad. It was the thought of being bereaved of *Him*. Why, the world was so absolute a blank to them when *He* was gone, that their affection (at least of one of them)

would have seized upon His dead body as her only treasure amidst the desolated waste around.

Love asks not to be enriched, to be told of happiness and glory; but *to be with* the object loved.

Did not the heart that had won their affections know what love's true guerdon is? He knew it well; and therefore says, "I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." A glorious heaven may well be the home which the God of glory has prepared for those whom His call and grace have made strangers here on earth. It is His goodness to tell His pilgrims amidst their present toils, that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God." But to the desolated affections of His saints He says, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him . . . then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be *with the Lord*. Wherefore," says the apostle, "comfort one another with these words." They are love's only effectual anodyne. He knew it well; *his* own heaven was to be "ever with the Lord." And ours, what is it, if it be not this? What is our Christianity? The knowledge of forgiven sin? the certainty of acceptance at last through the blood of Christ? the assurance of heaven—a doctrinal heaven—a reasoned heaven—when earth is done with? No; it is this. Christ has loved me, and given Himself for me; and He has said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be *with me* where I am; that they may behold my glory."

THE ACTS.

Had any man of his own hand undertaken to write an account of the first establishment of Christianity on the earth, we may safely conjecture he would have given us a history very different from that recorded in the Acts. From the time of the Lord's ascension till the apostle's first journey to Rome, is the period of history it is concerned with, and yet we have little else than the labours of Peter and Paul. What were the labours of James the Less at Jerusalem, or of Thomas, the reputed apostle of India? Where were the others at work when Paul found only James and Peter at Jerusalem? (Gal. i. 18, 19.) What was the immediate cause of John's banishment to Patmos? where did he labour before and after that? To answer these and kindred questions, we must go to the writings of men, for God has not seen fit by the Spirit to inform us.

Again, the history of Peter, as given us in the Acts, as well as that of Paul, breaks off in the middle of his work.

We read of his deliverance from prison, and of Paul, that he was kept a prisoner two whole years in his own hired house. Peter vanishes from sight in Acts xii. 17, to be seen no more except at the memorable meeting, whose details are recorded in chapter xv. As the apostle of the circumcision, it is plain, he regarded the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia as his especial charge; and we may gather from 1 Peter v. 13, that he did not in later any more than in earlier years remain fixed at Jerusalem. But where he went when he left Jerusalem (chap. xii. 17), and what he did at Babylon, whatever place we understand by that name, is left a story untold. So, too, of Paul; beyond the first interview with the Jews at Rome immediately on his arrival, we get nothing but the brief notice, contained in chapter xxviii. 30, 31, of the two years' residence at Rome of this most zealous of the servants of Christ. Had any one of his own accord sat down to write such a history, would he have stopped, unless

prevented by some unforeseen occurrence, just when the apostle arrived, for the first time, in the great metropolis of the world? Surely he would have recounted some of the details of that first answer, when no man stood by him, but all forsook him. (2 Tim. iv. 16.) Perhaps, too, he would have given us some insight into the apostle's visit to Miletum, where he left Trophimus sick. (2 Tim. iv. 20.) And yet we would not say that the history is incomplete, unfinished, like Stephen's speech or Paul's defence (chap. xxii.); interrupted before the speaker had ended, with no after opportunity of completing it. Its composition betrays no such haste; for if Luke had been minded to have extended it, he had ample opportunity, when with the apostle shortly previous to his martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 11), of hearing from himself all the details of his imprisonment, and answer before the emperor's judgment-seat, even if he had not been an eye-witness of the events as they took place. But this is passed over, and all Paul's labours after those two years so briefly

noticed. And why? May not the reason be simply this: The history of the Acts was not intended to give us man's work for God, carried on by the agency and supreme direction of the Holy Ghost; but the Lord's manner of working on earth, after His ascension, by the Holy Ghost, for and by man. Hence, when the great features of His work have been set before us, the history closes never to be resumed.

These great features are *three* in number. The Lord working in power for His people, manifested chiefly at Jerusalem; the Lord working by His word, manifested chiefly outside Jerusalem; the Lord acting in grace towards His failing servants, manifested so beautifully in His dealings with the Apostle Paul.

If we examine the facts recorded in connection with God's work in Jerusalem, we see the power of the Lord, in one form or another, is generally the prominent feature. Outside the city the first place is given, as generally, to His word. We have several speeches of Peter at Jerusalem, but they all fol-

low some manifestation of power, and give usually the reasons for its display. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, showing how what had taken place was only what Joel had foretold; but he only speaks after those who witnessed it wondered what it was. The healing of the lame man at the beautiful gate brought crowds together, to whom those fearless words were spoken, which subjected Peter and John to be brought before the council. At Cesarea, on the contrary, we read of nothing but God's word by the mouth of Peter, which, listened to and received, was followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost. When the Lord would commence the work in Samaria, Philip went down and preached Christ to them. He worked miracles as well (chap. viii. 6, 7), but we read, "They believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and were baptized, both men and women." (Ver. 12.) So at Damascus (chap. ix.); at Antioch in Syria (chap. xi. 19—24); at Salamis, and Antioch in Pisidia (chap. xiii.);

Derbe (chap. xiv.); Thessalonica, Berea, Athens (chap. xvii.); Corinth and Ephesus (chap. xviii.), it is the word of the Lord, and not the manifestation of His power, that arrested the attention of both Jews and Gentiles, and converted those who gave heed to it. At Paphos and Philippi we have accounts of miracles worked, but in each case it is only to remove the hindrance Satan put in the way of the free reception of the truths preached. The sorcerer, Elymas, is struck blind for a season, because he perverted the right ways of the Lord, and sought to turn away the deputy from the faith; and the damsel is delivered from the spirit of divination only after she has followed Paul and his company many days. For if the hostility of Satan to the truth could not arrest the progress of the work, the Spirit of God would not receive from him any testimony in its favour. At Iconium and Ephesus we have notices of other miracles wrought, but they seem to have been in confirmation of the word previously spoken. (Chap. xiv. 3; xix. 11, 12.)

Nor need the miracle worked at Lystra be an exception to this rule, for it appears not unlikely that the word had taken hold of the impotent man's heart before, at Paul's command, he leaped up and walked. (Chap. xiv. 9.) At Jerusalem, with the exception of Stephen's speech, the word follows the manifestation of power.

How suited was all this to the work to be done. If the apostles could stand forth at Jerusalem and proclaim a revelation they had received from God, their opponents in the council and synagogue could meet them on similar ground, and affirm the necessity of adhering to that word given by God to Moses at Sinai. For He had appeared in their midst at Sinai, and manifested His presence afresh at Jerusalem. (1 Kings viii. 10, 11.) They could and did oppose the disciples, as in the case of Stephen, with a revelation as much from God as that delivered to them. Did the followers of Jesus speak of a gift now given by God to none but those who believed on His name? The unbelieving Jew

could point to the many marks of special favour bestowed on their forefathers. From the time of Abraham to the days of Daniel, Jehovah had often interfered in power on their behalf. Twice in the history of Abraham (Genesis xii. 17; xx. 18) had the Almighty interposed. For the deliverance of his descendants it was that the destroying angel had passed through the land of Egypt, and decimated the ranks of the Assyrian invader. For them the sun and moon had stood still, the stars had fought against Sisera, and the shadow retrograded ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. For them the Red Sea had been divided into twain, and the waters of Jordan had stood on an heap, till all passed over dryshod. For Daniel, faithful to the God of heaven, the angel had come and shut the lions' mouths; and with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, a fourth was seen in the burning fiery furnace, having the likeness of a Son of God. What nation but theirs could speak thus of God's intervention on its behalf, or exhibit so many proofs of His lovingkindness and

tender mercy? How could such arguments be met except on their own ground? They could appeal to the power of God exerted so often in behalf of their fathers. Let them see now with whom and for whom He was working in power.

That nation, which formerly had experienced His intervention in power for their deliverance, must now witness His interposition in favour of those they persecuted and killed. They had crucified Jesus, and He, now at the right hand of God, had shed forth the Holy Ghost on His followers. At the temple gate a miracle, which none could gainsay, is wrought by two unlearned men, professedly in the name and by the power of that Jesus they had lately crucified; and when charged to speak no more in His name, these two humble fishermen bid defiance to the council. And still greater wonders are done, so that the sick are brought and laid in the street that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them. From within and without the city, the sick and

those afflicted with devils are brought, and all are healed. Despite the known displeasure of the council, the work spread; so to stop it, the whole company of the apostles are put in prison. In the morning the prison is empty, though bolts and bars are untouched, and the keepers are standing before the doors; but the men are found teaching in the temple "all the words of this life." The council then doubted whereunto this would grow, and well they might. No threat could intimidate these men, no earthly power restrain them. Stronger measures are next resorted to, and Stephen is stoned. But here, too, though outwardly they seemed to triumph, he really triumphed over them. For, rising above the spirit which legitimately characterized Judaism, he cries not for vengeance on his persecutors, but implores their forgiveness from the Lord. And stranger still, one who was consenting to his death, and kept the clothes of the witnesses who stoned him, one who manifested by his acts that he was exceedingly mad against the Christians, is

suddenly changed on his journey to Damascus. A light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shone around him, his companions saw it, and heard him speak to some one evidently in answer to words, addressed to him, inaudible to them.* In this case it was no weak enthusiast, nor any one seeking a fitting opportunity to declare himself on the side of the believers, but a man more hostile in spirit to the truth than the rulers themselves; for he solicited, unasked, letters from them to the synagogues at Damascus. Their most zealous instrument converted, the rulers pause in their career of outward opposition, and the "church had rest throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria," (chap. ix. 31), till the civil power in the person of Herod, essays to put down the spreading sect, by striking at them in the city of Jerusalem. James, the brother of John, is killed by the sword, and Peter is kept in prison, guarded by

* Is not this the meaning of the statements in chapters ix. 7, xxii. 9, "hearing a voice," "but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me?"

four quaternions of soldiers, to be killed after the feast of the Passover. Twice had he been imprisoned before. To make all secure he is chained to two soldiers, and one night only intervenes before the time appointed for his execution. But that night the angel of the Lord awakes the apostle, while the sleeping guards are unconscious that the prisoner escapes them. He leaves the prison, and the iron gate which led into the city, opened to let the angel and Peter pass of its own accord, and he was free; and shortly afterwards Herod, his hands stained with the blood of James, is smitten to death by the angel of the Lord.

On whose side then was God now? For whom was His power exercised? These displays of it for the deliverance of His people had a feature in them most peculiar. They were not miracles worked by men, but the direct interpositions of God on their behalf. It was the finger of God manifested in that very city of Jerusalem, of which He had said His name should be there. The arm of the

Lord was again awake, but this time for the safety and shelter of those whom the rulers wished to put down. In no other place in the whole earth could His power, when exercised, have more plainly declared His approval of the apostles and brethren. Here, in the very centre of those who claimed to adhere to, and support, the revelation He had formerly given at mount Sinai by Moses, is the Lord showing Himself strong in favour of those, who announce a fresh revelation from the God of their fathers. The high priest and all the elders of Israel are arrayed on one side; the apostles and their converts on the other. On the one side is earthly power, and the prestige of many centuries; on the other side is human weakness, and a revelation, at the most, a few years old. And the Lord Jehovah, by the Holy Ghost, personally present on the earth, shows plainly in the very metropolis of Judaism, and under the shadow of that house which the Jews called His temple, who are His. His acts, His interpositions in power, to all who had eyes to see and

hearts to discern, decided the question without equivocation or the possibility of a doubt. How convincing this should have been to their enemies, how encouraging it must have been to them. "The Lord of hosts was with them, the God of Jacob was their refuge."

But they had a work to do, to make known to Jews and Gentiles that One whom they owned as Lord and Christ. How should this be accomplished? By the display of power? No, but by the preaching of the word. Power reveals God as almighty, the word preached reveals Him as the God of all grace. Hence the next thing we see is the manifestation of the efficacy of the word of the Lord, and its suitability for all classes and nations, Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, barbarian and civilized. Some of each are brought under its power, and show themselves obedient to the faith. Was the religion of Jesus to be propagated only by power, those, who succeeded the apostolic age, might well have trembled and shrunk back, appalled at the task before them. But

since it was to be propagated by the word, the same word which was effectual then is effectual now—God's word applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost; and the same divine remedy suited then, is suited now. Whatever be the condition of darkness and ignorance now, it is not worse than that which reigned at Thessalonica or Lystra. Whatever be the pitch of civilization, and refinement, and intellectual activity the world may now exhibit, it will not surpass what could be formerly met with at Rome, Corinth, or Athens. The preached word was the instrument suited for them, it is equally suited for the civilized world now. Hence, outside Jerusalem, as has been stated, the prominent feature is the Lord working by His word. In Jerusalem, the need was to show that Christianity came from God. The display of God's power did that. Outside it, and to all the ends of the earth, the object was to point out what suits lost man. The word of God does that.

But there is something else displayed in the Acts—the Lord acting in grace

toward His failing servant. If we speak of Paul's failure, we must not forget the honour due to him, surpassed by none, in zeal for the Lord's glory, and devotedness to the maintenance and propagation of His truth. Yet he failed, and the Holy Ghost has recorded it for our warning, instruction, and comfort, because the failure gave occasion for the display of God's grace towards His servant. How comforting to all, who are privileged to labour in the field, to contemplate the displays of grace to Paul. How often do we need it. Blessed be God, what was here shown to Paul can be shown to all His people. How could any, conscious of what they are in themselves, stand for one moment without the knowledge of it. If the Lord had displayed His power at Jerusalem, and manifested the efficacy of His word wherever preached, He will now display His grace to His servant, who has for the moment acted in accordance with his heart's desire, and not in accordance with the Lord's revealed will.

Paul purposed in spirit to go to Jerusalem, but the Holy Ghost on the way expressly forbade this. (Chap. xix. 21; xxi. 4.) Not even a Paul can act contrary to the Spirit's expressed will with impunity. He adheres to his purpose, and before the week is out he is a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. If he had turned away when warned at Tyre, he would have been free and able to labour as before. He goes to Jerusalem, but has no opportunity that we read of for active service. What is the result? He has disobeyed the direct word of the Holy Ghost. Will the Lord leave him now to himself? He must feel the consequences of his act, but he is also to experience the Lord's tender grace, manifested after failure. Alone in prison, with none who counselled his submission to the law to comfort him, the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul." What tenderness was there in this. It was no message from God like that by Nathan to David. It was no angel that He sent as at Bochim. But at night, when all the

world is asleep, and Paul alone in his prison, the Lord Himself comes to him. Had he obeyed the Lord's word, would he have been there? He is not chided for his act; but surely this display of grace must have had for him a power, greater than any chiding or words of reproof. His disobedience is not passed over; but the Lord can show His grace. And now what honour is put on the lately failing servant. "As thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." How often have those, who have in the main served an earthly master faithfully, been dismissed in the most summary way for some trifling inattention or fault. But the Lord here tells His servant of other work in store for Him, the high honour of being a witness for Him in the capital of the world. To Rome then he goes, after imprisonment at Cesarea, in the company on shipboard of 275 souls. What cause had all on board to thank God for Paul's presence among them. Gifted by God with a prescience which the sailors have not (chap. xxvii. 10),

he foresees and warns them of their danger. But they heed him not. A second time Paul breaks silence, when "neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them," to remind them of the previous warning which had come true, and to announce the safety of all on board, but the destruction of the ship (ver. 21—26) on a certain island. A third time he speaks, and this time the centurion gives ear, and the boat by which the sailors intended to escape is cut adrift, for Paul knew their purpose. (Ver. 31.) A fourth time he comes forward, and entreats all to take nourishment after an abstinence of fourteen days, assuring them that not an hair should fall from the head of any of them. (Ver. 34.) This time he gains the confidence of all. What a position did he occupy on board that ship. He cheered them when their misfortunes were at their height, and assures them of safety when no deliverance appeared at hand. To him all owe their deliverance from drowning (ver. 24) and the prisoners from death at the

hand of the soldiers. (Ver. 43.) Reaching the shore, he restores to health the father of Publius, and others also who were sick. He a prisoner dispenses blessings, by the favour of his God as he proceeds to the judgment-seat. Such honour is put on him by the Lord. He reaches Rome according to His word, and, though a prisoner in bonds, by teaching sets souls free. He, who had failed by going to Jerusalem, is an instrument the Lord uses and honours at Rome. His failure is not overlooked, his bonds attest that; but the favour of the Lord is as clearly evidenced by the place of service and prominent position to which He calls His servant.

Here the book closes, complete in itself. The Lord's presence with His people, the power of His word on the earth, His faithfulness to His own, such are the chief features of this striking history. On high He was yet thinking of them. From the Father's right hand He watched over them; and the Holy Ghost was with them, as a witness of the truth, and a director of their work.

How precious is all this, and how sweet, that the last feature in the book should be the Lord's unfailing grace to His servant. For what He was then, that He is still. All that He was to Paul, that He will be to those who serve Him now. At this juncture the book concludes. The object in view is accomplished, and the historian lays down his pen.

ETERNAL LIFE.

"These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." (John xx. 31.) "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, who believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John v. 13.)

These two passages bind the gospel of John and the Epistle together in the common purpose to give to the believer the assurance of the possession of eternal life.

The grace and infinite goodness of God in this purpose, and of its moment to our souls, I need not here stay to

insist upon. For certainly there is not a heart that has duly pondered the meaning and weight of the terms but will be disposed to adore God, first, for this gift to guilty, ruined men, and next, for the assured possession of it on grounds so wonderful and divine. But I may say, that it is inconceivable how much we lose of the enjoyment of that which is our proper portion in Christ—of God's gift to us in Him—by lightly passing over, through a too-common familiarity with them, the terms in which the revelation of His grace to us is expressed.

But I will endeavour briefly to unfold these passages in their connection and import for our establishment and profit in the grace in which we are set.

The object both of the Gospel and the Epistle is the presentation of "that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." And it is written, as to the ground of the possession of this life, "He that hath the Son hath life." The dread alternative too is equally given, "He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." In the

Gospel it is especially the presentation of the eternal life as it appeared amongst men in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so that believing on Him, "we might have life through his name." Hence, in the outset of the Gospel, after the wonderful statement that, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," it is added, "in him was life, and the life was the light of men." This was what the Lord Jesus Christ was personally. He was God; and in Him was life. Life was in Him as in its proper fountain, and was possessed by Him. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Moreover, "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth [giveth life], even so the Son quickeneth [giveth life to] whom he will." And when it is said, "The life was the light of men," or conversely, "the light of men was the life," it speaks of it as communicated, but still retaining its essential character when communicated to us.

But this is further presented in that wondrous prayer of the Lord Jesus in John xvii. In the second verse the Lord says, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give *eternal life* to as many as thou hast given him." He then shows that eternal life comes to us through the knowledge of the only true God (that is, of the Father), and of Jesus Christ, whom the Father had sent. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." It may be asked, how is this knowledge imparted? and, how is this life given? If we turn to the Epistle we shall find the answer. The apostle says, in the first chapter, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father," &c. The result of this on the part of those who receive the testimony is a common fellowship with the apostle, and also "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." But at the close of the Epistle we get an energetic sum-

ming up of all the truths that he had been insisting on in the Epistle; and here it is we find, doctrinally presented, that most wondrous comment on the words of the Lord Jesus already quoted from John xvii. 4. The apostle says, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God, and the eternal life.*"

Here it is concerning the Lord Jesus that the affirmation is made, "This (*οὗτός*, this one) is the true God, and the eternal life." Hence we know the only true God. And we know Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent; which our Lord declares is eternal life. But it is still further stated, that we are "in him that is true," which shows the way in which this wondrous knowledge comes to us, and how it is possessed. As the Apostle Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation;" and, "I knew a man in Christ." But who can fathom these depths which are thus

laid open to the simplicity of faith? They may, indeed, be hidden from the wise and prudent of this world, but they are revealed unto babes; for herein alone consists the true knowledge of God, and everything short of this is atheism; not formal atheism, it may be, but real; for God is known only in the revelation of the Son. "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." And this is the meaning of the words with which John closes his epistle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," coming after the statement, "this is the true God, and the eternal life." That is, he has presented to them, in this wonderful statement concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the true objective idea of the only true God and the eternal life; consequently every notion of God framed in the mind that is contrary to this is not a true conception of the true God, but is an idol of the mind—a mere vanity. But it needs not further comment.

In this presentation of Christ as the

eternal life it is not as if His sufferings and obedience and death and work were excluded, as the necessary grounds of our possession of that life. Far otherwise. These were necessary to the glory of God, without which no sinner could ever be admitted to His holy presence. For God cannot deny Himself. They are equally necessary to us as affording the ground on which God can be shown to be just, as well as the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. But who does not feel that this revelation on which we have been resting carries us far, far beyond all the questions which ordinarily occupy the souls of Christians even, such as pardon and peace and acceptance and hope, and law and obedience; in a word, beyond every question that can by possibility come back reflexly upon self, while it lands us in the depths of God's eternal love, and in the infinitude of His own being? "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and the eternal life."

What depth and force also does this revelation give to the declaration—too

often too lightly passed over—"that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." For if the source of the one stamps its indelible character on that which flows from it, no less does that also of the other. But I forbear; not because there is not infinite joy in pursuing these things, but because no explanation of man can give them their place in the heart. They can be only known in their power in the soul's intimacy of communion with God, and in giving to His wondrous word its full meaning and place. But what I have written may help some thirsting soul to drink more deeply at these eternal fountains and well-springs of eternal joy and refreshment.

"Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth, unmeasured, no man knows;
I see from far thy beauteous light,
And inly sigh for thy repose:
My heart is pained, nor can it be
At rest, till it find rest in thee."