

THE  
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

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

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VOL. X.

LONDON:  
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

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1866.

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A S E R I E S .

No. 17.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

If we rightly understood and weighed the circumstances under which the Lord took his seat on high; the state of things here; the sense of His rejection which led Him at the close of His ministry (Matt. xxii. 43, &c.) to quote Psalm cx. as indicating the course He was about to take, we should at once apprehend how morally necessary it is that His coming again should be the eager, constant expectation of His people here on the earth during His absence.

The Lord Jesus is called to sit down above until His enemies are made His footstool, and there He is now waiting; and the fact of His quoting Psalm cx. when He did, proved that He was aware

of His rejection, which was fully perpetrated at the stoning of Stephen.

He is set down at the right hand of power. All power has been given Him in heaven and earth. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the promised seed, the true Son of David, but being rejected; the Jews having refused the sure mercies of David, the times of refreshing, which should come from the Lord's presence on earth, are postponed, and He sits down at God's right hand waiting until His foes are made His footstool. Being rejected by His earthly people, He foregoes His right and rule for a season; but this very fact makes His return necessarily the *first* expectation of His people, as also the true criterion of the state of their hearts respecting Him.

Scripture supplies us with four reasons why the coming of the Lord should be the first of our expectations. First, It is the Lord's own desire to come. To the true heart there could be no greater incentive or motive for any expectation or desire, than the simple

assurance that it is its Lord's own desire to come. And is it not so? He says that He goes away until His foes are made His footstool; thus plainly intimating that it is because of His foes that He, for a time, is absent, and therefore it is the time of His patience, as John says, "the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ." He waits and has patience until the time of His returning arrives; but His heart is set on it. He says, "I go to prepare a place for you," and "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." (John xiv.) When pressed by the chief priests and Pharisees, who sought false witness against Him to put Him to death, He says, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Insulted and afflicted as He was at that moment, He casts His eye forward and scans the day of His power, in contrast to the scene of shame and contempt which He was passing through. The most glorious announcement the Spirit

gives of Him is, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." (Rev. i. 7.) His own reply, when the Spirit and the Bride say "Come," is, "Behold, I come quickly." The assurance of the angels to the disciples who lingered gazing after Him as He was taken up (Acts i. 11), is "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." His reiterated warning to His disciples, was that they should watch for His return. He describes to them the fatal consequences which should befall them if they in heart should say, "My lord delayeth his coming:" the servants would then eat and drink with the drunken; there would be grievous intermixture of His servants with the world, and the worst forms of priestly domination would prevail in the Church; while, as shown by the parable of the ten virgins, the aspect of His people in the world would be that of sleep, until the cry of His coming should rekindle the flame of life wherever it was in the souls of any.

But not only did our blessed Lord set forth in the most forcible language the evil consequences of losing sight of His coming, but He also declared to them the blessing that should accrue to them if they were found waiting for their Lord. Such faithfulness of heart is so grateful to Him, that He pronounces, "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily," He continues (His heart disclosing how He appreciates such a state of soul), "verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." No attitude, no condition of soul, so pleasing to Him as watching and waiting for His return; and to those who are thus engaged, there will be unbounded manifestations of His satisfaction in the rich servings of His love, and it could not be otherwise. If His people are true to Him they must be widows here, during His absence, and their heart demands it of them that they should wait for Him from heaven. (1 Thess. i.) It is His

own desire to come again to receive us unto Himself, and, therefore, surely the heart that is true to Him, that is *near* to Him, must respond to this, the desire of His heart; and keep ever before it the Lord's return, as its first and leading expectation. It is evident that souls had got away from Him, and were not in communion and nearness to Him, or they never could have lost the freshness and blessedness of looking for His return. The soul near Him would have imbibed His own purpose and desire, and would have been the more earnest in it as it felt the desolation here during His absence, and the misrule of everything because it was not the day of His power.

And this brings us to the second reason why His coming should be our first expectation, namely, Because His rights will not be established until He comes. What righteous soul, not to say what loving heart, can survey the disorder and misrule of this world now in the hands of man, under the god of this world, without being oppressed with

the sense that its rightful Lord is not here, that the King of kings and Lord of lords is neither owned nor ruling. We know that He is the rightful Lord, that God hath set all things under His feet, and yet we see not yet all things put under Him. (Heb. ii. 9.) We know that it is man's day, and therefore we judge nothing until the Lord comes, until the day of His power. The spiritual must have the sense that the Lord is not reigning. They feel that He whose right it is is not in His true place; that His place is occupied by another, and hence the faithful servant is in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. I am formally and characteristically here at the Lord's supper announcing the Lord's death until He comes. I take this place; it suits me during His absence, allowing nothing else to characterize me till He comes. The knowledge of His rights not yet entered on, but usurped by another, the greater it is, the more are we separated from the world—the system which rejects Him and occupies in men's hearts His proper

place. We know that every knee shall bow to Him, but we see around us no recognition of His right and rule; and the more we are conscious of this, the more must we, because it is righteous, desire that He whose right it is should come and reign. He cannot reign until He comes. The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ were displayed in the holy mount. That was the kingdom of God come with power, disclosed for a moment to a few faithful ones on the earth. How blessed and how wondrous! It is impossible for me to have a true feeling sense of His right to rule over things here, and to see how everything is out of course and used against Him, not to be earnest and longing for the day of His glory when He will come and reign. I cannot be truly in His kingdom and patience without an eager longing for the time when He shall take to Himself His great power and reign. Hence no sooner does the seventh angel sound, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," than there is

the response, "We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come: that thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned." The apostle (1 Tim. vi. 14—16) exhorts Timothy of the "appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." That was to be his incentive to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable, because He, in the suited time, would display it; He the blessed and only potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. The heart necessarily turned to the time when He should be set in His true place, and in the full exercise of His power; and, therefore, in the Second Epistle he characterizes the saints as *loving* His appearing. It is His right to reign. He is now waiting until His appointed hour arrives; but every faithful servant is in His kingdom and patience, and, in the sense of His right, must, as he feels it and is oppressed by the confusion and evil here, desire above all things, and look out for His coming. Nay, the more troubled we are, the more we shall find out that our rest and our

relief will be only when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven. So that the establishment of His right will also be our gain, which is *another* reason why we should desire His coming.

Therefore Peter writes, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 13.) His coming, His exaltation, will confer the greatest blessings on the saints. First, the resurrection of the bodies of the saints does not take place until He comes.\* "Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's at his *coming*." (1 Cor. xv. 23.) "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his

\* It must not be supposed that because I here view the Coming in its most comprehensive sense, that I do not distinguish between the coming for the saints and with them, or that I confine it to one point of time. That an interval will elapse between the two is clear, how long we cannot say; but both belong to the day of His power, the dawn of which the rapture will be.

glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) When Christ enters on the day of His power, the first display of His power will be the resurrection. The moment He ceases to wait—when He takes to Himself His great power, even before there is a manifestation of His rule on earth, and before His appearing to the earth—the resurrection will take place; and the first action of His power will be to clothe His body, the Church, and all those who without us could not be made perfect in glorious bodies like unto His own. Again, John says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We cannot see Him as He is until He appears; and if we desire to be like Him, we must desire to see Him as He is. His own desire is that we should be with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory; and until He appears we cannot appear in glory; for it is when Christ, who is our life, shall ap-

pear, that we also shall appear with Him in glory. Our appearance in glory is a consequence of His appearing. How many and how blessed are the provocations to our hearts to desire His coming? How suited it is that so much and such varied blessing for us should be thus inseparably connected with His coming. Our happiness in any blessing depends greatly in the happiness of those we love, and surely in our hearts we could not desire to reach perfect blessing while our Lord was still waiting for the consummation of His glory and position, and therefore it is grateful to us that our perfection in blessing occurs simultaneous with His coming to rule in all the largeness and fulness of His right. If the resurrection of the body be desired by us—and it is the full consummation of the eternal life given to us in Christ—the sense of eternal life in us now reaches on to the full manifested power of it. For if the Spirit of Christ dwell in us, He that raised Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwelleth in

us. The consummation does not take place, and it is suited and consistent that it should not take place, until the dawn of the day of the Lord, of which it is the first act of His power. Hence we wait for His coming "until the day dawn, until the day-star arise in our hearts." His coming will bring perfect blessing for us. We do not see Him till then; we are not like Him till then. The more our hearts are taken up with Him in His absence, the more must we desire His coming when all these varied and marvellous blessings will be perfected to us. A saint who departs is truly with the Lord, and in full and uninterrupted rest and nearness to Him, but he has not a resurrection body: he does not see Him, he is not yet like Him, nor can be until He comes. And more than this, we are not consciously or knowingly re-united with those gone before until He comes. It is when He comes that "the dead shall rise first; and then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be for ever with

the Lord." These are the words with which we are to "comfort one another." We do not pass the judgment-seat of Christ until He comes, that wondrous moment when all we have been, in the presence of His long-suffering and continued grace, will be brought forward and stand out in contrast. This cannot take place till He comes; and, lastly, there will be no rewards or defined sphere for us in our relation to Him until He comes. How could there be? Spirits absent from the body, present with the Lord, could have no definite sphere or reward until the Lord had come and taken to Himself the power "whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Surely, then, our hearts are not truly estimating the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, if we are not desiring His appearing and kingdom. And if our hearts *are* thus true, if we are in any degree impressed with the force and conclusiveness of the above reasons for desiring the coming of the Lord, the *fourth*, and last, reason would be simple

and only natural for us, namely, that our hearts would not consent to suggest anything else to Him but to *come*. Hence the Spirit and the Bride say "Come." There is no other suggestion to offer; no other action of our Lord could meet the necessity of the heart but His coming, and, therefore, it can suggest nothing save "come." If it could suggest anything else, it would imply that there was something which would be of more value to us than His coming, or be a substitute; whereas there can be nothing else so precious or so valuable to us. His coming is so connected with the desire of His own heart, with His rights, and with our great perfect blessing, that the Spirit who acts for Him here can say nothing else but "come." Neither can the bride; it is the one breathing of the heart of the bride. Nothing else can she say but "come." If we are in the Spirit we must say "come," for the desire of the Holy Ghost is for the day of His power, and His coming for the Church is the beginning of it, the day-star of it. The

Bride, in the affection of her heart, and every one partaking of her affection, can say nought else but "come."

In conclusion, I may repeat that I have not here drawn any distinction between His coming and His appearing, my object being to set forth the moral of both rather than the details; and to engage the souls of saints with their Lord's *desire* and His *right*, as primary even to their own gain, great and wondrous though the latter be, as we have seen. The heart that is true to Him will readily discern the difference between the earlier and later actions of His coming; between the moment when He no longer waits but rises from the throne, and the full glow and power of the day when He *appears*, and when "*every eye shall see him.*"

May He keep our hearts in such simple allegiance and devotedness to Himself, that we may not afford ourselves any other suggestion to Him but that which alone suits the love and fidelity of our hearts, "Even so *come*, Lord Jesus." Amen.

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## THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE, AND THE GROUNDS ON WHICH IT IS TO BE RECEIVED.

I desire to present a few thoughts on the subject of the authority of Scripture, and the grounds on which it claims to be received by us as divine.

The infidelity which nearly on every hand presents itself either in books or in the common intercourse of life almost of necessity throws the minds of thoughtful Christians, at least, upon a review of the grounds of their faith, and upon asking themselves the question, "What is it that we do believe, or profess to believe, and on what grounds? and how is it that we are henceforward to maintain our position against the world?" The only true answer to this questioning I have no difficulty in conceiving, and it will be the main object of this paper to place it before the reader's mind. Meantime I observe that Romanism and ritualism on the one hand, and Pantheism or a philosophy which is essentially pantheistic\* on the other, are at the pre-

\* That is, a philosophy, or a faith if you please which confounds God with the universe.

sent moment making advances in a manner that is extraordinary, and, perhaps, unexampled. They are winning the favour of multitudes around us, and are advancing as well in the upper as the lower classes of the community. These facts seem to be indisputable, and may be said to obtrude themselves upon us every day, and are indeed generally admitted, in tones either of triumph or of uneasiness and alarm.

This aspect of things, it is admitted, is sufficiently fraught with anxiety for those who are looking only at its possible effect on the christian institutions of the country; and for those also who have nothing more stable on which to base their convictions than their educational habits of reverence for Christianity, which it may be are already beginning uneasily to be felt as totally inadequate to resist the strain which any day may possibly be put upon them. But to the Christian who has consciously nothing to maintain but what the Scripture declares to be essential and of permanent and eternal bearing, and

whose faith has heretofore rested on this testimony as absolutely divine, there is nothing as regards himself to give him one moment's serious concern. He may be awakened by a knowledge of these facts, as he ought to be, to do one of two things. He may either fairly examine this infidelity or atheism that is at present so clamorous for a hearing, and then he will learn that under all its varied guises it is simply "IMPIETY CHRISTIANISED," as it has been rightly designated—and which he will feel at no loss how to dispose of. Or he may apply the fresh energy of an unsophisticated understanding to the pursuit of truth on its own ground the Scripture, and then he will soon be able to solve the problem before him, and will reach a ground that he will know to be immovable. And thus with faith proven anew, he will only be driven in, by what we have referred to, upon the only position where a stand can by any means be made, the authority of Scripture thus being held as absolute, and not to be abated with any other pretended sources of belief.

Far happier is that state of mind where it exists, in which its possessor is carried on in the calm unquestioning enjoyment of what the inestimable word of God reveals, unvisited by the doubts and perplexities that agitate many bosoms around him, than it is to get the clearest answer (by going through them) to the unrestrained speculations of the human mind in a sphere that is altogether beyond its powers. I at least should feel indisposed to break in upon his calm. There is little profit in drawing attention to objections that men are bringing against God's revelation, though it were only to show how baseless is their character and how easily they could be overthrown. But there are times in which for a moment it may seem necessary to leave the quiet enjoyment of the house in which ordinarily we are in tranquil repose, to glance at the security of the foundation on which it rests. And wherever there is interest enough in the contents of the divine word to make it a matter of concern that it should be valid and true, there

at least there will be felt an interest in the proofs by which it is authenticated. Not that for a moment I think anything can be added to the force of that proof without which all others are of slender value. I mean the proof which, if it be not satisfactory to the conviction of others, is to individual consciousness alone of real value, the proof resulting from having been brought into unquestionable living intercourse with God on the basis of what the divine record unfolds.

Sceptical thoughts are for the most part the result of viewing the Scriptures through what may be termed a human medium, that is, through the observations of men upon them, instead of in their own connected harmony and simplicity and power. At least I have found this to be the case in more than a single instance, especially amongst the young. Such an acquaintance with Scripture will never stand against the sophistries of disbelievers of the present or of any day. Nothing so tends to correct these thoughts [for I am writ-

ing for those to whom they are supposed to be unwelcome], as the quiet, diligent reading of the Scripture itself. It is thus that a thousand difficulties disappear, and proofs unquestionable of their divine origin arise upon the mind. To judge otherwise is like reasoning upon the existence and attributes of some object in nature, the real character of which has never been apprehended by the mind. At best, it is like attempting to judge of some natural scene that is extended around us, not as it is presented in the clear sun-light, but as it is seen in the dimness of twilight or enveloped in a mist. It is thus that an accomplished christian writer speaks of an antichristian work, a pretended life of Jesus, written with great fascination: "Are there any among us—on the christian side—who would wish to see a formal refutation of this illusory book? the best refutation of it is that which it receives when an ingenuous reader, in closing it, opens one of the gospels . . . . The feeling of revulsion and disgust is irresistible." The dreams and spectres

that haunted us in darkness and the night are driven off by light and morning.

It has long since been observed, that, "generally speaking, those who throw off all dependence upon revealed religion, with great inconsistency, attach their faith to some one leader as infallible, and embrace all his dogmas with the most slavish submission." Every fresh school of disbelief has its leader and apostle; and every phase of infidelity presents *man* to be believed in instead of *God*. Men avail themselves of the light of revelation as to the creation of the world, the being and attributes of God, an upholding and a controlling providence or power, &c., by which they escape, in their reasonings, the follies of the ancient philosophers, and then use the knowledge they have gained from Scripture to discredit its testimony. They readily appropriate the light that gives exaltation to man and his powers, and reject that which emphatically brings in God. They are content to use the clue which Scripture affords to guide themselves through an

inextricable labyrinth, where all before them, who had not this clue, utterly lost their way, and then, from the eminence which Scripture has enabled them to gain, they seek to make themselves independent of its aid, and to discredit its testimony exactly at that point where man's moral condition is brought in, and where alone, in divine grace and love, its remedy has been disclosed.

No one ever so little acquainted with these reasonings can escape the conclusion, that the juster thoughts of the men, who possess a revelation, which they seek to overthrow, they owe to that very circumstance, and not to the superior powers of their mind. Just so far as the truth of Scripture remains abstract they are content to use it as a fulcrum to overthrow that part of it which marks out their present responsibility and insists on their future accountability to God. In this it will be seen that, so far, revelation or Scripture is its own witness, because it irradiates a sphere that never could be projected by the mind of man. Consequently all

disbelievers, the material atheist excepted, are obliged to take its testimony (*quoad hoc*) on its own authority. I mean that they are obliged to take the account which Scripture gives of the existing state of things, because there is no light upon it from any other source. But what is there in reason or consistency, that should make *me* stop here?

There is a creation. There is an existing uncaused cause of all. There is the presence of moral evil in a world that owes its existence to a God of goodness, as these disbelievers in a revelation would assert. In this world there are the most frightful anomalies. There is man with his constitution, his aspirations, his forebodings, his capacities, —undertrodden and oppressed, crushed under the iron heel of despotism—or, in more favoured circumstances, led by ten thousands to death and torture in sanguinary wars—and—ambition, luxury, avarice apart—the teeming millions of the population of the globe are as little accounted of as the sands of the desert. There is the accumulated mass of human

misery around us, with its seething passions and brutalized ignorance, its dens of misery and crime, and its ten thousand oppressions. There is pain and suffering, and grinding poverty, and unmitigated sorrow, and there is death ! These are all to be accounted for. Scripture, it is true, makes all plain. But without it, how are men to dispose of these difficulties ? It matters not—the Christian, the infidel, and the atheist are on common ground here. They must take the world as it is, and account for its condition as best they may. Philosophy may speculate, but the hard problem of “the world as it is,” stands before it unsolved.

But there is something else to account for. Interwoven with the world's history of the last two thousand years there is a religion which had its obscure commencement in Palestine, that, in less than three centuries from the ignominious death of its founder, in spite of persecutions, by its own energy, pervaded the entire extent of the Roman Empire, and, in some instances, traversed coun-

tries far beyond its limits. It is an unquestionable fact that, in spite of innumerable martyrdoms of its professors, this religion, within that period, changed the whole moral aspect and institutions of every country bordering on the shores of the Mediterranean. From the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and from the forests of Germany to North Africa and the Libyan desert, men of every condition of life, and of every species of moral and intellectual training, as well as communities, were to be found professing subjection to its sway. I do not dwell, as has been so often done, on its having ascended the throne of the Cæsars.

By those who are conversant with the history of this period, I know it may be objected that there was boundless corruption amongst its professors, and motives the most sordid had drawn innumerable hypocrites to its standard. Be it so. Still, whatever may be set off on this account, there *was* the standard, which it was worth their while to join, when the amphitheatre, and the gibbet,

the rack, and the mines were no longer the penalty of their faith.

But there is still something beyond this to account for. There is the collection of the writings of the New Testament, which, from the earliest periods, has been the subject of attack by disbelievers of every character and of every qualification, and, it might be added, almost of every clime. But to this day it remains in its integrity, after all the fiery ordeal it has had to sustain, at constantly recurring periods, for near two thousand years. Still it remains amongst us, like the "two prophets" in the Apocalypse, "to torment them that dwell on the earth."

The great body of infidel objections, which have been reproduced from age to age, were answered by Origen within a little of a hundred and fifty years after the latest books of the New Testament were written. And the various attacks which have been made upon it since have not merely been repelled by christian writers, but have been set aside as futile by succeeding writers on the anti-christian side. Every fresh attack, as it

has varied its ground, has been the witness of the unsuccessfulness of every other. The work unaccomplished has had to be done over again. And now, at length, the question is so narrowed, by the mere process of exhaustions, as to be nearly reduced to the single issue of whether the New Testament shall be received, on its own showing, as a divine revelation, or material atheism be embraced as the only consistent alternative. Constituted as the human mind is, it demands consistency in the grounds of its beliefs, or its disbeliefs, and things have been driven to this point by anti-christian writers themselves, that it exists no longer midway between the one and the other of these positions.

The authentication of the records in question is complete as a mere historical question, unless every fragment of ancient history that has come down to us on the stream of time is to be rejected. And criticism adverse and favourable has so effectually done its work that it is not possible for their import to be evaded. There is but another alternative.

That there are difficulties in Scripture all must admit. There are difficulties in chronology—difficulties in harmonising certain revelations of facts—difficulties arising from the range of matters treated of—difficulties inseparable from the briefness of the his-

tories, or rather the memoirs of histories, that are given. Is it wonderful that there should be difficulties in a record which embraces the whole course of time from the creation and the introduction of man into the world, to the final close of all earthly history? Is it extraordinary that there should be difficulties connected with numbers and genealogies, in a book in which endless details are given? especially if we think for a moment of the difficulties in connection with almost every ancient author that has come down to us, from corruptions of the text, from ignorance of customs and events, and from chronology? Is it wonderful that there should be difficulties in a book that embraces such a boundless variety of subjects? that soars so high and descends so low? that interweaves itself with the histories of nations and dynasties, and at the same time condescends to the details of families and all the circumstantiality of domestic life? How wonderful is it that notwithstanding all this its thread should never be broken! It is almost passing wonder that every subsequent revelation should so recognize all that was prior, should so adapt itself to what had been declared of man's condition, should so acknowledge the hopes that promises had raised, and so conform itself to what prophecy had declared, that its various writers

in remote ages, and of dissimilar manners and without personal communication should be so found to harmonize, that if any book of Scripture were withdrawn the sense of incompleteness would be felt!

It may be asked, What should be done in reference to works in which these objections are urged, and which are occupied with the "free criticism" of the day, as it is called? This question may be answered by another. If I am convinced by a positive divine evidence of the truth of Scripture, is there any advantage in being occupied with the negative objections of unbelief? It may, perhaps, be the duty of some to read such books in order to refute them, or at least to see that they are refutable, but it seems to me that a person must hold the truth cheaply, and think but little of its author, who can, without necessity, take up works whose whole aim is to undermine his faith, and make what comes from God appear to be a forgery and a lie. I do not know that I owe so much respect to these brain-spun theories of men as to give them for an hour a lodging in my mind. For I repeat, the positive proofs of the inspiration of Scripture are all in itself. [The history of the transmission of the books of Scripture is altogether a separate question.]

First of all it is to be remembered that

the only due reception of a revelation from God is by faith. Then, whatever difficulties attach to its form may become the subject of patient enquiry or stand over till further light. Next, it should be borne in mind for what end distinctly this revelation is given, viz., that God may be known and His salvation personally received. Next in order of importance is the unfolding God's counsels and ways; but these, in order to be apprehended by us, demand a spiritual faculty. The harmony of Scripture, that is the coherency and congruity of its various parts, can only be appreciated as a result of understanding the meaning of Scripture, or in other words by the exercise of a spiritual understanding in Scripture itself. There is enough in Scripture that makes its appeal to man's conscience—enough in its declarations to leave him without excuse if rejected. Still without divine illumination God's revelations in His word will never be rightly received or understood. It was so with Christ's personal manifestation on earth with the Jews. He said, "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not . . . The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day."

I have but cursorily touched my subject, but opportunity may be given by God to return to it again.

## LIBERTY AND SUBJECTION.

“Ye have been called unto liberty, only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (Gal. v. 13.)  
“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor. iii. 17.)

However natural it may be for men to assert their independence and to contend for liberty as their dearest birth-right, there is to Christians a liberty and a subjection altogether the reverse of this, and which belong to them by virtue of their subjection to a Lord which the world does not own. The natural liberty of men too often consists with bondage to sin and Satan, although they may be saying, “Who is lord over us?” The liberty and subjection of which we speak is not to be found apart from the grace that “delivers us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father.”

Our first enquiry, therefore, must be into the nature and limits of the liberty the gospel introduces to, which may be so easily missed; and also into the nature of the subjection which it equally incul-

cates with liberty. Human reasoning here would be out of place, and of no value, since the liberty and subjection we have to do with as Christians have no existence apart from Christianity, and consequently can own no subjection but to its laws. Hence, little else of course, is left, in the enquiry, but to adduce the authority of the New Testament in the various passages which have a bearing on the subject.

I only premise that, with the plainest direction of Scripture in our hands, there is a danger of our liberty degenerating into wilfulness, and of our subjection becoming superstitious and servile—subjection to men and not to God.

“Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men.” (1 Cor. vii. 23.)\* This passage lies at the foundation of the subject before us. Here we find that he who has bought us—has paid the price of our redemption—claims us

\* It is an odd and almost inconceivable use that ignorance has sometimes made of this passage, viz., that Christians ought not to be in the position of servants, as to their earthly condition.

as exclusively his own, to be in subjection only to his will. It is Christ who is absolutely the Lord and Master of those who are redeemed by Him, and not man; and in no circumstances can it comport with our obligations to Him to disregard or go contrary to his will. A slave (*δουλος*) owes subjection to the master who has purchased him. No one contrary to his master's will has the remotest claim of authority over him.

There was no liberty in connection with the systems of polytheism which Christianity superseded. Neither is there any liberty for the people, in connection with popery which has in effect grafted polytheism on the christian institute. Concerning the former the apostle says, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away unto dumb idols, even as ye were led." (1 Cor. xii. 2.) That is, the multitude were mutely and blindly led by an interested priesthood to the worship of idols, the mute creations of man's superstitions and fears. But the reverse of all this is presented in the calling of the believer through the gospel. In

accordance with the known and revealed character of the object of their worship—the living and true God revealed in all His moral attributes in the person and works, and words, and ways of His only-begotten Son, believers are called to present their “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord—that is their intelligent service.” (Rom. xii. 1.)

There is no liberty in the nature of things where a priesthood prevails. There was not even under the priesthood of God's own establishing. This, as we know, was in connection with law or the covenant from Mount Sinai, which (the apostle says) “gendereth to bondage.” Hence in the gospel, which is connected with the new covenant (of which, not Hagar the bondmaid, but Sarah the free-woman, was the type) there is presented as its distinctive characteristic a ministry, and not a priesthood. That is, the law gives a priesthood—the gospel a ministry; the functions of which are essentially opposite the one to the other. In the one case it is the intervention between the

worshipper and God in some necessary service to bring them together; in the other it is the communication of light and instruction to show the basis of communion which God Himself has laid, and thus to bring souls into direct personal intercourse with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is not, however, that priesthood is done away; far from it, for everything in divine grace hangs upon its effective exercise. But then it is Christ who is the high priest of our profession; and His priesthood is carried on in heaven and not upon earth at all. Neither is there now any priesthood on earth, in any speciality of function, except as all believers are declared to be "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And in another epistle it is said they have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Man naturally, since the fall, is the slave of sin; and by his sin even the inferior creation has been brought into subjection—not to sin, but to vanity.

It has thus far participated in man's fall, as the head of creation. But when the liberty of the redeemed will be, not the liberty of acceptance, or the liberty of service merely, but the liberty of glory, then creation that came under the bondage of corruption ("not willingly,") will participate in this liberty. "Creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. viii. 21.) Redemption in its effects extends beyond man, the special subject of it, because it is Christ's glory and authority, as the second Adam and head of the new creation, that are connected with it.

But John viii. 31—36 is a passage that strikingly illustrates the truth of the nature and source of this liberty. But it does more than this. It forcibly presents the harmony of subsequent doctrinal truth, binding it all together in connection with His blessed person and work. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my dis-

ciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth for ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John viii. 31—36.)

Here we perceive it is "the knowledge of the truth" which Christ especially promises to His disciples. And further, He declares that it is the truth makes free, always remembering that it is Christ Himself who is the truth. The knowledge of the truth in the heart is like the rising of the sun in nature, which, by itself, dissipates the darkness and brings the light of day. The darkness of error and ignorance of themselves vanish before the light of truth. But the truth does more than this. It delivers from the fear and the power of

the prince of darkness who holds his usurped dominion in the soul alone by the power of ignorance and error. It is true there is "the bond and chain of our sins," and the hold which Satan has over us by our lusts; but all this gives way before "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So "the truth makes free."

Christ is Himself the truth. He is the truth of God's character in grace. He is the truth also as regards man's moral condition. His very position here in the world declared this. For He was the Son of man "come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Now it is plain that nothing but the participation of the truth as regards God, could ever put man in any acceptable relationship with Him, on which all happiness depends. But this the Lord Jesus, as the Son, alone could give. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Man, whether by nature or under law, is the servant or slave of sin. His nature is evil and contrary to

God, and the law presents no deliverance from this, but only brings out the evil in the shape of transgression, and puts him under the law's curse. It does not free man from the dominion of sin, and in other respects, as the apostle expresses it, it is "a yoke of bondage." This is the condition Christ addresses himself to, when he says, "the servant (or slave) abideth not in the house for ever." He has no rights, no authority, no permanent relationships. He is liable to be turned out of the house at any time. In application to those he was speaking to, it was equal to saying, You are but the slaves of sin, you are in danger any moment of being dismissed in judgment from God's house and presence. For this is in truth the point. "But the Son abides ever"—He has authority and permanent rights in the house. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

What I found upon this is that Christian liberty is nothing more than this, deliverance from the bondage of sin by the Lord Jesus Christ, to be

henceforth in absolute subjection to the authority of Christ as my Lord. Liberty, is liberty in everything to do the will of God and Christ, and not the will of men, nor my own. And this gives the limit of subjection also. I must be subject to God in every relationship in which I am placed and concerning which His will has been expressed.

Romans vi. 18 shows exactly this freedom. "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." And also in verse 22, "Being made free from sin and become servants (or slaves) to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life." Especially also it is expressed in chapter viii. 1, 2, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me *free* from the law of sin and death." Again in 1 Peter ii. 16, "As *free* and not using your liberty as a cloak of covetousness, but as the *servants* of God." The action of this principle Peter had seen beautifully exemplified in the conduct of the

Lord regarding the demand upon him for the tribute money. In reply to Peter's answer our Lord said, "Then are the *children free*. Notwithstanding lest we should offend them," &c. (See Matt. xvii. 24—27.) In absolute contrast to this is that which is presented in 2 Peter ii. 19, "While they promise them liberty they themselves are the servants (slaves) of corruption." What kind of liberty can the slave of corruption promise—but that which man is ever seeking for—liberty from all restraint, that he may do his own will? But this is emphatically liberty only to become the headlong slave of his own lusts.

But there is a liberty which is to be jealously guarded against any infringement—the liberty of grace—which frees the believer from all the claims of legal rites and ordinances. Concerning this the apostle says, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. v. 1.) It is Christ that makes free that we may be in subjection to Him and

not to the yoke of carnal ordinances. The full ground of this is unfolded in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians. But the principle is given by the apostle when he says, "To them that are without law as without law, being not without law to God, but under due subjection to Christ." (1 Cor. ix. 21.) But there is another point at which this liberty may be invaded, which requires to be jealously guarded. In the Epistle to the Galatians it is noticed that false brethren came in to spy out the liberty which the apostle and others had in Christ Jesus, that they might bring them into bondage. Here it is the bondage of human authority that is attempted to be established. But it was thus sternly met by the apostle, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour: that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Gal. ii. 5.) The thing attempted to be imposed by this authority may perhaps be indifferent in itself, but the principle is always in hostility to the Spirit of God. "Full

well," says the Lord Jesus, "ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition:" though the thing in question was only whether it was right to eat bread with unwashed hands, when it was contrary to "the tradition of the elders."

There is a liberty of another kind which Scripture also establishes. It is liberty from being bound by the scruples of other people's consciences. "Why," says the apostle, "is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" And he adds, "If I by grace (or with thanksgiving) be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" The point in question here is eating certain meats, or abstaining from them. In this he shows there is room for the exercise of charity toward the scruples of another; but at the same time asserts that individual christian liberty is regulated by no such punctilios; while he adds, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 29.) But this principle is utterly con-

travened when rules or pledges of abstinence are brought in. It is a principle of Rome, and not of the gospel, that whatever may be abused is to be prohibited.

So as to the exercise of the christian ministry the apostle shows that the same principle obtains. He says, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free?" (1 Cor. ix. 1.) That is, none had a *claim* upon him for this service—often an unrequited service as to men—but Christ, whose servant he was, called him, after his own example, to be as one that served. So that as he says, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." (Ver. 19.)

Liberty of speech or teaching in the Church of God, or as it is called, "liberty of ministry," need not be insisted on here. It is only needful to say in this place that, like every other kind of liberty in the gospel, this also is balanced by subjection. "My brethren," says the Apostle James, "be not many teachers (*μη πολλοι διδάσκαλοι γένησθε*), knowing that we shall receive the greater

condemnation" (or the severer judgment.) And then he adds wholesome words of warning concerning the exercise of this gift, and, in general, the evils resulting from an unbridled use of the tongue. "For in many things," he says, "we all offend. If any man offend not in *word*, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (Jas. iii. 1, 2.)

In a word then the liberty of the gospel is never, and in no sense, to be confounded with natural independence of spirit. It is always, and in all circumstances, subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ *directly*, and intermediately subjection to all to which he has ordained subjection, as will be shown. Meantime, it may be said with the Apostle James, "So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." (Chap. ii. 12.) As he had said previously, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein . . . . this man shall be blessed in his deed." (Chap. i. 25.) That is, there must be reality in the professed subjection to this *law*. For indeed it is a law

—a “perfect law”—for its accomplishment is its own end. It is a law of *liberty*, because what the word of God unfolds as the rule of christian life, is according to the nature and will of God, and no less in accordance with the new nature of the believer.

The subjection of the believer is, as has been already stated, coextensive with his liberty in Christ. But it may be profitable just to glance at the various relations in which that subjection is enforced.

First, there is the general principle, as manifested in christian association, and the spirit marked from whence it flows. “Likewise ye younger *submit* yourselves unto the elder; yea all of you be *subject* one to another, and be clothed with *humility*.” (1 Peter v. 5.)

Next, there is taught the subjection that is due to earthly governments, and also the principle on which it is to be rendered. “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: [it is God in the power that is obeyed:] the powers that

be are ordained of God. . . . Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath [i.e., the fear of punishment], but also for conscience sake." (Rom. xiii. 1, 5.)

Then follows the subjection that is to be manifested in the Church of God.

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) This subjection is of God, and is always due in the Church, altogether apart from official appointment or formal order. This is manifest from 1 Corinthians xvi. 16, "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth." He who can find no room for this in his creed, has need to revise the articles of his belief.

A *bishop* must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own

house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" "Let the *deacons* be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." (1 Tim. iii. 4, 12.) In their rule subjection is to be seen. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." (1 Cor. xiv. 34.) "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The contrary is the subversion of God's natural order in regard to the sexes, and it is the contravention of His expressed will. But this is no licence for man's lordly authority, nor is it the exclusion of woman from her proper sphere, or service, or influence. But whatever puts woman apparently in the place of authority, is the subversion of the order of creation. Its consequences are—neglected duty, an unfeminine spirit, and disorder in domestic ties. Again, we have the subjection that is due in the various

relationships of life in connection with family association. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. *Wives* submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord. . . . *Children* obey your parents in the Lord. . . . *Servants* be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh. . . . not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ. . . . *Masters* do the same things to them. . . . knowing that *your* master also is in heaven." (Ephes. v. vi.) "Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands." These rules of subjection cannot be contemned or neglected without misery. But the age is impatient of restraint. But another reason is given—"that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus ii. 4, 5.)

There is another kind of subjection which the apostle presents, and which it is right to speak of before I close. He says, "The administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the

saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men." (2 Cor. ix. 12, 13.) Here the active benevolence of these Christians of Macedonia and Achaia is adduced as a proof of their professed subjection to the gospel. But why this peculiarity of expression? Was kindness and benevolence unknown before the gospel? or does it never exist apart from subjection to the gospel? Far otherwise. There were always the feelings of natural kindness to draw upon as a resource for the relief of the miserable, the afflicted, and destitute. Still it has been and is the special province of Christianity to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to redeem the captive, to visit the sick. What the gospel has done in regard to efforts of benevolence is to give them the action and force of a fixed principle instead of leaving them to the fitful and uncertain impulse of crude feelings;

while the impelling motive is altogether of another kind from that of either ancient or modern philanthropy. Subjection to the gospel demands this exercise of the benevolent principle—"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to those who are the household of faith."

In conclusion I would say that I have stated the principle of liberty and subjection, as presented in the New Testament; and I have done little more. I have not attempted to follow it out in its various details of practical application. These will readily suggest themselves to those who are desirous in all things to own and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. As to those who, though they profess to be His servants, are nevertheless seeking for power, and place, and distinction in the world, are intent on accumulating its riches, on interfering with its politics, and seeking its honours, whether these be civic or such as the legislature can bestow, I can only say they must be left to another code of morals than that which Christ

has left for the guidance of His servants. It would be well for them, and for us all, to ponder the heart-breaking words of the apostle: "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the *cross* of Christ . . . . who mind earthly things. But our conversation is *in heaven*."

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**"WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH  
PRIEST."**

(Exodus xxviii.)

We are told in Hebrews that "we have a great high Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God;" and again, "We have such an high Priest who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens;" and again, "If he were on earth he would not be a priest." The place of the exercise of the priesthood of Jesus is the heavens; and He has gone there as priest, "when he had by himself purged our sins." His priesthood follows redemption for us. He is gone as a priest there to sustain,

according to the light and perfections of God's presence, those whom He has redeemed. "We see not yet all things put under him," says the apostle, "but we see Jesus . . . . crowned with glory and honour." The same words (see LXX.) as those in verse 2 of our chapter, when speaking of Aaron's garments of "glory and beauty," or "honour;" so we find that what Aaron was typically and officially, when clothed in these garments, Christ is personally. But before we see Him thus as represented in our chapter, let us look on Him in His life down here, before the way into the holiest was made manifest. We read in Exodus xxvi. 31 of a vail which separated the holy place from the most holy, and concealed the glory of God within. A vail composed of "blue and purple and scarlet and fine-twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made." This vail figured to us the flesh of Christ, as we are told in Hebrews x. 20. The materials which composed the vail tell us of the purity and graces of Christ. We find that the

“blue” was the first of these things, the heavenly colour. Heavenly was He in all His ways, walking through the world as “the Son of man who is in heaven.” (John iii.) Truly perfect in His humanity, yet with a savour of heaven in all His ways. The royal colour, the “purple,” was there too; born a king, as we read from the Gentile mouth, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” And then the “scarlet” which conveys to us the human glory of Jesus. (Psalm viii.) And “fine-twined linen,” His own perfect personal spotlessness, and inherent righteousness. With the cherubims added, for God the Father had “given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man,” as we read in John v. The cherubims are always the companions of the throne, the judicial executive of the throne in government. (See them in Gen. iii., Ex. xxv., 2 Chron. iii., Ezek. i.—xi., Rev. iv., &c.) Thus we have in the vail that which concealed God within, and in it the figure of Christ’s flesh. And He was thus presented to

man, and He put forth His claims; but one after another they were refused, rejected and set aside. His earthly claims being thus refused, He must die and rise again that He may have a heavenly people, and bring them in divine righteousness before God. In verse 4 of the chapter before us, we find certain garments which were to be made: a breastplate, an ephod and a robe, a bordered coat, a mitre, and a girdle. Now the ephod was that which peculiarly characterized the priesthood. In 1 Sam. xxii. we read of Doeg the Edomite falling upon and slaying fourscore persons who wore the linen ephod. David, when he enquired of the Lord, put on the ephod. (1 Sam. xxiii. 9—12.) The ephod was composed of the same materials as the veil (without the cherubims), but there was one material *added* to those composing it, which was *gold*. Gold is the figure of divine righteousness in Scripture. The inner part of the tabernacle and the furniture and vessels were of gold. We learn from this, that while God's Son had come

down in divine and perfect love, and "had taken not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he had taken hold;" He who was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." God took Him up and set Him, in divine righteousness, in His presence. He is "with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And we find Him thus set there in divine righteousness before God, and girded with the girdle of service for His people: to wash their feet and cleanse them practically according to the purity of what God *is*, not merely according to what they *ought to be*. We find Him thus in John xiii. All His earthly claims had been put forth before this and refused—as Son of God, Son of David, and Son of man. (See John xi., xii.) He looks beyond it

all into the heavenly glory; and, in the washing of the disciples' feet, we learn that which He girded Himself to do in the glory into which He was about to go. He had come from God and went to God. In the end of chapter xiii. He speaks of His work that gives them a title to be there, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." And in chapter xiv. He enters into the Father's house, now as a glorified man, upon a title that brings others in too, and we find those others in our chapter, His people, associated with Him. (Ver. 9—29.) Their names are borne upon His shoulders and His heart; on the "stones of memorial" and the "breastplate of judgment;" and they are set in their places in GOLD! Brought in and set in *divine righteousness* in Him in the presence of God, "who hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) He bears the weight and burden of His people on His shoulders before God Himself; and more, He cannot

be there without representing them, for we read in verse 28, "They shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod and that the breastplate *be not loosed* from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." And, more than this, He bears their judgment according to the light and perfections (the Urim and Thummim) of God's holy presence. The robe of blue was under all the official garments—the personal, heavenly character of Christ. But when He went into the holy place, to "heaven itself," He left them behind to a "holy Father's" care. As the Father had sent Him into the world, even so does He send them into the world (John xvii.) to bear testimony to Him, and for His name; and to manifest the savour of His life on earth, to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of

God. Thus, as at Pentecost, as our great High Priest went into the holy place to heaven itself, He sent down the Holy Ghost to His people; and as the golden bells and pomegranates were on Aaron's robe, that "his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord." So was the sound of Jesus, the testimony and fruits of the Spirit (the golden bell which made the sound, the testimony; and the pomegranates, the fruit), heard upon earth at Pentecost, when He went in to the holy place.

But the precious fruits are often mingled in their purity with something of the flesh and the natural man; and we read that, "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, *Holiness to the Lord*; and thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things (the testimony and fruits when mingled with

anything of the flesh or the natural man) which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts: and it shall always be upon *his* forehead that *they* may be accepted before the Lord."

Precious and varied and beautiful are the offices He thus sustains for His people—sustains, not merely according to their inconsistencies, but according to the light and perfections and holiness of what God is, to whom they have been brought in Him. F. G. P.

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## "I WILL CONSIDER THY TESTIMONIES."

How varied and precious are the "considerations" set before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, striking chord after chord in our hearts, and producing note after note of praise! In the first chapter the personal and official dignities and glories of the Lord Jesus Christ crowd themselves together and unfold themselves before our souls; while in the second chapter, we have the grace of Him, by whom God spake in these last days, in associating others with Himself when passing through death to the Headship of all things,

crowned with glory and honour: it is as thus set before us, we are told, as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, to "*consider*" Him, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; to gaze on Him, and have our souls enlarged in contemplating Him, "who was faithful to him that appointed him."

But how can such as we sit down and feast ourselves with such considerations, with consciences unpurged and not at rest? In view of this need, and before the next "*consideration*" is presented to us, we are led, in chapters ix. and x., to see the altar of sin-offering receiving a victim, once and for ever, that has satisfied all its cravings, and which has fully answered all the demands of the glory of God as to sin and uncleanness; satisfied the need of the convicted conscience, and silenced every accusing foe. And with consciences thus at rest, we are set down to another consideration for our souls. We are told, in chapter x. 24, to "*consider* one another to provoke unto love and to good works." With the holy peace and calm of purged consciences we are thus, as it were, told that we have leisure to turn round and look one upon another with such an end in view, and so much the more as we see the "*day*" approaching.

But, you will say, there are the trials and difficulties of the way to contend with, and there are the weights and hindrances that would hamper and clog us in our journeying onwards to the glory. And, in view of these things, we are told to turn our eyes toward Him again, and we are exhorted, in chapter xii., to "*consider* him who endured," as One who has been in the way Himself, and understands the grace needed for every step, and who has learned "how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isaiah l.) at every stage of the journey to the place where He has Himself sat down, "lest we should be weary and faint in our minds."

And, lastly, as those who are in the midst of the things that are about to be shaken, and who are dwelling in spirit, and by faith amongst those things which, when all things are shaken, will remain, we are exhorted to "*consider*" the end of the conversation of those who minister amongst us—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Varied and precious are the "considerations" thus laid before us, and to which we are set down to contemplate, in their order and suitability, as every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of our God.

F. G. P.

## ABBA FATHER.

Is there not a lack of a due knowledge of the Father in most saved souls?—a lack of the knowledge of their relationship as sons?—a want of *filial* affection and of communion with the name, and grace, and love of our heavenly Father? Surely there is, and a consequent loss of the blessing proper to that holy relationship, and a want of understanding of that wondrous word of the Lord Jesus, “I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, *for the Father himself loveth you.*” (John xvi. 27.) I make bold to say that the gracious Lord, in teaching His poor disciples, sought to lead their minds and hearts to a knowledge of the Father’s love, more than to aught else. He could tell them of His love—“as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (John xv.)—of washing the feet of His own, of heavenly mansions, and of His return for them, with other precious truths which fell from His lips as they flowed from His heart of love; yet, as it seems to me, nothing does He insist

upon so much as that they (and we) should understand the love and care of the Father. He who of Himself could say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father" came to reveal the Father, and marvellous it is, that while in His dependence as the humbled man on earth, He cried, "Abba Father." (Mark xiv. 26.) The Holy Ghost puts the same cry into the mouth of the sons: "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." (Rom. viii. 15.) Again, that remarkable passage in Galatians iv. 6: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." It must be confessed that many believers are yet without solid peace with God, and this because, not having judged themselves as totally ruined and helpless, they are not thrown over (if I may use the expression) on Christ Himself for righteousness divine before God. They do not get a perfect conscience in His presence and cannot enjoy a fixed, settled peace, founded on Christ's efficacious work and glorious

person. Other saints again, from careless walk, alas! from sin and self, grieve the Holy Spirit of God, the sacred guest of the child of God, whose body is His temple. How can such have peace? A grieved Spirit, because He is the *Holy Spirit*, cannot be the spring of peace and joy to such, or of access to the Father. These all will be, according to their need, looking rather to a Saviour and a knowledge of redemption than entering into the joy of "access by one Spirit unto the Father"—to the blessed acquaintance of "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

But oh! as the loved apostle could witness, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The Father's heart of love was the spring, the living source of all our blessings and mercies. All flowed from Him according to His own grace and mercy, which is "from everlasting to everlasting." He would not spare, but gave freely "the Son who was in the

bosom of the Father;" and the Son could say of His own, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." I would again refer to Scripture, and that affords its plentiful witness to us and a various and affecting testimony, meeting the children of God as it were on every side, whether as to the love of the Father or that which should mould their walk and draw out the affections of their souls to Him. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke we find the gracious Lord telling them that "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him," that "the very hairs of their heads were all numbered." It was "the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom"—that they were to be "perfect as their Father in heaven was perfect." And how sweet that word, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him." Therefore, "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find."

Dear reader, I would inquire plainly of you, whether you possess that confidence in your Father's love, that sense of relationship, and your full title to say, Abba Father, the strongest cord, as another has said, round man's heart—that you can be without fear before Him in worship, in making known all your requests with thanksgiving and have liberty to confess everything to Him? What a place it is! The sweet sense that a Father's heart rests in its love over you—His eye ever upon you—His ear open to every cry, yea groan (see Rom. viii. 26, 27)—His power (Almighty) causing “all things to work together for good.” In John's Gospel, where the Lord Jesus is not revealed as Messiah, but in His full divine glory as Son of God and Son of the Father, what blessed unfoldings we have as to the Father. “The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father *seeketh* such to worship him” (iv. 23); “that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it

you;" "if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." And, to conclude these citations, allowed to speak for themselves in their surpassing sweetness, that most blessed word of Jesus in His prayer (xvii.), "I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." I appeal again, reader, to you as I would to my own soul and conscience, do you enter into this, tasting of the love of God your Father, *and of such character of love?* Happy he who does so in any measure and walks in the power of an ungrieved Spirit! "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father."

To continue a little: and the reading of the precious Scriptures that bring the Father before us in the riches of His grace and glory, I feel to be most blessed. What a testimony does the Epistle to the Ephesians afford us. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us

with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." This founded, I doubt not on the Lord's own declaration after His resurrection, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John xx.), unfolding our standing in the same position with Himself, with His Father in redemption, and our blessed relationship. And the reader will observe how this pervades the epistle. Chapter i. 4, it is as God, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." It is as Father we are "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." (Ver. 5.) Wondrous revelation of grace and love. He would have children to Himself. Sons near Himself! Further, as most know, the prayer of chapter i. is addressed "to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." That in chapter iii. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is as to communion, the former as to power. John tells us in his first epistle of "fel-

lowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ:" the blood of Jesus Christ having cleansed us from all sin, so that we can "walk in the light, as he is in the light." And in a passage before quoted, he does not try to explain or define it, but calls our attention to the love "the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God," the blessed relationship flowing from His heart of love, and securing His children by such a word, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." However hateful sin is, yet provision is thus made, because "grace reigns through righteousness," and there is the advocacy of Christ. If I have quoted at some length from Scripture, dear reader, it was to bring out what the Holy Ghost reveals to us as to the Father and our deep heavenly blessing, heavenly sonship. And now I would say, let us seek to know more of the place of sons—the filial affection. Let us in more simplicity have confidence in our Father; more waiting on Him as dear children. It is not that it

is to lessen our knowledge of, dependence and obedience to, our Lord Jesus; nay, but to increase it. The Father's eye and heart are ever on Him, and it is in communion with the Father that we really see the dignity of Christ's person. His beauty and glory as the Son of man who is in heaven. God has revealed Himself in the person of His dear Son, and in Him we find our all. Our life, righteousness, motive, strength, and wisdom. The true knowledge of the glory of Christ's person opens to us the counsels of God; and in Him, indeed, we know the Father. Let us by the eternal Spirit's power who dwelleth in us, and who down here is the spring of all our knowledge of the Father and the Son—for even the new man in us cannot "take of the things of Christ and show them" to itself—we are absolutely dependent on the Holy Ghost—let us, I would humbly say, in the hand of that blessed Spirit, ungrieved and unhindered, seek to have more fully "our fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Amen.

## THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

“Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”—Heb. ix. 28.

The coming again of the Lord Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as one event, but with varying aspects according to the bearing and moral connections in which it is presented. It is my purpose, if the Lord will, to notice it in these different aspects for the stirring up of our souls to a more earnest desire for the accomplishment of this end of all our hopes.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints is very distinct in its aspect from His coming to the world. The grand distinction however which Scripture teaches us to make is between the *coming* of the Lord and the *day* of the Lord. The day of the Lord is always invested with terrors and never presented as the attractive object of hope. Whether spoken of in the Old Testament or in the New, it is always in connection with judgment. In Malachi iv. 5 it is called

“the great and dreadful day of the Lord;” and in Zephaniah i. 15 it is said, “that day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress.” And in the New Testament the Apostle Peter says, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away . . . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Peter iii. 10.) But if there be one thing in Scripture more distinctive than another it is this, that as surely as faith in the object of our Lord’s first coming delivers from the moral judgment of God on account of our sins, so His second coming delivers from all material judgment, which will be the world’s portion on account of His rejection. If my heart has received Christ in His coming in grace, it gives me a personal, and distinctive, and essential connection with Him in His coming in glory. “When Christ who is our *life* shall appear [mark the term] then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Let it be said then that the primary

aspect of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Christian is that of simple, unconditional, unembarrassed hope. Our Lord has said, and He will surely not mock our expectations, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Here it is plain His coming again and our being with Him, in all the happiness of the Father's house, the happiness, and light, and eternal joy He rose to when He had accomplished redemption for us, is presented as the direct and immediate fruit of His own love and grace, and as dependent upon nothing else. Thus simply is the coming of the Lord presented in the divine word as our animating hope. But it has also another bearing to the Christian. It is connected with his responsibility to Christ. Hence the apostle's solemn charge to Timothy, "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, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable,

until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." The appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ marks the limit of christian responsibility; and it is then, we are taught, that there will be the awards for service. For we must never forget, however bright may be our hope, that our Lord and Master has said, "Occupy till *I come*."

As to the general subject, it is of immense importance that we should ascertain for ourselves from Scripture, apart from any theories about it, whether or not it is presented there as an immediate hope; that is, however it may be delayed in God's long-suffering to the world, whether it is a hope whose accomplishment may be looked for at any time, or which must of necessity await the fulfilment of certain intervening prophetic events. With the hopes of Israel the events of prophecy have an intimate connection. But the church is not the subject, in any proper sense, of prophecy at all. Prophecy has its range in the events and circumstances of this world. The Apocalypse itself is

no exception to this principle, since it takes up as its subject the general external profession of Christianity, as responsible to God, and traces its course onward to its issue in judgment. In this respect it is like "the olive-tree" of Romans xi. It is true that the church, as composed of the members of Christ, while it is continued in the world, must necessarily be found within the scope of this profession; but its peculiar relationship to Christ at the same time takes it out of the stream of earthly events and circumstances as to its position and hope. It is expressly declared that when Christ is manifested in glory, whether for the deliverance and establishment of His ancient people or for the judgment of the nations that have falsely professed His name, His saints, whom He acknowledges as members of His body, will be with Him. And in Revelation xix., where He is presented as coming forth to judge the array of man's evil and rebellion, whether as portrayed in "Babylon the great the mother of harlots and abominations

of the earth," or, "the beast and the false prophet," it is said that "the armies in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean." It is not difficult to determine whom these armies in heaven comprise. Nor is it difficult to conclude that those who are to be with Christ when He is manifested in glory must have been taken to be with Him *before* He is thus manifested.

Morally, it is personal attachment to Christ, springing from our knowledge of Him and our intercourse with Him that makes His coming again a living and an animating hope. It is well to remove, if it may be done, the difficulties that beset the subject (though these are comparatively few when Scripture is allowed to speak for itself), and also to show the grounds of this hope from the divine word; but nothing can give it power in the soul except a true and real attachment to Christ as One known to the heart in the love He has manifested in dying for us, and especially in the revelation He has given us of the pre-

sent and eternal intimacy of our association with Himself. Let any one read John xvii., not merely as a portion of the abstract truth of the gospel, but as the outflow of the holy desires of that heart that beats in affection towards Himself as never heart beside could beat; and, above and beyond all the wondrous change of circumstances which His coming will introduce us to, let him ask if there is another desire that can rival that one of being with Him and seeing Him as He is?

I do not speak of the times in which we live, though I do not question that our subject, without overstepping the limits of revelation, might receive an enhancement from such a consideration. For what thoughtful mind is there that can fail to discern in the condition of society at large, especially in professedly christian countries, the moral signs and foreshadows of the last days? But leaving this, I pursue the subject as presented in the Scriptures of truth.

In doing this I propose to take up the divine testimonies of the word in

the order in which they are there given to us. And if I do so in a series of papers, which I propose, it will obviate the necessity of so pressing on with the isolated point of proof, as to pass over unnoticed that which is of equal importance, the connections in which the general truth is presented.

Formerly, it might have been necessary by argument and induction to endeavour to establish as a preliminary the certainty of the pre-millennial coming of the Lord Jesus; but I apprehend that this is no longer the case with those who seriously look to the Scriptures as their guide. The danger now to be feared is lest it should quietly take its place as an admitted truth with other admitted truths, and become, like them, uninfluential on the soul.

I assume, then, on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, that this was to be the moral attitude of His disciples from the time He left them to His coming again: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that

wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding." Now, however many generations of His servants may have fallen asleep since these words of our common Master were uttered, it is to me demonstrable that no length of time of His tarrance can give any of us a warrant to set aside this practical direction and to substitute something else in its place. It is equally demonstrable from Scripture, that however death, in the good pleasure of God, may supervene, Christians are never set to look for death as their hope, but for the coming of the Lord. Nor can the different moral effect of the one and of the other be estimated by those whose minds are not formed in this respect on the speciality of the revelation of the divine word. I may affirm that death is so abolished by Christ, and "life and immortality are [so] brought to light through the gospel," that death is not, in the New Testament, urged as a necessity to the Christian, much less is it ever held forth as an object of hope. I may, if the will of God be so,

through death be carried a stage forward toward my hope; but neither is *it* my hope nor do I by death reach my hope. "To depart and be with Christ is far better." Who would let this go, as giving its true character to a Christian's death? But it is not the attainment of the object of his hope. It is but waiting still. In happier circumstances it is true; but still it is waiting. If "the earnest expectation of the creation waits"—waits as with outstretched neck—it is "for the manifestation of the sons of God." But what do we, and all saints wait for, if our hope is that of Scripture? Let the apostle answer: "Ourselves also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." It is not until the redemption of his body from the grave that the believer enters into glory. If absent from the body, he is present with the Lord; but he is not glorified, nor in glory. This only results from Christ's own presence in glory. "Our conver-

sation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus: who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body." This testimony of the word is decisive on this point (there are many others equally so) that whether we are in this world or in that world to which death transfers us it is to the coming of the Lord alone we must look as the time in which His power will wrest from death that trophy which he has yet in his keeping and make our vile bodies, even, partakers of His glory. As to the resurrection of the bodies of His saints it is said distinctly that this will be at Christ's coming ["Christ the firstfruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"]; and it is also said, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [i.e., those who are alive at Christ's coming] shall be changed."

It is not enough dwelt upon that the ultimate purpose of God toward us in redemption is that we should be "conformed to *the image of his Son*." Now while the argumentative importance of

this passage may have been seized as establishing the apostle's doctrine concerning the foreknowledge and purpose of God, it seems to me that its force as a positive statement concerning the final destiny of the children of God has been much overlooked. The full statement of the passage is, "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." In a word, redemption, in its final results to those who are the subjects of it, is declared to be this, that they will be conformed to the image of God's Son. This is definite. And how wonderful a subject is it of contemplation and of sure expectancy! But this is redemption. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And that upon the principle that, "as *is* the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as *is* the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly." This is a result now. Identity of nature is affirmed of the one and of the other; and it is declared that this will issue, in infinite grace, in identity

of likeness and condition ere long. Who can help saying, while this divine purpose of love is before the soul, "Come, Lord Jesus?"

If it is not given to us to lift the veil from death that we may see the final condition, and experience, and employments of those who have passed its portals in the faith of the Lord Jesus, still it is wonderful to note the definiteness of Scripture as to the immediate result of the transition from the seen to the unseen world, and to trace the various steps in the divine actings by which the full and final issue will be brought about. What more wonderful and definite than the order and application of the divine power in the resurrection, as presented in 1 Corinthians xv.? What more wonderful and definite than the details it gives concerning the resurrection of the body, and of the positive characteristics of that body, so far as it is possible that they should in our present state be intelligibly given and apprehended? How unlike is all this to the dreams of

poetry, or the conclusions of philosophy! We have not here the reasonings of a Plato—"It must be so;" but the positive assertions and details concerning the application of the divine power in the re-fashioning of our *bodies*, that go to dust, that philosophy never dreamt of. I do not speak now of the infinitely superior brightness of the Christian's hope in death; but of the definiteness with which things that lie beyond death are brought out to view. But what could possibly have advanced the apprehensions of ordinance-bound Jews, so immeasurably beyond the utmost limits of the speculations of the discursive philosophy of Greece? It is answered in the single sentence of the apostle, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." And to Christians it may be well said, given the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and everything else, as the apostle argues, most naturally follows. His resurrection is indeed the demonstrative proof of the truth of Christianity; but it is a great deal more. It is that which alone gives coherence and consistency to

every conviction of faith and every aspiration of hope that ever through the gospel found its lodgment in a christian heart. Take the resurrection of Christ from that chapter to which I have referred, and all the apostle's reasoning rushes to confusion. It is nothing but the consciousness that we are in the arms of Christ that makes the difference between the triumphant exit of the soul with the expression, "thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and its shuddering departure to an unknown, dark, and fathomless abyss!

But beyond this, in Hebrews xii. 22—24, we have what I believe to be, not the presentation of an array of theological truths in figurative language, but the showing of the company we shall meet in heaven, and the order which is kept in the heavenly Jerusalem. And when the apostle says, "Ye are come," &c., he teaches us with what scenes and associations our faith allies us, and which only await the removal of the curtain of time and sense to be revealed and en-

joyed in all their attractiveness and in all their grandeur. And in another scene less prosaic than the last, and though presented in highest symbol, I learn the joyousness of that company which the Lamb will gather around Himself, and the divine harmony which his blessed presence will create. "I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sung as it were a new song before the throne." And surely if the soul lists, it may catch the vibrations of this multitudinous joy and hear the pealing of this wondrous anthem. And oh! is there nothing in the thought of Him we shall meet there, and whose voice shall lead these heavenly chants in which with our harps of gold we shall so soon be joining that makes us feel—I long to be there? Is there nothing definite as to the character of heaven's happiness to be learnt in the declaration, "And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Al-

mighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb<sup>s</sup> is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life?" (Rev. xxi. 21—27.)

But I turn now from these general remarks, and observe in the prosecution of our subject that it is very important to notice when the coming again of the Lord Jesus is presented to believers as their animating hope, it is altogether apart from any question of their responsibility and unembarrassed by any conditions. It is the direct and simple fruit, in glory, of that grace which was

brought to them by Christ's first appearing. "The Lord will give grace and glory." The two are in God's purpose indissolubly conjoined. If believers are looked at as members of Christ's body, it is but a natural consequence that they should be brought to share in the glory of their Head. And this is the force of that passage in Colossians i. 27, "which is Christ in you the hope of glory."

The natural order of the testimony of Scripture, which I hope to take up, is that of the gospels first, and then how this hope is sustained and combined with the fuller exposition of doctrine in the epistles and subsequent books of the New Testament. The witness of the Old Testament cannot be directly adduced in relation to the coming of Christ as the hope of the Church. It may, indeed, with regard to its effects on the earth and its inhabitants under the millennial reign of Christ, as the Apostle Peter shows when speaking in the Acts, of "the times of restitution of all things" at the coming of Christ. He says, as to these "times of restitution,"

that "God hath spoken of them by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." The testimony of the Psalms also fills up a striking place as to this. Still the bearing is not direct and immediate on the position of those who are gathered to Christ during the time of Israel's rejection. The further prosecution of the subject I leave to the next number.

#### THE END OF THE AGE.

On us the age's end is come,  
 Our pathway leads through deep'ning gloom;  
 The shadows that about us lie  
     Are shades of doom.

But we for a salvation wait,  
 Long-promised, and that draweth near;  
 The word is "In the age's end  
     It shall appear."

O promise fraught with deepest joy!  
 Let us with loins well girded stand,  
 Watch through the last short fleeting hour,  
     For He's at hand.

Bid disappointment's murmur cease,  
 And hush the clamour of distress;  
 Christ cometh with the breaking dawn  
     And brings redress.

Robes of surpassing brightness,—crowns  
 That cannot wither—then shall be  
 The tokens of a love past language deep,  
     To thee and me.

## NOTES ON 1 JOHN II. 8.

(Continued from page 192 of Vol. IX.)

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." The Lord did not accompany the word with judgment when it was spoken; but that word will judge him at the last day, and he will be condemned. Antichrist will only bring out by God's judicial action towards him what He has taught all the way through. Antichrist will be brought out in full display, and God has to *shew what He is*, and to act towards him in that *character*. The first way God taught them was in the Lord Jesus Christ, but being rejected, and having ascended up on high and become the expression of what we should be, the Church should be the manifestation of what Christ is. Then comes the communication of the life from Him in heaven. This was the new thing—"a new commandment I give unto you that

ye love one another." It was not a new commandment to love one another. It was the old commandment and yet *new*, because it was now given in the power of it; being not merely commanded in His word, but communicated by the power of the Holy Ghost to reproduce in us the life of Christ, and that is a new thing, and we are to manifest it. The Church of God is to be that vessel for the manifestation of Christ down here according to the power of the life in its Head in heaven. God acted in government towards Israel when He dwelt in the thick darkness. He acted in government according to a known law, but He was hid behind a veil—"set bounds about the mount;" but now when Christ died, the darkness was past in the cross, and there was a full display of the holiness of God. At the same moment that His wrath burst forth against sin, the light burst forth which fully manifested His character. "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth." The veil is rent and we can now enter into the presence of God Himself into the holiest which is now

opened to us. "Walk in the light, as God is in the light;" "You were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Nothing is to be allowed that cannot bear the light. My fellowship is with light. Men perish for lack of knowledge. "The true light now shineth," by Christ's death. He ascended up on high—the veil is rent—God is fully manifested in truth and love. If He had been only just we should have perished; if He had been only love, there would have been no justice; but there was justice and holiness with love, and God has been glorified about our sins in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The light now is shining, Christ the source of that light is to be manifested in us, "which thing is true in him and in you." It is an old commandment which was from the beginning—Christ Himself. You cannot have a better than that, and now the manifestation of it is learned in us; and if we want it as a test, it must not be the imperfect light that is in us, but in Christ Himself. While it is given to us as the means of detecting these

errors, it is also to build us up in what Christ is; and in looking at these traits we discover more and more that it is thoroughly divine. I learn in Christ such and such a trait of perfectness, and I say that is "God manifest in the flesh;" and thus I learn all I shall know in heaven. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." We learn the beauty in Jesus and learn it is divine, and learning what God is we are happy and peaceful. And if you have seen a saint dying, if he has apprehended the blood of Christ, he will have peace; but if you look for joy, it must spring from the affections being acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. You will sometimes see a saint, and there is *joy*, and by and by his *peace* is gone. That is where the soul is not settled. There ought to be both; the blood gives peace, but it is my acquaintance with and knowledge of Christ that gives me joy. The apostle always speaks of the abstract principle, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

## SUMMARY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

I fear the following brief opening up of the structure of the Epistle to the Romans will be very dry; and, with a view to edification, I should prefer to add more by way of application to the heart and conscience. At present that is not possible, and I think what I may be able to give on the structure of the Epistle, with some passing remarks, may supply materials to those who study the word for their own edification through grace, with the ever needed, but ever ready help of the Spirit of God. I think I shall be able to set out the structure of the Epistle more perfectly than I have ever myself done it, though I have often latterly partially referred to it in oral teaching. And, first, this structure as a scheme. Chapters i. 1—17; i. 18—iii. 20; iii. 21—v. 11; v. 12 to end of viii.; ix—xi.; xii. to the end.

The first 17 verses are an introduction, only the writer states the sub-

ject of the gospel: Christ accomplishment of promises and Son of God in power. Then comes the ground on which the righteousness of God, therein mentioned, has had to be revealed, namely, that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Then follows the demonstration of the sin of both these classes. This second part begins with chapter i. 18 and ends with verse 20, of chapter iii. whereupon the apostle returns to the unfolding the righteousness of God, chapter i, 18. is the thesis of the part I now refer to, the rest is the carrying out of the proof. Chapter i. 19, to the end of chapter i. as to the heathen in general. Chapter ii. 1—16 as to moralists especially, such as philosophers, but whoever they may be. Verse 17 to the end of the chapter the two, only that there is introduced in connection with the hypocritical judgment of the moralist the sure judgment of God to those without law, and those under law. It is the reality of this

judgment, and the immutability of God's estimate of good and evil, which introduces the judgment of the Jew. (Ver. 11, 17, to 29.) Did this set aside the advantages of the Jews? In no wise. They had many, specially the possession of the oracles of God. The apostle now therefore takes them up upon the ground, not of God's true and righteous judgment of men's hearts and acts in the day of judgment, when all will be brought to light, and God must have realities, but on the ground of the revelation which they had, and in which they boasted, and by a selection of passages from that proves them, for that revelation was theirs and applied to them, utterly guilty, and thus every mouth was stopped, the Gentiles confessedly already, and now the Jews by their own Scriptures which they boasted of as exclusively theirs. The world was guilty before God. Verse 20 stands in a certain sense alone, and is a connecting link of what precedes with what follows, touching a subject which was an urgent one with the apostle. By the works of

the law no flesh could be justified; for the law brought the knowledge of sin, not sins. Natural conscience often gave that, but of the state of sin in which men were. And that is what is described in the preceding verses quoted. In verse 21 we come to the remedy, the great revelation of the gospel. And first as to sins. Apart from law, which was the rule of man's righteousness, God's righteousness has been manifested, the law and prophets having borne witness to it. Hence, as apart from law, and being God's, universal in its character, God's righteousness to all—Jew or Gentile; and upon all those that believe, for it is the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus. It is *δια πιστεως εις παντας*, by faith to all; *επι παντας τους πιστευοντας*, on all who believe consequently. All who return take up God again in grace by Jesus Christ, for all have sinned. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Him. God has set Him forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood. We have

redemption or here ransom, justification of the believer, freely by God's grace, but through the ransom of redemption and so righteously, and God is approached at a mercy-seat, that is, bloodshedding on the throne of judgment according to the holiness and righteousness of God. God is approached according to this perfectness as well as man delivered. This is through blood. It has a double aspect. It proves God's righteousness in the remission of Old Testament sins, when He had shewn forbearance. It is divine righteousness itself declared now, as fully just and justifying him that believes, so that he is in righteousness before God. Thus a man is justified by faith without works of law, and God is the God of the Gentile as well as of the Jew. He justifies the Jew on the principle of faith, and if the Gentile has faith he is justified through it. Law is established thus. It convicts him who is under it of guilt, and is given all its force too in this respect, and its claims are met by the blood of Christ. This then reveals jus-

tification by blood for those who have sinned. He has closed with Gentiles and law. But what of Abraham, the root of promise? He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. How does a simple narrative provide, because of an eternal Spirit, the deepest principles of truth for all ages. And this David confirms, shewing the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. As regards then not imputing sin, forgiving, and imputing righteousness are all the same, for actual sins are in question, judicially in question. It is not holding a man to be innocent, but the non-imputation of what he has done, he is judicially held to have no charge against him, he is justified or accounted righteous. It is added from Abraham's case that it comes on Gentiles as on Jews, for Abraham was uncircumcised when he got it, and he got it by the power of resurrection, faith in God's power to accomplish it, we by believing that He has done so. Thus the resurrection of Christ, God's raising Him out of the

place where He had gone because of offences, as satisfied as to those offences, and bringing Him into a wholly new place where He was accepted. And as it was all done for us, we say He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. All this applies, Christ's death and Christ's resurrection, to our sins. Only having suffered for them, He came into a new place.

Chapter v. 1—11 gives the glorious conclusion and consequence of Christ's dying for our sins and rising again: peace, present favour, hope of glory. Our complete, actual place before God; but we glory in tribulations also on the way because of patience and its fruits; and we have the key to all in God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. The perfect ground of this is there stated, and the conclusions drawn to our security in that love. Nor that alone, we glory in God Himself through Christ, by whom we have received this perfect reconciliation with Him. Verse 11 closes the whole sub-

ject of our reconciliation by Christ's death and resurrection. God has cleared us, commended His love to us, so that we joy in Him; and all that He does by the way is only a means of blessing. The whole question of our actual guilt has been settled, but our state has not been touched. The apostle shews that it was not a mere question of law but of sin, and so applied to man and not merely to the Jew; for sin was there from Adam to Moses, when law was not, and death proved it. Thus the rest is traced up to Adam, and it is shewn that grace must be as of wide an application; and Christ refers to all, to Gentile as well as to Jew. Chapter iii. 20 to v. 11, inclusive, treat then the question of sins. Chapter v. 12 to the end of viii. that of sin, and our condition through the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Christ. If it be a question of sins each has his own; if of sin, we are all one lump. This is the ground taken from chapter v. 12, though, of course, the sins come in as fruit. Hence justification is not seen as justi-

fication from anything but our living place in Christ. Justification of life, we are constituted righteous, and it goes to a fuller presentation even of this truth—"There is no condemnation." Nothing of the sort can apply to one who is *in Christ*. Thus though God is not so fully presented in sovereign grace, our state before God is much more fully entered into, and that connected with death, life, obedience and connection with Christ. This flows on from the consideration of the common objection of flesh. If by the obedience of one I am constituted righteous, no matter what I do, I may live on in sin. But this obedience was unto death; by my public profession of Christianity I have gone down to death, been planted together in the likeness of death. If, as alive through Adam, I have taken my place in death, where Christ's perfect obedience for me was, I cannot live on in that life. A dead man cannot continue in sin, nor can he be charged with sin. A dead man cannot be said to have lusts or will. Here then Christ is looked

at, not as having died for our sins, but to sin. Our old man crucified with Him, that henceforth we should not serve sin. The believer is to reckon himself dead consequently to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This, let me remark in passing, has a very full character; for Christ in the sense of personal walk and perfectness always lived to God. But while down here had always to deal with sin, to be tempted, to be exercised in obedience, and keep His feet from the paths of the destroyer; and, finally, knowing no sin, to be made sin for us. All testing and trial only brought out His perfectness; still He had to do with it, live above it, not let in what would have been sin and disobedience, or want of absolute obedience. Blessed be God, we know He did not and could not fail, nor was there the smallest answer or movement in Him to answer from incessant temptations from without, but He lived in the sphere in which one was moving, as the air around Him, and died to it. Now *in that He lives*, He

lives to God. All that He had to do with sin in this world was to *die* to sin. He died and suffered rather than not accomplish absolute obedience to, and glorify, His Father. But now as man, God is the one sole object filling, satisfying, occupying the life in which He lives. There is no other object to claim its movements, no movements which turn towards anything else. "*In that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*" So we reckon ourselves dead to sin as crucified with Him, and alive only to God—a wondrous word. Our old man is crucified with Him, for the destroying the body of sin; and if I am alive at all, it is through Jesus Christ our Lord, and so alive to God. Life has no other object nor produce of thought and feeling. Hence I have not to serve sin. He does not say continue in it, that supposes life of and from it, i.e., pure flesh, but not to serve or submit to it as a master even, a different thing, and which more directly concerns the Christian. And I have a right to speak, for it shall not have dominion over me as if I was under

law (in which case it would, even if I hated it), but under grace. Thus I am set free, and in a happy and good sense my own master. Whom am I going to serve, to whom yield myself? To God, and my members as instruments—that is all they are now—of righteousness to God. It is an absolute *yielding ourselves* up to God. Blessed privilege. And here I get fruit. In the slavery of sin, none; only it ended in death (guilt and judgment are not the subject here, but state); but now I have fruit unto holiness; walking in obedient righteousness, I learn God, His ways, I have fruit in separatedness and affections of heart to Him: so Moses, “If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me thy way, that I may know thee, and that I may find grace in thy sight.” There is added one word which brings all back to grace, lest living to God might be wrongfully reckoned to man. “The *wages* of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” But it is a blessed thing to be allowed to yield ourselves to God. So did

Jesus, so in His life are we privileged to do.

Chapter vii., as often studied and commented on, applies this principle of death to law. The law has power over a man as long as he lives, but we have died in Christ, the bond with our first husband, if we have been under law, and being born of God without the knowledge of redemption, put us under it in spirit, a state described at the end of the chapter, is dissolved by our death, and we are to another, Christ raised from the dead. We have therefore besides death and a new life, the bond of relationship in which we are, wholly to Christ and no longer to the law to which we have died. The state of a soul knowing, as quickened, the spirituality of the law, consenting to it, and delighting in it, but unable to keep it, and looking for deliverance, is there described, and deliverance found to be in Christ. The natures still remain the same. This state of deliverance is then unfolded in chapter viii. The man is in Christ. No condemnation is therefore

possible. Such is the result. He is in the place into which Christ's perfect work has brought him, in that state in Him. The manner of the whole thing is then stated. Its ground as to our status down here. The power of divine life in Christ Jesus, the raised One, in Him, now alive, who was dead, has set me free from the condition in which I stood, the law of sin and death under which I was in the first Adam. But I have died out of that and am alive in Christ. So freed from it. But this is not all. The law had the pretension to set me in righteousness, in a righteous place and standing before God; but it could not succeed. It was weak through the flesh, which was not subject to it, nor could be. The sin and flesh remained independent and unsubdued. But God has set us before Him. He has sent His own Son in the likeness of this sinful flesh (Himself sinless) and as a sacrifice for sin, thus sin in the flesh was condemned perfectly and fully according to God (for there is no forgiveness of a nature) and He perfectly

glorified as to it, but by death, in Christ's dying, so that while righteously condemned, Christ has died as regards the state in which He was in the likeness of it and had to say to it (though perfect Himself and as perfect) and we in Him, so that while the sin *has been* condemned, so that God has no more to say as to it. I have passed wholly out of the state in which I had to say to it, was in it before God because I have died in Christ. While the efficacy of His sacrifice secures the glory of God and the putting away of sin. A few words will give the close of this part of the epistle. The first eleven verses unfold this deliverance and the natures concerned in it, but with the additional truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost which gives power and liberty, the effect of this, not merely as life and resurrection, even of the body, already noted, but as leading, guiding, bearing, personally witness, first for that we are children and heirs, then for the joy that belongs to us, but this giving a divine yet human sense of the sorrow and bondage

of corruption around us in which yet our bodies have a part. But this leads to sympathy and the expression by the Holy Ghost in us of the sense of this sorrow in a divine way. He who searches the hearts finds there the mind of the Spirit and the Holy Ghost Himself interceding in it. Such is our blessed place as regards present evil—read, ‘according to God.’ We do not know what to ask for, but we express the need according to God, a groan sure to be heard. What a place as in us the Holy Ghost has here. The rest of the chapter is the conclusion of all this part of the epistle. If God be for us, who can be against us? For us as to gift, He has given His Son; for us as to justification, He justifies us; in us as to all the difficulties. Nothing separates us from His love in Christ in them. They have been or are the scenes of His love. All difficulties are of the creature. His love is divine, yet has gone down to every depth and is exercised at the highest height. This is all the proper doctrine of the epistle. Chapters

ix., x., xi. reconcile the doctrine of the difference between Jew and Gentile with the promises to the Jews. Chapter ix. shews that their own history forces them to accept the principle of sovereign grace, otherwise the Ishmaelites and Edomites must be admitted, and they would have been cut off because of the golden calf. God will use this sovereignty to bring in the Gentiles. Chapter x. shews they stumbled at the stumbling-stone, and all had been predicted. Chapter xi. that the stumbling was not final, but for the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles, and that if the Gentiles did not continue in God's goodness they would be cut off, and the Jews grafted in again. The rest of the epistle consists of detail of exhortation, founded on our offering ourselves up to God, a living sacrifice to God, proving what His will is. The doctrine of the body comes out here; each is to fill up the measure of his own gift, and not to pretend to more. We have also the instruction as to Christ, that He was a minister of the circum-

cision (i.e., to the Jews) for the *truth* of God to confirm *promises* (this is not law), and that the Gentiles should glorify God for His *mercy*. And, lastly, that the mystery now revealed was hidden in all the ages of time, and now made known to the nations by prophetic scriptures. J. N. D.

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## THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### ISAAC AND JACOB.

Isaac was seventy-five years old at the death of his father. He was married at forty years of age. His two sons, Esau and Jacob, were born in his sixtieth year, and they were at the age of fifteen at the death of Abraham.

In reviewing the history of Isaac and Jacob in order to ascertain the testimony sustained by them, we must bear in mind that they are rather the continuation of the testimony committed to Abraham, each in a distinct way, than the leaders of any new or advanced line.

We are to learn in and by them how the testimony committed to Abraham fails in the hands of those who are called to support it; but in their history also is presented to us all the difficulties with which one set in their place is beset; and therefore we shall find therein disclosures of the grace of God peculiar and blessed to meet and sustain His people, hindered and embarrassed by nature in the maintenance of His truth (for that is always His testimony). In a word, we shall find in Isaac how feeble mere nature is to sustain the path in which the testimony sets him; and in Jacob we shall find that not only nature, but all the powers which affect nature, and can use it against God, are brought to bear on him. How wilful he is, and how he yields. How God delivers in both cases, exemplifying to us the nature of the difficulties in the way, but at the same time also the greatness of the resource that there is in God when one looks simply to Him.

In Abraham I have the difficulties which a man of faith has to encounter

always; namely, *bye-paths* to the ways of faith. In Isaac I have the trials and weakness of one who would keep the path of faith appointed, without any of the exercises of soul which leads into it. In Jacob I have one who trusts to his nature and his own devices more than to God; who seeks to secure the blessings of the path more than the path itself, and who discovers in the end that what he leant on was but a broken reed, which had pierced him through when he leant on it.

Isaac does not come prominently before us until after the birth of Esau and Jacob. He presents to us characteristically man in nature, supporting the testimony of God. He has little to contend with except what attracts his nature. His first trial as heir and maintainer of the testimony is that he has no children. For twenty years he was without an heir, and he entreated the Lord, and the Lord was entreated of by him. The patient continuance year after year in a country where one is a stranger, without any prospect or clue to inheritance, is

the character of faith exemplified by Isaac. Before the birth of Esau and Jacob the Lord communicates to Rebecca the grand outline of their history; the patient maintenance of the testimony being that which devolves on Isaac. His trials are of the order to disturb and contravene patience. They are the ordinary ones of daily life, and his failures are always in giving way to his nature. Isaac's history is given us in order to present to us how a man in nature, however amiable, is tried when set as God's witness in the earth, and called to walk in dependence on Him in a strange land, where as yet he had no inheritance. The feebleness of nature to support this testimony is disclosed, and then God establishes His servant in the line committed to him.

Isaac and Jacob, as we have said, properly, only follow up the testimony given to Abraham, and therefore in Hebrews xi., and in other places, they are classed together. We are to look at Isaac as occupying the place of testimony to which his father had been called,

and in which he has grown up without learning any of the difficulties or exercises of reaching it, which peculiarly and singularly belonged to his father. But his history presents to us how God leads and deals with him, a man like unto ourselves in it; and yet all his hindrances are of himself and natural. He does not cease to be God's witness, but the indulgence of nature hinders and obstructs his testimony. There is an absence of self-denial in him, and therefore he must learn that all his troubles mainly spring from his own weakness. However, notwithstanding all his failure, he was a witness, for as such the Holy Ghost owns him; he "confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim;" he had no hope on earth but from God. For twenty years he, the promised seed, had no heir: but then God hears his prayers and Esau and Jacob are born unto him. It is important for us to note the difference of trials according to the order of testimony. Abraham, we have seen, had to contend with *bye-paths*, which proposed

to him an issue similar to what faith proposed. Isaac, on the other hand, is seduced from the position of faith which he occupies, to consider for himself and his own ease therein. The one has to suffer in gaining the position, the other in maintaining what is gained. The art of the adversary, with regard to the first, must be to divert him from the true line; while to the latter, it would be to engross him with his own interests, and thus lead him through self-gratification to compromise his position as the witness of God.

Into this snare Isaac falls. Esau's hunting and acquisitions warp Isaac's mind and judgment because they minister to himself. He loved Esau because he did eat of his venison; and the witness for God on earth, the one whose history in connection with his testimony He has seen fit to record for us, while maintaining the place he was set in, is hindered, and attempts to run counter to the mind of God, because he had yielded himself to his own self-pleasing, and, as a consequence the testimony suffers.

How little we contemplate or take into account the responsibility of being God's witness on the earth, and how impressed we are with the purpose and grace of God, when we begin to note the way in which He makes His chosen vessels to fulfil His pleasure and do His will. We may be God's witness on earth, and in the very position to which faith has called us, and yet like Isaac, be diverted from the support and resource which faith always gives by that which addresses our nature and gratifies it.

The land is the scene of this testimony. There is another famine in the land (Gen. xxvi.), beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham, and Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, into Gerar. Thus the pressure of circumstances induces him to go down where man could afford him succour. God in His mercy appears to him and warns him not to go down into Egypt. The Philistines typified the support of man. This Isaac sought, for he was going "south," bordering on Egypt: but the Lord appears unto him,

and tells him not to go to Egypt, but to "dwell in the land which I will tell thee of." This word of the Lord is but a renewal of the call to Abraham, and, with it, a confirming of all the promises made to Abraham. Isaac is now instructed in the mind of God, and how, as His witness, he ought to comport himself: but he must not trust in man. He does not go down into Egypt, but he dwells in Gerar, which was within the precincts of the land but in the hands of the Philistines, and hence the Philistines represent to us the flesh obtaining a place in the sphere entirely belonging to God. Isaac learns here not to trust in the flesh; he denies his wife; and afterwards suffers at the hands of the Philistines because of the prosperity given him of God. This suffering was in order to separate him from them, for he was God's witness; but it is slowly he does so from Esek (contention) to Sitnah (hatred) and then to Rehoboth (room); and when he obtains the sense of *room*, the true liberty, he goes entirely outside the land of the

Philistines unto Beersheba, a place already recording how the servant of God can stand outside and apart from all human support; and in doing so is owned by man as having God on his side. When Isaac, in the energy of faith revived, reaches this spot, the Lord appears to him "that night," and renews to him the promises made to Abraham; and there Isaac builded an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. The separation from the Philistine obtains for him true ground where God can appear to him, and where Isaac, in his own soul, can know that he is on God's side and for God on the earth. "Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar; and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army; and Isaac said, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee."

The testimony we see is confined to the land. Esau had already sold his birthright. His natural engagements which were so pleasing to Isaac had

brought forth bitter fruit, but their own proper fruit, for Esau, hungry (destitute of natural resources) had despised openly what was of God even his birth-right; and had sold it for a mess of pottage to his brother Jacob; and now in his fortieth year, when Isaac was an hundred years old, Esau marries two wives of the people of the country, both Hittites, which were a "grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebecca his wife." And such it must have been to see their firstborn son in this close affinity with the people of the land. Nevertheless, Isaac does not investigate the course and the habit of life which had led to this crisis; and because he fails to see the spring of it all, he becomes implicated in it himself. He grieves at Esau's marriage, but he gratifies himself with the result of Esau's works. Surely this is recorded for us that we may see what can spoil the testimony of God, and how subtle the snare by which we can be allured from the simple path of testimony. Isaac, failing in time to stay and correct this evil work-

ing, actually paves the way for the declension and suspension of testimony in the land. His expressed wishes to Esau, marked as they are with that vein of self-gratification which had led him astray, being overheard by Rebecca, cause her also to work carnally, and to counterplot in order to secure the blessing for Jacob. "Make me," he says, "savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee before I die." Deceived by his natural partiality for Esau, he fails as God's witness, loses his power and due influence, and is inapprehensive of the mind of God; for he would have conferred the blessing on the son of his choice instead of on the one for whom God had designed it. Thus he falls from the place of testimony and Jacob henceforth comes before us as the one on whom it has devolved, because of the blessing conferred on him in spite of all the intentions of Isaac.

The manner, however, in which this blessing was obtained was not of God; and therefore demanded because of God's

holiness, distinct and peculiar discipline. The working of nature in Isaac had led to the working of nature in Rebecca; and because of it, the testimony is passing away from Isaac; but as the way in which it devolves on Jacob is polluted by the same working of nature, he must be subjected to discipline before he can fully be the witness of God on the earth according to the place of blessing now from the lips of Jacob conferred on him. How interesting and momentous it is for us to note and grasp the patience of God in continuing through all opposition and failure one line of testimony. Varied and different is the opposition urged and levelled against it in the histories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The frailty and feebleness of man are exposed in the witnesses, yet God in His mercy and patience bears His witness above all, though (necessarily, because of His holiness) in a reduced condition or state of things which only marks the unfaithfulness which led into it.

Jacob now blessed is God's witness

on the earth, but he must fly from the land, which was the proper sphere of his testimony. The manner in which he had obtained the blessing which set him in the place of testimony being by natural device, he must now learn that he cannot maintain the divine position without first in practical confession, declaring the end and weakness of himself—of that nature by which he had obtained it. In a word, he must be humbled first. At this juncture, Jacob was seventy-six years old (about one year older than Abram when he first entered the land), and at the counsel and instigation of his mother, he flies from the land for fear of his brother Esau. Isaac renews the blessing to him and sends him away, directing him to take a wife of the daughters of Laban ; and adds to the blessing these words, "That thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger." Peculiarly interesting is it to grasp and comprehend the nature of the testimony at this moment! The failure of the witnesses to maintain the truth committed to them subjects them

to the most humiliating trials. Jacob has to abandon the land, and Isaac to endure the double trial of seeing his son Esau openly and avowedly departing from the position to which he was called of God, and to be obliged with his own lips to consent and approve of Jacob's retiring from the land, a consent forced upon him on account of the unhallowed marriage of Esau. The testimony, once bright in the land (how bright in the day of Abraham!) has gradually declined in the hands of Isaac, and is now, we may say, for a time suspended. True, Isaac survived and lived for forty years more, even to see Jacob again renewing the testimony—a lovely and touching instance of the grace and faithfulness of God! The stock of the old tree of testimony is not removed until the new one is fitted to replace it.

Jacob then leaves the land. (Chap. xxviii.) He went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran. When he reached Luz the sun did set and he tarried there all night. Then and there

God appears to him and thus in his exit from the land, and in this moment of the declension and almost suspension of the testimony God shews him that in the land is the place where He will display Himself, and that there is the house of God, and He sees therefore the gate of heaven.

After a period of twenty years (Gen. xxxi. 11—12), the history of which I pass over, our subject being that of testimony and not Jacob's personal history, God in His infinite mercy releases His servant from obscurity and calls him to resume his place of testimony for Him. "The angel of God spake to Jacob in a dream, saying, I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me. Now arise get thee out from this land and return to the land of thy kindred." *How holy and patient and faithful is His mercy!* The testimony for twenty years, one might say, was under a cloud; Isaac in the shade; Jacob subjected to discipline before he could be permitted to occupy the place.

*(To be continued.)*

# THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ISAAC AND JACOB.

*(Concluded from page 128.)*

O! may not some of us lay this to heart while we may trace in our own histories the will and self-seeking that has driven us from the path of testimony to the distant land in which we have had to endure discipline for the carnality which proved our incompetence to be witnesses for God. Alas! the testimony has suffered. The witness is under discipline far off from his true place and under a cloud; but thy compassions, O God, fail not! Jacob is recalled. Gifted he is of God, but so little dependent on Him, that he can be no witness for the truth given of God until he has ceased to trust in his own plans, and rests simply on God. And thus it is with every saint now called of God to testify of Christ. There is neither power nor opportunity to do so, while he is seeking his own will and pleasure. Nay, before

he can be used in his proper place he must be subjected to painful discipline, in order that he may seek Christ with a true heart, as one wearied with himself, and thankful that he is not debtor to the flesh, to live after the flesh; but that he is through God's eternal love in Christ Jesus a new creation of His Spirit and life.

It is evident, I think, that Jacob had not fallen into idolatry, though living with idolators (even Rachael was one); nay, rather that Laban knew his faith, as we speak; for he says, "*The God of your father* spake to me yesternight." Thus, even in this very feeble way, the truth of the living God was again maintained in the land of Syria; and doubtless the interposition of God on Jacob's behalf, and the sequel of his sojourn there, must have had weight and testimony to many. Jacob returns to Galeed before Laban overtakes him, and without meeting with any reverse. There they both make a covenant in the name of the God of Abraham, and part company on good terms.

“And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.” (Chap. xxxii. 1.) God in this distinct manner guards and inaugurates his return to the land. Jacob is now at Jordan, at the ford of Jabbok, in order to pass over with his family and his possessions. But *here*, and ere he accomplishes the passage, must he learn in the spirit of his mind what real, simple dependence on God is. He is not fit or competent to be a witness of it until he knows in himself the spirit and power of it. How little he yet knew it! He is now “greatly afraid and distressed” because Esau and four hundred men with him are coming to meet him; and he says, “O God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewn unto thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands; deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau.”

Jacob is now learning dependence upon God; but not as Abraham learnt it. He "went out, not knowing whither he went." With Jacob it is quite different. As God's witness he has been subjected to discipline because of his wilfulness, and now as restored of God to the path of testimony, his first lesson before he crosses the Jordan must be that only in God can he be preserved from that which his own evil had provoked—from Esau. Fine and wondrous is the character of the scene in which he learns this, portraying and presenting to us how God restores and replaces His servant in the true line of testimony.

"Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him till break of day." *God contends with him*, and in that unique and peculiar time he gets a double blessing. The marvel of grace is effected. Jacob is silenced; yet at the same moment he is conscious that as a prince he has power with God and with man. That which resisted God in him is overcome, and that of God, which "overcometh all things" is developed

and displayed in him. Jacob's name is now Israel. Laban had owned that the hand of God was with him; Esau must own it too. Walking with God, dependent on Him was now the line of testimony, and one marked with distinct and open blessing. Men see the power and the greatness of God.

Jacob however, again ensnared, tarries at Shechem for seven years (chap. xxxiii. 18), nor does he truly resume the path of testimony until he reaches Bethel, and erects there an altar called El-Bethel (God of the house of God), and there the name Israel is confirmed to him. (Chap. xxxiv. 10); "And God said, Thy name is Jacob, thy name shall not any more be called Jacob, but Israel shall thy name be; and he called his name Israel."

Jacob is now witness for God in the land, and hence we read of the death of his father Isaac more than forty years subsequent to his flight from the land. "And Jacob came unto Isaac his father to Mamre unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Isaac and Jacob so-

journed, and the days of Isaac were a hundred and eighty years." Consequently Jacob at that time was a hundred and twenty years old, and he dwells in the land in which his father was a stranger (chap. xxxvi. 1), in the land of Canaan.

From this time on, until Israel removes into Egypt, we have but one continued series of the evils of his children without any check of the grace of God in them, until at length on account of a famine they all desert the land, and go down to Egypt; a chapter in the history of God's testimony on earth which no one can read without seeing how sadly man fails in the place where God sets him, and how wondrous is the forbearance of God; how long-suffering and patient; not finally removing the people from the place of testimony until they had in every way and manner proved themselves not only incompetent, but, worse than all, indifferent both to His calling and His testimony.

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## THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

*(Continued from page 92.)*

In resuming the subject of the coming again of the Lord Jesus, I shall take up in their order the various testimonies of the Gospels and the Acts, and the other books of the New Testament, to this wonderful event, so full of terror to the world, because of its rejection of Christ and the salvation which was wrought by His first coming, but so full of hope and triumph to those who, through grace, have been taught to love His appearing.

As an introductory remark it may be said, that the coming again of the Lord as presented in the Gospels and the Acts in its general aspect is connected with the establishment of His power on earth, in what is designated "the kingdom of the Son of man." There is a sphere of divine power and rule, which in Matthew is characteristically called "the kingdom of heaven," or the reign or rule of heaven; and in Luke, "the

kingdom of God," or the reign or rule of God. In this sphere, whether for judgment or subsequent blessing—so largely dwelt on in Old Testament prophecy—the power of the Lord Jesus Christ will be exercised on His return. The Gospel of John, however, is an exception to this. In the opening of Christ's ministry in John, we do not find Him calling the nation of Israel to repentance, and announcing "the reign of heaven" as at hand; but the declaration of this truth, that "he came to his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power (or privilege) to become the sons (or children) of God." In accordance with this, therefore, in the fourteenth chapter, which I do not now dwell upon, He speaks of His coming again in the sole and single aspect of coming to receive these children of God to Himself, that they may be with Him, where He is, in the place which He has prepared for them in His Father's house. This is not His rule or reign. It is the promised introduction to His own eter-

nal home—the Father's house in heaven—by Jesus as the Son of God, of those whom His unbounded grace has made partakers of life and the privilege of sonship with Himself. It is this His people are called to look for. O! infinite joy to find at last such a home, and such a welcome there!

But there are other aspects of his coming. In the mere reading of Matthew xxiv., which I now briefly notice, it is impossible, I think, not to see that our Lord's announced return here connects itself, and its results, especially with the people among whom He exercised His personal ministry in His first advent. It presents to us emphatically the sign of His coming as "the Son of man"—the title he assumed in Israel on the rejection of His claims as the Messiah—and "the end of the age." Now it is important to remember that Matthew xiii. shews the judgment of the wicked, under the figure of the tares of the field, to be in "the end of the age." And it is also said in the same chapter, "the harvest is the end of the

age." But this plainly, as the chapter shews, closes the history of Christianity upon earth, as commenced by the ministry of Christ. He Himself explains the parable thus, "He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man," &c. So that we have thus the main statements of our chapter totally taken away from any supposed connection with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The question of the disciples, in the third verse, was, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of *thy coming*, and of the end of the age?" To this our Lord replies by presenting (as He only could, for time and eternity are alike within His view) the general course of things in the world, in the declaration that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," &c., giving at the same time a specific warning against false Christs and false prophets. This is closed by the statement (in verse 14) that this gospel of the reign should be preached in all the habitable earth for a *witness* to all the nations, and then the end

would come. From verse 15 and onward, it is plain that Jerusalem and Judæa become the centre of that scene upon which the coming of the Son of man breaks with the suddenness and vividness of the lightning's flash, which covers the whole horizon with its lurid gleam, and arrests the attention of every eye. This is not the symbol of hope and peace, like "the morning star," but of terror and of judgment. Moreover, the coming of "the Son of man in the clouds of heaven," links this event with that which is given in the prophet Daniel, chapter vii. 13, 14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

In consonance with this, our chapter

presents the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, and the shortening of the days of tribulation lest "no flesh should be saved." That is, if they were not shortened all living men in the sphere of this "great tribulation" would be cut off. There is also the warning against false Christs and false prophets: and it should be remarked that this is a second warning of the like kind. The first evidently connected itself with what took place before the destruction of Jerusalem and at the time. The second (ver. 23, 24) as certainly looks on to the closing scenes, precursory of the coming of the Son of man "with power and great glory." Then there is the sign of vengeance taken upon an apostate people—the eagles gathered to the carcase. Further, there is the warning of the days of Noah and the judgment of the flood; and, finally, there is the gathering together of the elect from the four winds." This gathering, it is to be remarked, takes place after the coming of the Son of man is seen, at least where His glory is first displayed.

From verse 45 to the end of the chapter it is plain that our Lord's instructions are *moral*, and not *local* in their application, as before. But I quote the passage in full. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here we have the Lord's committal of a trust to his servants for the care and instruction and ordering of His household, while He is away and until His return. This trust was to be exercised

in the constant sense of responsibility to Christ as Lord, and could only be duly kept alive by the habitual expectation of his coming again. Then follows the blessing and reward of those who have faithfully and watchfully fulfilled this allotted trust; and the unexpected coming of the Lord in judgment upon those by whom it has been betrayed. But if this be the plain expression of the general thoughts of the passage, its own vividness and force will be returned to by every faithful heart. By its terms alone a chord is struck which no comment can ever reach.

Now it is apparently on the consummation of this scene of betrayed trust that our Lord introduces the parable of the ten virgins, and in just sequence. Few can have read chapter xxv. without having been arrested with the peculiar form of its commencement. "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened,*" &c. It seems as if the contemplation of the ecclesiastical domination and worldliness, of which Christendom presents so striking an example,

and to which this figurative language of our Lord has been, I believe, justly applied, afforded a starting-point for the parable by which it is followed. In the previous chapter we have seen unfaithfulness and the spirit and habits of the world traced back, by an unerring hand, to the thought of the heart which is thus expressed, "my lord delayeth his coming"—he will not come yet. Now the special object of the parable of the ten virgins is to recal what was the first animating hope and position of Christians, and to restore them again to it, after it had been long forgotten and practically lost. If this be a just conclusion, it will at once be felt that those who desire to be faithful to Christ have a more than ordinary interest in the right apprehension of this divine instruction. For, if the parable shews a long period in which the true hope of the Christian had lapsed and become practically extinct, it also presents the recovery of this hope, and the practical position connected with it, on the part of those who are truly Christ's, just on the eve of His return.

The history of Christianity, alas! is too faithfully sketched in this parable, to allow of mistake in its application. Christians mingled with an increasing mass of false profession, and gaining power and position in the world, in very early times were tempted to give up, *in heart, at least*, the vivid hope and expectation of the Lord's return, which characterized the Church in apostolic days. The power and wealth and corruption which flowed in upon the so-called church, and so abundantly generated the spirit of ecclesiastical and worldly ambition, under the Roman Cæsars, obliterated from the minds of the professed followers of Christ the words that were addressed to the men of Galilee as they stood gazing up into heaven after their departed Lord—"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Nursed in security and ease, what had the Church *then* to do with the thought of the Lord's return? It could only be like a nightmare, to alarm and oppress the slum-

bers of people in such a case. But, as I have said, the parable glances back to the original call of Christians to be separate from the world while they waited for God's Son from heaven; and it looks forward also to a time when there shall be an awakening up from a state of supineness to resume the original position of preparedness and expectancy.

In the interpretation of the passage, however, it must be remembered that it is a similitude. It is a similitude of the reign of heaven—"Then shall the reign of heaven be likened," &c. The coming of the Lord is not here presented as the attractive hope of the Christian, but in its bearing on the duty of watchfulness and separation from the scene around. It is a figurative representation of what takes place in the history of Christianity, from the period of Christ's departure until all responsibility is closed by His return. That which is in prominence in the figure, is the preparation of persons to join a bridal procession at night, the moment it appears. But let

us have the inimitable scene before us. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, I know

you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." \* (Matt. xxv. 1—13.)

Now, though we know from other scriptures that Christ sustains the character of bridegroom, it is not the purpose of the parable to present him in that title here. Neither are Christians in it viewed in any corporate character as the bride. Other scriptures present that. But here the bride is not in the scene at all; nor the bridegroom, except in figure. What is presented, is Christians in their individual capacity, and especially in their being called out to separation in heart and purpose from the world, to be waiting in the expectation of Christ's return. True Christians are represented as having forgotten this (alas! how true in fact!), and the mass of those who are Christians only in profession have forgotten it too. There is, however, this distinction—true Christians have that within them which is divine, and answers at once and

\* The chief editors omit the words, "wherein the Son of man cometh."

fully to the announcement of the Lord's return. But mere profession can in no sense answer to this. It may indeed supply people with notions and forms, and perhaps build them up in orthodox views; but it can never separate them from the world, or impart to them the love of Christ's appearing. The difference is expressed by those who "took their lamps and took no oil with them," and those who "took oil in their vessels with their lamps." In the ordinary history of profession, the two classes may have gone on together, but the parable teaches us that there will come a time when this will be no longer possible. The midnight cry may awaken *all*—but it is only those that are *ready* who go in with the bridegroom to the marriage. The others, alas! are awakened, but it is only to the consciousness of their own unpreparedness, and come but to find that the door is shut. While the solemn admonition to all is, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour."

It is not in the scope of the parable

to present the catching up of the saints, nor even the joyous thought of the Father's house. These are the subjects of other revelations. Here it is that which comes within the range of "the reign of heaven."

Mark xiii. gives the same general truths as those presented in Matthew xxiv.; but it does not, in the object of the present paper, demand any special remark. It is well to observe, however, that no truth which we may have received, or position in which we may be placed by it, puts us beyond the application of the exhortation of the closing verses of the chapter—"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. As a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch: watch ye therefore (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning.) Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you,

I say unto all, Watch." (Mark xiii. 33—37.)

As presented in Luke xii., to which I now turn, it is the "kingdom of God," or reign of God, that gives its special character to the coming again of the Lord Jesus. In verse 31 the Lord places it before his disciples as the supreme object of their desire and care. If they had belonged to the world, in estrangement from the knowledge of a Father in heaven and His gracious care, whether Jew or Gentile, they must needs have other and inferior objects to seek. But His disciples through this revelation are delivered from this. To them he says, "But rather seek ye . . . the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you." They would be secured by their Father's care to those whose hearts were given up to the accomplishment of His will. And the Lord adds, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the

heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Upon the kingdom of God their interests were to be henceforth concentrated, and to them it was their Father's good pleasure to give it. Their position in the world, as we see, was to be at once adjusted to this hope and expectation. Earthly possessions were no longer to be esteemed by them as their proper portion; but on the contrary the incumbrance of them was to be got rid of; and what was possessed was to be used alone and supremely in the objects of the Lord's beneficence; while they reserved to themselves an unfailing treasure in the heavens. This is a result that is instinctively reached wherever the paramount interests of that kingdom strongly seize upon the heart—for where the treasure is, there the heart will be. Such can have no part in this world but that of strangers in it, acknowledging allegiance and loyalty only to an absent Lord.

In verses 35, 36, are sketched in a brief and graphic manner what is the truthful moral position of those who are the expectants of this kingdom. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." This figure is the same as that of Matthew xxv., but varied thus, that here it is the master of the house returning from the wedding to his house, and the responsibility of his servants is not to go out to meet him, but to be in instant readiness to receive him when he comes. It is the beautiful and varied instruction of one who does not confound the different aspects in which his people are viewed. The application of the figure to His disciples, is given by the Lord in verses 37, 38. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come

forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

How the heart at once feels that the grace here presented is altogether and absolutely divine ! Such a result of watching and service, if that service were far different from what we are conscious it is, might well seem strange to us. But it is not strange to his heart who has already sacrificed so much to gain us for Himself. And well sure we may be of this, that if His life of humiliation and sorrow has been so fruitful of love and grace to us, His life of glory will present Him still the same in unchanged affection, and will yield its correspondent results. But so it is. That which the blessed Lord presents to His disciples is this, that in His reign in glory, when the kingdom of God shall indeed be come, He will in a sense change places with them ; so that as they had owned Him as their Lord and Master, and had watched and waited for Him, in a world that was contrary

to them and Him, so now he will serve them in a sphere where all is correspondent to His will, and all subordinated to His infinite love. When will the day dawn and the shadows flee away ?

I connect this 37th verse with what is presented by the Lord in chapter xxii. 18. "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." He had said that He would not eat any more of the passover, which was the symbol of redemption, until its fulfilment in the kingdom of God, when He would again participate with His followers in its accomplished results. So also He would reserve His joy, of which the cup was the symbol, until He could share it with them in the kingdom of God, who, on earth, had been rejected for His sake. In Matthew xxvi. 29, He also says, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." This gives the other aspect of the kingdom, and corresponds with that which he taught his disciples to

pray for:—"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." In this sphere will eventually be found the blessed results of earthly service and responsibility. Other scriptures open other relationships to Christ and other positions of those who are partakers of His grace, but here it is His relationship of Lord to His disciples and their responsibility toward Him, and their reward. This is especially seen in verses 41 to 48, where the responsibility of "the faithful and wise steward" is brought out; and who at his Lord's coming is made ruler over all that he has. It presents also the punishment of the unfaithful servant who said in his heart "my lord delayeth his coming." It was no object to him that his lord should soon, or at all, return; but the reverse. It is true that he bore the name of servant, but he had carried himself like one who was a stranger to all subjection, and had used his lord's household as if it were his own, and made it only the sphere for the indulgence of his lusts and domination. Its

moral application is, alas ! too plain to require being pointed out.

The instruction of Luke xvii. concerning the coming of the Lord is introduced by the question of the Pharisees, verses 20, 21, "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there: for behold the kingdom of God is within you" (or among you). It was an answer appealing to their moral condition and responsibility. Here was the Lord in the midst of them, who had already proclaimed that kingdom, and whose character and works proclaimed it more fully; but they still remained ignorant of Himself and of the character of that reign about which they as ignorantly inquired. His doctrine had unfolded the principles of that reign, but they neither understood it nor received it. For, as Scripture declares, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink [this they could have compre-

hended] but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." These are the principles which characterize the kingdom or rule of God; and within the sphere of divine power and goodness so designated, they will be established by Christ. In the subsequent verses the same subject is opened to His disciples. "And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here, or see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven: so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe: so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark: and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered, and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."

(Ver. 22—37.) Here the condition of the world is especially presented, and the effect upon it of the revelation of the Son of man. It is the even course of the world's procedure, and the total discomfiture that the coming of the Lord will bring upon all that men are enjoying and pursuing: of which the judgment of the flood and of Sodom, from which Lot escaped as by fire, are the foreshadows. "Remember Lot's wife" has at least a moral warning for us all. It is a warning against a Christian's having his affections lingering in the world, upon which the coming of the Lord will bring certain judgment. And of this we may rest assured that there is nothing in the calling or hopes of Christians that legitimately takes them out of the range of such a warning.

We have advanced, as yet, but a little way in the testimony of Scripture, but it is striking to observe how entirely it presents this event as bounding the horizon of the Christian, in whatever aspect he may be viewed. If he be ensnared by the world in the pursuit

of its gains, its luxuries, or ambitions, so as to feel that he has a stake in its continuance and prosperity, this he is told will be suddenly and rudely broken up by the coming again of the Lord. If Christianity be looked at in its course on the earth, this, we are told, will be cut short by the coming of the Lord, resulting from the cry at midnight, "Behold the bridegroom cometh." Men may have other thoughts, and Christians too; but whether we contemplate the world or the Church; the destinies of Israel or the career of the nations; whether it be judgment or deliverance that is looked for—all will be met, and alone met, in its varied aspects, by the coming of the Lord. But the Christian alone, who is watching and waiting, can say, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

"Lord Jesus! come  
And take thy people home;  
That all thy flock, so scatter'd here,  
With thee in glory shall appear.  
Lord Jesus come!"

*(To be continued.)*

## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

At the end of chapter xx. it is written, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing, ye might have life through his name." This distinctly informs us that it is one piece of truth that is opened out so far in this book, and therefore it is important that we should be able to grasp it as one unbroken chain.

My desire and intention is, if the Lord enable me, to point out the links and mark their connection, and thus make the chain more easy of apprehension to the general reader. I shall adhere to the chapters for the most part, only marking the moral sequence when necessary if broken or interrupted by the chapter-division.

Chapter i.—The first chapter is properly an epitome of Christ. Here is presented to us the whole range of Christ, from His being with God and being God, unto the point where the

angels of God ascend and descend on Him as the Son of man on earth. The whole distance is spanned; while in the interval are unfolded all the great virtues and ways of working of this blessed one. He is the Word with God, and who *was* God. Word signifies the expression, declarative of *mind*; while an act signifies rather an expression declarative of a *purpose*.

“All things were made by him.” The acts followed and were effected by Him who was the Word. He is the creator of all things. He had life. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” There was no light anywhere else. The light shines in darkness. Wonderful fact! The light is manifested where it is needed, but the darkness did not comprehend it; did not apprehend how appropriate and suited it was to its need. So much is stated as showing the greatness and nature of the Word, and His manifestation to men. And then we are told of a *man* who was sent from God to bear witness of the light; and his name is given to mark

the definiteness of his mission. A man of men is sent to announce that this light is come in order that all might believe through Him. The light does not shine to exhibit itself; but this man (John) is sent to bear witness to it that all might believe. How gracious and blessed! He was not the Light himself; he must not be mistaken for it. The power of the true light is that it lighted every man which cometh into the world. No other could. He not only made man, but man is dependent on Him for light.

Verse 10.—We have Him now as come into the world; but He is unknown. “He came unto his own things and his own people received him not.” His rejection is noted; but as many as received Him, to them is given power to become children of God. It was simply owning Him as the only light of men. As many as received Him, received new and distinct blessing from Him; they believed on His name. He is come to bless. Received in faith, He blesses entirely anew. They are born

of God ; not of blood, nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man—in no known or existing way, but entirely of God. Seeing Him in faith was attended with the effectual results of new-birth; and not to see Him thus, was darkness. Then, verse 14, we have Him in *flesh* not only as the light shining; but come as a man among men in the world. But though in flesh, it was not the glory of the flesh that He bore; but the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Now being presented in His true form on earth, John's testimony is again alluded to. (Ver. 19.) He not only proclaims Christ's superiority, but also the effects that have accrued to them who believe. It is no mere man; but of His fulness (whose glory was superior to the glory of the flesh) have we all received, and grace for grace—grace qualifying for still more.

But there is another thing; the law was given by Moses, but by this blessed Man *came* grace and truth, unmerited favour; and yet everything openly and

distinctly declared just as it was on every side—man's ruin and God's love, which had been denied. This is *truth*; and this with the favour, the abundant grace, came by Him. He who is the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared the Father, shown Him out, made Him manifest; so that this only-begotten Son was not only the Word, the verbal expression, but He was the perfect manifestation of God. May we worship as we behold.

Next, we have a summary of John's testimony (verse 19, &c.); the character of the opposition to it; and John's announcement that there was One standing in their midst whom they knew not. Their non-reception of Him is noted.

The place where these things were done, "beyond Jordan" (called Bethany), is striking and significant.

The next day (ver. 29) (we now get into a new day) he, the witness, sees Jesus coming unto him. And now for the public announcement of Him personally. He is, so to speak, presented

thus: Behold the Lamb of God, the taker away, or taking away the sin of the world. Then he reverts to his previous testimony, and adds, although I knew Him not, but that He should be made manifest unto Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water; intimating that baptism would declare that they were prepared to meet Him. Again, the instruction given to John about Him was peculiar and distinct, and not gathered from any previous prophecy. "He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." We have now an important addition respecting this blessed One. The Holy Ghost, in bodily shape like a dove, abides upon Him. He is owned of God as in His mighty mission, as revealer of the Father, starting with this announcement, that He would take away the sin of the world. Verse 35. Now we have another day; this was

John's last day, or, at least, when his disciples passed from him to Christ. Seeing Jesus walking, he says, Behold the Lamb of God—a term which implied sacrifice on this earth. For this purpose he had previously added what is left out here—"who taketh away the sin of the world." John's two disciples hear him, and they follow Jesus. They hear the testimony and follow this lonely One, God's Lamb on the earth! What a sight! He had no one with Him, but when He heard them following, He turned, and on seeing them said, "What seek ye?" This solitary Stranger might well put such a question to them; and how comprehensive and expressive is their reply! "Where dwellest thou?" I can in no way better express my desire to become acquainted with anyone, than in seeking to be with him in his own abode; and it was no small matter to see and know this wondrous Stranger in His own home. "Come and see," is His ready reply; and so grateful and pleasant is it to them that they remained there that day—it was the tenth hour,

within two hours of evening, our six o'clock. There is something very touching and significant in this incident. It tells the nature and manner of the Lord's reception to every one who seeks company with Him and His acquaintance; and, therefore, it represents to us the character of the relationship and intimacy which He accords at this moment to His people. The millennial scene is different, when He will be publicly seen as the centre of all blessing. Here He is peculiarly known at home; and it describes to us our place and nearness to Him at this *present time*. It was Andrew who brought Simon, son of Jonas, to Jesus, and he is named Cephas (a stone), which is significant as relating to testimony.

The next day the Lord would go forth into Cana of Galilee, and He finds Philip. The different ways by which souls are led to him is interesting to notice. I suppose the manner of their introduction gives a character to their course. Philip was of the same city as Andrew and Peter. Philip finds

Nathaniel and announces to him, "We have found him whom Moses wrote of and the prophets: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." Nathaniel is doubtful because of the place: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" We must take care how we judge of people by the mere circumstances in which they are found, for they may rise quite above them and thus prove their own moral greatness. Nathaniel comes to Jesus, and the Lord anticipates him by disclosing to him not only that His eye had been on him at a moment when he had little thought of it; but that the same eye had discerned all that was in his heart; for the Lord's words immediately impart to Nathaniel the sense that he is *known of Him*. Wonderful charm this and amazing power in binding the heart to Him! convincing it that the One with whom it has to do is Almighty; and not only so, but with the distinct intimation that He ever keeps His eye on His own. Nathaniel is here a sample of the true remnant of Israel. Seen and watched over by their

Lord and Messiah but not yet seeing Him, they will mourn for Him as one mourning for his only son, until He reveals Himself to them in His greatness as both God and man, and they exclaim like Nathaniel, "Thou art the Son of God : Thou art the King of Israel." To him accordingly the Lord now unfolds His own place in the great millennial day which is henceforth ready to be revealed, the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.

Thus in this chapter are epitomized, as I may say, all the wonderful characteristics of the Blessed One who has come from God to reveal the Father.

Chapter ii.—In this chapter is related how the only-begotten Son, who having spanned the interval between God and man, so that though He was God, the angels of God may henceforth ascend and descend on Him, the Son of man begins or enters on His mission and work on earth. It is detailed to us in this book how He found man and how He dealt with him. The mere fact of

there being a marriage in Cana of Galilee would have had no significance if He had not gone. The mother of Jesus was there. This seems to be His link, or the reason of His being invited with His disciples to the marriage. His mother occupies a prominent place. I apprehend that she represents the Jewish people cognizant of their state, telling Him they have no wine, or rather that the wine was out. Now this marriage scene represents man in his own condition. A wedding is a scene which presents man naturally in his brightest, happiest estate; and with Israel this ought to have been so after a special manner, for they were blessed in the basket and in the store with plenty of corn and wine. Yet here the wine was out and the mother of Jesus feels the need, and looks to Him to supply the deficiency. Man in his own condition is a failure, even when offered of God the richest and fullest natural blessings. He cannot appropriate them, much less retain them. Solomon is a witness, who was raised to the highest natural state both in riches.

and wisdom (not one apart from the other), which many would plead as an excuse for themselves; but he had plenty of wisdom and plenty of means to effect any ends he might devise. And what then? Did he arrive at happiness? Was the wine never exhausted with him? Did he not own and write that all his efforts to reach anything securely happy were in vain? Nay, that it was not only vanity but vexation of spirit? Surely *his* wine was out. Man himself is oppressed with a sense of a coming cloud in his brightest moment. The more beautiful anything is, the more it suggests the sorrow connected with it; because it will, it must, fade away. The Lord is here present to see and understand man in his own condition, his sun going down at noon-day, the sense of need breaking in and checking, instead of the fulness of supply sustaining, the hour and season of human happiness. Whether we look at man without revelation consummated in philosophy as its reformation, and still seeking wisdom, or at the Jew with revelation seeking a

sign—something to confirm them in it—we reach what man is in a double way; the two branches meet in the one point, a condition truly defective and unhappy—the wine is out!

When the mother of Jesus called His attention to the fact, His reply intimated, “It does not now concern us: my time is not yet come.” She, however, understanding that He would act in grace, directs the servants to be obedient. “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” The Jews had there six water-pots of stone for purifying; I suppose with reference to the Red Heifer. The Lord uses these vessels to communicate the good wine. The good wine will flow from purification. Man is a failure in his condition; but the Lord, while seeing the utter and hopeless failure of man to repair his own condition—for if the wine is out, if there be a cloud in the brightest moment, in the moment when he concentrates his utmost—what must there be at other times? But the Lord, while seeing it, shows here anticipatively, how He will repair all. He

will bring the new and the better wine through water of purification, and thus give on the earth full and established happiness, in the great millennial day.

The next great subject in this chapter commences with verse 13. The Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There he sees man, even the favoured people of God, in *relation to God*. He had seen and been a witness to man's failure as to his own condition; and now the Jew, in his relation toward God, is a scandal. God's name, through the temple which exemplified Him on earth, instead of being honoured, was used to subserve the selfish interests of man. His house was a den of thieves. As we know, whether with the Jew or in Christendom, the name of God is used to promote and secure the selfish and covetous desires of man. The history of religion, divinely introduced, comprises the worst displays of human evil! Could anything be more condemnatory to man than that in his relation to God, and the more light granted him, he exposed

the evil workings of his nature more than elsewhere: the house of God a den of thieves! Jesus maintains not only the honour of God—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up"—but He will repair all, bring in all new. Destroy this temple, and I will rear it up in three days; but He spake of the temple of His body. Jesus now knows all. He commits not Himself to any. He knows what is in man. Man is found out to be a failure as to his own condition, and a scandal in his relation toward God. He will repair all, but He will in no wise commit Himself unto that which He knows is so wanting and worthless.

*(To be continued, D. V.)*

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## THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

*(Continued from page 160.)*

In the order of Scripture, which, in the prosecution of my subject, I have proposed to make the order of my re-

marks, the next passage which presents its testimony in the gospels to the coming again of the Lord, is Luke xxi.

In this chapter we get "Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." That is, the Jews and their land will not be delivered from the oppression of the nations by whom they have been subjugated, ever since the Babylonian conquest, until the last form of Gentile power will be destroyed by "the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Precursory signs are given, and encouragement is thus held forth to those who will be called to pass through that day to see the blessedness of Messiah's reign and the rule of God, when the domination of oppressing earthly power shall for ever be done away. "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." The condition of things in the world, as described in this chapter, and that which has been noticed in chapter xvii., may, at first sight, seem to be at variance, but it

is only, I imagine, an apparent discrepancy. Here it is said there shall be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." While in chapter xvii. it is said, "They did eat, they drank, they married wives and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark . . . . . and they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom," &c. How can any thoughtful person fail to see (whatever he may imagine it will issue in) in these descriptions a picture of the present condition of this country and of the whole of (what is called) the civilized world? Was there ever a period in which men universally were so set upon material improvement, and enjoyment, and luxury, and advancement of all that ministers to social and personal aggrandizement? And was there ever a period in which men's

minds were so fevered with anxiety and dread lest some event should suddenly turn up—they know not what—to threaten or destroy its continuance? There they must be left while we listen to the words, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Ver. 33—36.)

It is plain that Israel's redemption is here to be the special result of the coming of the Lord, which will issue in the establishment of the reign of God in the hands of the Son of man. It is also plain that it is the “day” that in these closing verses is warned against. But what is it that delivers morally

from that day, if it be not a heart to listen to the injunctions here presented?

But we come now (in John xiv.) to view the return of the Lord Jesus in an entirely different aspect from that in which it has been presented in the scriptures that have hitherto been considered. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (Chap. xiv. 1—3.) Here the coming again of the Lord, as has been already observed, is presented to the believer in all its brightness as the object of unclouded hope. The form of its announcement is that of a spontaneous promise and assurance on the part of the Lord in order to soothe the sorrow and sustain the expectations of his disciples whose hearts were saddened and in grief at the anticipation of His departure from them.

This is in harmony with the character of the gospel. In the Gospel of John our Lord comes before us at once in His divine character as the only-begotten Son of God. Hence, all dispensational relations between Him and the people amongst whom He was manifested, which have more or less prominence in the other gospels, in this are seen to fade away and disappear. Here he is shewn to be (however veiled in human form) the eternal Creator of all things, who in the beginning [before creation had a beginning—before the earth, or sun, or moon, or stars, or angels of God, existed] was with God, and was God. It was in this character, as John's gospel shews, that He was present with men. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"—pitched His tent with us. And the glory that was manifested in Him—so dwelling with men—was the glory of an only-begotten Son with a Father—"full of GRACE and TRUTH." Hence, He is presented as "in the *world*," and the distinctions of Jew and Gentile are comparatively lost. It

is not now the call of a people to repentance in the expectation of a long-promised Messiah, or the announcement of a kingdom, which in His person would be set up. The only mention by Him of the kingdom is to announce the truth that a man must be born again—born of God, in truth—in order to see or to enter into it. And that this might be in accordance with man's condition and the exigency of God's holiness, it is declared that, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Thus deeply must be laid the foundations of man's restoration to God. Consequently those who are in connection with Christ in this gospel, are declared to be in connection with Him as sons of God: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become [or privilege to be] the sons of God." And as he was manifested as the eternal life, so that which was directly received from Him, in the reception of Himself, was eternal life. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." "For as the

Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth; even so the Son quickeneth [giveth life to] whom he will." Hence, on His anticipated departure from His disciples, He does not speak to them of the ruin of the temple, or of wars and famines and pestilences; of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and the array of sorrows that lined on either hand the long vista of ages through which alone the kingdom could be looked forward to in its establishment. But as He that knew "that he came from God and went to God," He opens to His disciples directly, and as none other could, the *home* from whence He came, and to which He was now about to return. In a word, He declares to them that His home—the "Father's house"—should no longer be His alone, but theirs also: and theirs in the same relationship as Himself to the Father, whom He came into the world especially to reveal.

He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." Whatever God at any time

had been to those that trusted in Him, that He had been to their faith. "No man hath seen God at any time." His revelation of Himself from the beginning, from Abel downward, had been to faith. But on that account was His mercy, His truth, His compassion, His care, His sustainment, His access to the soul, the heart's repose in Him—all that He was as God—less true, or less real? No. And now the Lord Himself was about to become the object of their *faith* also. But would His love to them on that account be less real? Would His power to sustain them be diminished? Would His interest in them decay? or His character, as they had known Him, be changed?" Far otherwise. It was of this same blessed One, presented to the faith of succeeding ages, that our apostle, afterward in his epistle, thus speaks: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." And he adds, "These things write we unto you

that your joy may be full." It was not a mere mitigation of their sorrow that the Lord presents in His wondrous living words. It was the spring, as we see, of the fulness of joy: and it teaches us as nothing else can how our hearts should estimate a written Christ, and how important it is that they should be filled with thoughts of Him.

"In my Father's house are many abodes: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." I want to think rightly of that world to which I am going—the world where I shall be brought into immediate contact with the things that are unseen and that are eternal. I want to have true and right thoughts of God, whose presence will, in a little while, absorb every faculty of my being. I want to know how Christ thinks of me now, and how He will meet me when He comes again, and what will be my eternal place and portion with Him whom I have loved and trusted here in this sinful and dying world. Well! He who came down from heaven to accomplish

our redemption, by dying in our place, and has returned thither again, tells us that, *to us*, that unseen world will disclose only the many mansions, or abodes, which mark the amplitude of His Father's house. So that when I think of heaven and of being in the presence of God, it is not with some vague notion of vastness, or brightness, or dazzling thoughts of glory, but of being at home with God, and with Christ, whose infinite love will bring me there, and with all God's children, for whom the fatherhood of God has provided a home worthy of His greatness and His heavenly grace; and who, as a loving Father, will delight to have His family in happiness around Him, and in the glory where He dwells. This brings the greater rest to the soul—the rest of calm expectancy—that it is the *home* of Christ, the home which He, in love, for a season left to be with man in his home and his sorrows, and to which He did but return again when He left this world. In speaking of the Father's house, He describes no unknown, unfamiliar place to Him.

And His occupation now in heaven He declares is that of preparing a place for us, the place of sons, in His Father's house. It is plain that we are here so far away from all earthly events and circumstances that might be affected by the coming of the Lord, that they are entirely overlooked, and treated as if they were non-existent. He comes to His disciples to take them out of the world to be with Himself. He adds, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Their leaving this world would be to them but leaving their own home and circumstances of sorrow to rejoin Him in His home of blessedness and glory. And His promise is that He will come for them Himself in order to bring them there. Thus do we see how entirely the thoughts of the Lord span the interval, which we think so wide, between the time of His departure and the time of His coming again. He does not speak of death, nor of their departing to be with Him, but of His own coming

again, which will be the accomplishment of God's counsels in the Captain of salvation, having been made perfect through sufferings, that He might bring "many sons to glory." How wonderful is it that this is still the true position of believers—the position that links them with the first disciples and earliest Christians, and enables them to appropriate to themselves Christ's words of encouragement and hope to His sorrowing disciples! But it is so. For we are set by the very truth of the gospel "to wait for God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come."

We pass now, by means of the stream of revelation, into entirely different scenes. In Acts i. our Lord is risen from the dead, and is again in intercourse with the men of Galilee. In perfect accordance with these circumstances and associations, we find Him no longer speaking of the Father's house and His coming to bring His disciples there; but His communications to them

now, during the forty days He is seen by them, are "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." But there is no disorder in this. There is no contradiction in it. The Acts, we must remember, are a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, and there we have found the Lord directing the expectations of His followers to His coming again to establish the kingdom, or rule, of God. While here, as risen from the dead and among them again, He takes up the subject where it was broken off by His death.

Intermediately, it is true, there were other things in the counsels of God to be accomplished before the restoration again of the kingdom to Israel; and other services to be rendered by the apostles before they would enter on the authority and the rewards of the kingdom. Still it is plain that the import of the words of the two men that stood by them in white apparel, while the disciples stood gazing up into heaven after their ascended Lord, whom a cloud had received out of their sight, was to connect their expectations with the ac-

complishment of the things which they had so lately heard from their divine Master pertaining to the kingdom of God. "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Ver. 10, 11.)

In Acts iii. we have the witness of the Holy Spirit by the Apostle Peter to this same event. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Ver. 19—21.) The import of this statement is too plain to be misunderstood. The coming again of the Lord

as here presented is restricted in its bearing upon Israel's hopes, and will be accomplished on Israel's repentance. "Even unto this day," says the apostle, "when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it [i. e., their heart] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." These "times of refreshing" will come by the presence of the Lord, and especially by His presence amongst His ancient people. To them especially pertained the bright testimony of the prophets concerning the blessings of Messiah's reign; and in their midst these "times of restitution of all things" will run their happy course: however the overflowing cup of Israel's blessing will extend to the other nations then existing upon earth.

I do not stay to prove that Peter's testimony here to Israel relates especially to their earthly blessing. This will be best proved by carefully reading the prophecies of the Old Testament. For of these "times of restitution of all things," he declares that "God hath

spoken by all his holy prophets since the world began." But this testimony, bright and happy as it is that indicates the blessing, and peace, and glory flowing from Christ's presence upon earth, does not belong to our present subject.

In Acts x. 42 there is a latent, but solemn testimony concerning the coming of the Lord which was attached to the very preaching of Christ in apostolic days. I but adduce the passage, which needs not a comment. Peter, in his address to Cornelius, says, "He (God) commanded us to preach unto the people that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." All, but infidels, believe that Christ, at the end of the world—at the last day—will judge *the dead*. But who believes in His coming to judge the living? Albeit Scripture declares, "Behold the judge standeth before the door!"

There is also a similar declaration by the Apostle Paul addressed explicitly to Gentiles—a declaration which in its solemn import will not allow the world

to think that there are no retributive consequences connected with its rejection of Christ—or that because He has been once got rid of out of the world, He will never come to trouble it with His presence again. No; the apostle says, “God now commands all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts xvii. 31.) This is not the judgment of the dead. The term employed fixes it to the world of living men. It is this habitable earth that Christ is coming back to judge. The brightest hope of the Christian—Christ’s coming again and presence—is the world’s greatest terror! It must needs be so. For every knee must bow to Him. But how bow to One whose love has been despised, and whose authority is spurned? But who must now be met, clothed with infinite almighty power?

*(To be continued.)*

## “THE SONG OF SOLOMON.”

[I send you a brief paper on this interesting book of Scripture. It may differ in its character from your ordinary communications, but I trust it may not on that account be uninteresting or unuseful to your readers.]

It is exceedingly important in this day for Christians to have their minds firmly established in the principle of the entirely human and at the same time absolutely divine character of the Scriptures. The books of Scripture, like all other books, are writings which are subject to the laws of human language, and, like them, are the communications of thought through an absolutely human medium. The peculiarities of mind and of human character, and style too, stand out as distinctly in the various writings of the books of Scripture as they would do if there were no such thing as inspiration connected with them. This is the case when the form of the writing is that of historic narration, or in the didactic portions of the Scriptures. But it is more especially manifest when it takes

the mould of poetry, and language is subjected to the artificial requisitions of versification, which is the case to a great extent in the Hebrew writings of the Old Testament, as in the Book of Job, the Psalms, Isaiah, &c. Nevertheless the divine thought is as absolutely conveyed as if it were subject to none of these conditions; if indeed an unconditioned mode of conveyance of the divine mind to man generally as a revelation could be conceived.

This principle is perhaps more perfectly illustrated in the structure and character of the elaborate composition of "The Song of Songs," than in any other book of the Old Testament:—in which only, and not in the New, the element of poetry is found. If this be laid hold of clearly it will go far toward establishing the ground on which it is to be interpreted as a divine communication.

These true "Idyls of a King" would not have found their place in the canon of Scripture, and thus have become the vehicle of delight and edification to the

godly in every age, if they had not been the communication of the divine thought submitting itself to the poetic and idyllic form. And yet it is plain that if this writing had come down to us apart from the books of Scripture, as some fragment gathered from the wrecks of a former age, it would, indeed, have been admired as a poem for its vividness and ornate beauty, but it would not have produced the thought that there was anything beyond the delectation of the reader in its design. In a word, it would have been to us but a *pastoral*; distinguished indeed from all other pastorals by the chaste and simple dignity of its loves, and the freshness and sparkling beauty of the scenes in nature which it depicts, and the perfectness and purity of every emblem and of every figure that is laid under contribution for its embellishment.

As to its form, it is the passionate expression of conjugal affections that have never known a cloud and never experienced a chill, combined with the tranquillity and attractive freedom of

rural scenes. It combines, indeed, the luxuries of a palace with the purer taste and more quiet enjoyment that attaches to the scenes of nature, and develops itself in the tranquil homes of rustic life. There are the orchard, the garden, the vineyard, the hill side, the flowing streams, the flowers, the singing of birds, the flocks, the shepherds' tents, the freshness of spring, the fruits of autumn. What inartificial freshness breathes in these lines:—

“ Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away :  
For lo, the winter is past,  
The rain is over—is gone ;  
*The flowers appear on the earth,*  
The time of the singing is come,  
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land ;  
The fig-tree hath ripened her green figs ;  
And the vines—the tender grape—give fragrance.  
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away !”

In such scenes of tranquil beauty can the spirit of the inhabitant of a palace take delight. In poetry the two may be brought together, however they are sundered in actual experience. It tells perhaps of the uncorrupted taste of the writer—for I am speaking of the human

element—which breaks away from the luxuries of a palace and the scenes of the crowded city, and goes back in thought to the simpler life of patriarchal times, if not to the scenes of enjoyment and of holy love in Paradise itself, before sin had defiled the bowers of Eden. Thence the writer seems to gather the primeval elements of human happiness and to weave them together in the texture of his song. Justly has it been said that, “The tradition of a Paradise is the germ of poetry.” And what poetry like that of holy writ, which the Spirit of God has consecrated to His use!

But that which awakens the delight and wonder of the soul is that God should take up these elements, and in this form, and through these tastes, should convey His perfect thoughts to us! The medium of their conveyance in the book before us is pre-eminently human, and yet the thoughts conveyed are perfectly and absolutely divine.

From the religious affections which the perusal of this divine poem—as I

may call it, or series of poems—has so constantly set in motion, perhaps it has seldom struck the mind of devout persons that the name of God does not so much as occur throughout the composition. And amidst the divine enjoyment it has so constantly ministered to the purest minds, perhaps it has been as seldom reflected on that, apart from its mystic meaning, there is not a single divine truth or principle enunciated in it, or a single utterance of piety proper to an individual believer throughout.

Now this, so far from its being used as an objection to its incorporation with the books of Scripture, as it has sometimes been, if rightly viewed, may become a very strong argument in its favour. Being found in the canon of Scripture, it has been assumed, both by Jewish and by Christian writers, to be a presentation under the form of the mutual expressions of conjugal love, of the reciprocations of confidence and affection of a heavenly bridegroom and His bride. But then this is so entirely beneath the surface—its under

and hidden meaning—that had a single expression obtruded itself of a didactic kind, or had there been a single utterance of individual piety directly expressed, it would have destroyed the harmony and divine instruction of the whole. It could no longer have been taken as an illustration of the principle of the apostle's words—“This is a great mystery; but I speak of Christ and the church.”\* It would then have been individual piety, and no longer a sustained and mystic instruction, which the soul must penetrate, in order to reach the divine element in this book of heavenly purpose. Critics have had no difficulty in discerning the human element, but have lacked the divine intelligence which is necessary for the discernment of that which is divine.

It must be observed, that all the elements of grace, all that there is to attract the heart in his moral beauty,

\* I speak only of the principle of its mystic instruction, of which the apostle presents marriage as a type, without entering into the question of a Jewish or a heavenly bride.

all that can draw forth affection and confidence and desire toward Christ is presented in the mystic utterances of the bridegroom; while all the worship of the heart, and delight of the soul in Christ, and all the yearnings of spiritual affection toward Him, are exhibited in the ardent responses of love of the mystic bride. So that there is no place for what might be the sentiments of piety suitable to the heart of a godly man and woman, looked at in their individuality, and apart from the purport of presenting a mystic picture of the divine affections that are reciprocated by Christ and His people. To the careless and unspiritual mind, this book has always appeared to have no claim beyond that of an amatory poem, marked by singular grace and dignity and beauty—"an epithalamium," as it has been termed. But those who have looked beneath the surface to its latent meaning, as a book of Scripture, have as invariably found in it the perfection of enjoyment and delight. So interwoven are many of its expressions and

figures with the natural thought and feelings of the heart toward Christ, that they are taken up oftentimes without even the consciousness that they owe their force entirely to their figurative and mystic meaning.

It has not been my purpose to present any interpretation of this book, which perhaps more than any other in Scripture has been commented on, and not without profit, it may be, wherever true spiritual affections have been brought to the task. Mine has been a simpler purpose; having chiefly to do with the human structure of a book, through which the divine thought and inspiration of God have been conveyed to man.

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## THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

### CHAPTER VII.

### JOSEPH.

The testimony connected with Joseph properly begins from the time he is made

governor of Egypt; and this event occurred shortly after the death of Isaac. Jacob is now dwelling in the land wherein his father was a stranger. Isaac dies, and Jacob occupies the place of testimony; but before his death, before Jacob is left alone to maintain it, his sons had, in their fearful moral declension, given evidence of their entire unfitness to support it. Their hatred of Joseph drives them to an utter disregard of their father's feelings; their malice must be consummated in spite of all barriers, even divine ones; for their father's love for Joseph only exasperated the evil that it would check. Reuben the eldest may remonstrate, indicating that a spark of conscience remained; but it is in vain. Joseph is sold into Egypt; but this is not all. Genesis xxxvii. details how degraded in every sense Judah had become, though there too the voice of conscience is not yet silenced.

The testimony is now transferred to Egypt in the person of Joseph: after thirteen years of sore and heavy afflictions in which he is disciplined accord-

ing to the will of God for the post he should fill, he is called from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

We shall do well to bear in mind the way and manner of God at this time. The testimony for God had failed in the land of promise. The one whom God would use as His witness, and of whom He testified and forewarned by dreams, his brethren had refused; and not only refused, hating him the more for his dreams, they had determined on his death, and sold him into Egypt; while his father Jacob, who observed these dreams, was nevertheless unable to check the wide-spread iniquity of his children, and thus represents the faithful remnant; true, but unable to stem the torrent of evil. The testimony is thus diverted from its true place by the working of evil in those who should have supported it, and God's vessel is fearlessly and ruthlessly cast out. God, however, in His boundless mercy causes that the fall of Joseph's brethren should be the riches of the world, and His servant after the needed preparation; first a

slave seven years to the captain of the guard, and afterward six years in prison, comes forth to maintain His name and truth—riches to the Gentiles—and in relation to His people who had dishonoured Him in Canaan how much more their fulness. In the land of Egypt, entirely apart from the land that was promised them, God in His unchanging faithfulness continues the testimony, but where evil is allowed He cannot continue it, and when the force of intent and will is to get rid of the witness, the opposition is in reality against Himself. Hence it shews itself in its dire hate of the one chosen of God. There is no room or place for the testimony, when the instrument which God would use to maintain it, is rejected and refused. Thus was the Jew tried and found wanting. They saw no beauty in the only begotten of the Father. With wicked hands they crucified and slew Him. "Now they have no cloak for their sin; they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

The unfaithfulness and feebleness of

Isaac and Jacob in supporting the testimony was what first led to the open departure from the line and principles of it, in their children. The children or successors always expose, retributively, as I may say, the dereliction of their heads to whom was committed the truth of God. In Genesis xxxv. we get Esau the son of Isaac setting himself in rule and power in the world independently of God; and in Genesis xxxvii. Judah is presented to us as morally degraded; so that we may say that in both the outward circle and the inward, the declension from their first calling is so great, that there could be no testimony for God; nay, the witness who walked in any power must first separate himself from those who assumed to be such, or rather from the position they occupied. The evil of the children of Jacob has now come to a head; they have sealed their iniquity by putting an end as they supposed to God's chosen vessel and the testimony only lingers in the land.

There is much interesting and important instruction for us in all this.

It is recorded in order that we may understand the ways of God. God's purpose from the beginning was to declare Himself; and in proportion as He declared Himself, the wondrous fact was established; that man, lost as he was, was an object of His love. God had raised up a testimony to Himself, and the purposes of His grace in Canaan as His own inheritance. While the witnesses walked in any truthfulness of conscience, grace and help were afforded them; so that in spite of many failures, there was still recovery, and they were continued in the place of testimony. The long-suffering of God in the history of testimony is very touching and instructive. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, each respectively had been borne with and restored; but now when the evil of the parents works unchecked in the children, it reaches its height in rejection of the chosen of God; the one whom he had ordained to be chief of the family. The solitary spark of the fear of God found in Reuben, God will respect, and in future mercy to the nation acknowledge; but

He will not continue the testimony where it has been openly refused and rejected. Joseph the future witness must be led through many and deep trials to declare His name in a scene and sphere entirely new and untried. God, let us note, never foregoes His purpose; but when evil arises—departure from the principle on which it is based—in the place where He would testify of it, He turns aside to another place. We have many instances of this principle in Scripture. God's testimony springs up in Babylon when Jerusalem is in the hands of the Assyrian, because of Israel's apostacy. The grace of God in the gospel is carried out unto the ends of the earth when by the murder of Stephen the Jew had formally driven the testimony from the land. The principle is plain, that the testimony which God has set up must continue until He sets it aside; but if those to whom He has committed it prove themselves unworthy of it, He consigns it to other hands; and I believe, as a rule, effects a change of place as to it also.

Certainly the candlestick (not the light but the lamp which should hold the light), was removed from Ephesus, but God's testimony in and through the Church must continue until He Himself sets it aside. I would call attention to this principle, because I think it explains how in the history of the Church God has used a knot or company of saints at their start for testifying of His truth, which, after a time were superseded by another company more earnest and faithful. And so it must be, I am persuaded, to the end; so much so, that I should hold myself ready through His grace to attach myself, and to walk in company with any knot or company of saints who I saw were led of Him, and were empowered by Him to maintain His testimony. May we walk in such self-denying faithfulness, that we shall be ever ready to accompany the most faithful and earnest.

The principle I have dwelt on is distinctly set forth in the history of Joseph. The evil of his brethren was at its height and he is sold into Egypt!

Let us ponder for a moment and survey how God's testimony is maintained at that period on the earth—a dark age we may say! It was the winter which was maturing His plant for an early and fruitful spring. See Jacob scarcely recovered from his sorrow at the death of Rachel, still only on his way to his father Isaac; and now in his seventeenth year, Joseph is sold into Egypt, and the testimony consequently is transferred thither; for he is the vessel of it chosen of God.

Many and varied are the trials to which he is subjected for thirteen years, whether in the house of Potiphar or in prison, but in each he shines brightly as God's witness, the rebuker of evil and corruption in the one, and the interpreter of God's mind and counsels in the other, himself the sufferer for righteousness' sake in both. What a dignity there is in such a witness, and what an ordeal must such an one be subjected to! Here is one, a slave in the house of the chief captain of the guard, not only resisting temptation,

but exposing himself because he resisted it, to the malice of the ungodly, who could not corrupt or turn him aside from his path for God, and is thus a warning voice to the unrestrained evil in that day, if known only to Satan. There is something more than mere testimony here. It is not that the vessel chosen of God can at any time at once and openly assume and present himself as a witness, be he either a Paul or a Luther; but there is a struggling for the very existence of the testimony in the hand of the witness who is called to endure because of the evil which had grown up among the people of God. He must wade through, as I may say, in suffering, all the evil in which he is found, bearing it on himself personally, as if it were all his own or caused by himself, even as it is said of our blessed Lord, of whom Joseph is so marked a type: "He bare our sicknesses and carried our sorrows." Joseph, cast out by his own and as one dead to them, is from that moment ever rising up from the dead, from the depths to which he is reduced,

to the place where he can fully assume and maintain the testimony of God. The steps, slow, measured, and sorrowful by which he wended his way to that position have a voice for us. He first wins the confidence of the captain of the guard who sees that the Lord is with him, and that the Lord made all that he had to prosper in his hand. But though the world can bear God's witness while he contributes to its gain, when in true self-denial and fear of God he rebukes and refuses its unholy allurements, it cannot endure him, and stoops to every malicious device to compass his ruin. Thus after seven years' faithful service, Joseph is cast into prison, and for six years more in this new and sorrowful sphere, he is acknowledged as God's servant. "The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper." Satan outwits himself in driving the witness from place to place. Like as Paul cast into the prison at Philippi there found

the "Macedonian," so here Joseph, cast into prison at the instigation of unsuccessful corruption, not only sets forth in such a sphere what is the power and favour of God, but also is distinguished by Him as possessor of that which, hidden from man, belongs only to God. "Do not interpretations belong to God?" says Joseph to Pharaoh's officers, who are powerless to interpret their own dreams. But Joseph, the witness, has the mind of God, and he can say, "Tell me them, I pray you," and then declares the interpretation of them.

Two years longer he remains in prison, but now his time was come: the ruler of the people sets him free. He had witnessed for God and declared His mind in humiliation. He is now to do so in the court of Pharaoh, and prove that he has the secret of God when all the magicians and wise men of Egypt had failed. Who can adequately portray the scene now transpiring in the court of the then best organized country in the world! All its wisdom and power are at a standstill, and are entirely

ineffectual to resolve the difficulty which has presented itself, when a slave, reckoned as a malefactor, is called forth from prison and all the great and wise ones of the earth are silent and subject while this unknown one, as the witness of God, expounds the purpose of God! How wondrously and beautifully the testimony is raised up and renewed! All man's power and glory are placed in abeyance before the power and word of God in the Hebrew stranger. God as the God of mercy and compassion is declared to the whole world.

Joseph is now governor of Egypt and a witness to the whole world of the goodness of God. Dispenser of blessing and plenty in the time of famine, the wisdom of God which had distinguished him as a witness in humiliation is as pre-eminent in his elevation; and through him the God of Israel is heard of, owned, and feared in many a land, for all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn; and God thus declares Himself and the compassions of His heart through His faithful witness.

And not only to the world at large, to Joseph's father and brethren the mercy and faithfulness of God in a glorious manner are declared. Joseph's dreams must be verified, and the circle which had so failed as to the testimony and rejected the witness, must own him now as lord of all.

It is beside my subject to dwell on the deeply interesting and affecting way in which the lately rejected but now glorious one leads his brethren to estimate their own sin and bloodguiltiness in compassing the death of him now about to be revealed to them as their saviour, inimitable as is the history in its detail; nor can I here trace it as typifying that of the true Joseph in the day of His power. My subject is that of testimony. It was in the ninth year of Joseph's governorship over Egypt that his father joins him. Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die. And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of

his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." Jacob had forfeited the place of testimony in Canaan; but still, as true of heart, he is to be blessed now in the *place* to which the testimony is transferred, and in connection with the witness—God's chosen one, whom his sons had rejected. All his blessing now (and he was richly provided for in Goshen) is apart from the land of promise, and in virtue of his connection with Joseph; but with the promise that, though God will chasten His people, He will eventually restore them to their true place and inheritance: He will bring them up again out of Egypt.

Jacob lived seventeen years in the land of Egypt, but now the time is come

that he must die. (Gen. xlvii. 29.) His heart clings to the land of promise. In Joseph is his confidence, and to Joseph he looks to separate him from Egypt after death. "Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt. . . . . And he said, Swear unto me. And he swore unto him." Jacob is sick, nigh unto death; his heart bound more closely than ever to the land. The testimony has revived, but not there, and his dependence is on him in whom it *had* revived—on Joseph, as the minister of God. And in this association of heart and spirit, Jacob is bright and full of divine wisdom. Joseph brings his two sons to him, and Jacob, after rehearsing how God had given to his seed Canaan for an everlasting possession, adopts them as his own—"As Reuben and Simeon shall they be mine." Whenever there is faithfulness to God under any circumstances, there the purpose of God, according to His own will, engages the heart of the faithful. Joseph and Jacob are as full of Canaan and interested about it as if they were living there in the happiest

association and had no painful reminiscences connected with it. God's counsel has its place in their hearts. Jacob gives the pre-eminence to Joseph; he is to have a double portion in the land, the true seat of testimony. "Moreover (he says), I have given thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow." And when in his closing hours he, by the Spirit of God, unfolds the history of his seed on the earth, Joseph occupies his mind in the fullest and most blessed way, concluding with, "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." Wonderful burst of light! Remarkable instance of how God vouchsafes light and knowledge to His people when faithful, though previous unfaithfulness may have reduced them to very painful circumstances, even to a house of bondage.

Jacob dies and Joseph went up to

bury his father. The testimony as we have seen is revived, but the inheritance is only enjoyed in hope. In Canaan *there is a grievous mourning*. Joseph must return into Egypt, and there he survived his father sixty-four years, having lived a hundred and ten years in all. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die, and God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."

Thus, having set forth the name of God in the earth, and having manifested His grace and forbearance to his own people, Joseph sinks into the tomb, in vigorous faith of the future of Israel, making mention of their exodus, and giving commandment respecting his bones, in hope of a glorious resurrection. God's line of purpose was fully maintained. While the witness submitted to the low estate and humiliating position to which God in His righteousness subjected him, because of the evil of his people who had dishonoured God in the land, but whom God would yet in His longsuffering mercy care for and correct, but never abandon.

## POPERY AND PANTHEISM.

Popery knows how to make use of the loosening of men's minds from the authority of Scripture, which is now so extensively going on. Infidelity in every form is only negative in its character. But the human mind is not formed to find a rest in negative conclusions. If the authority of Scripture is undermined as the standard of truth and ground of appeal, Popery stands ready with its traditionary claims as the depositary of truth; while its dogma of infallibility seems to present an anchoring ground to minds that are drifting they know not where. Pantheism and Romanism are equally tolerant of each other. It has been well said that, "Romanism, under cover of mysticism, reserves a place for Pantheism." Pantheism has been used to say, and is now saying aloud, "Inasmuch as the mass of mankind—the herd, high and low—must and will have a dogmatic belief of some sort, and must have an ostentatious worship, Romanism supplies both in a mode that is well adapted to satisfy

the instincts and to meet the prejudices of the unthinking many." Nothing but adherence to the divine word will secure from the one or the other of these evils of the present day, but this will. "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." (Rev. iii. 10.)

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#### NOTES ON I JOHN II. 12—27.

"I write unto you, children" [not "*little* children," but all saints], "because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." It is a settled thing; you are not Christians at all without your sins are forgiven you. The poor jailor wanted salvation and that is what he got. "He cried out, What must I do *to be saved*?" That is what he wanted. If I come to hear the testimony of God, what I want is *to be saved*, to get life. Nicodemus came by night with his questions; the Lord said, "You must be

born again." "He that is in Christ is a new creation." The jailor did not know what being in Christ meant, but he believed: what is the consequence? He was saved by a work which was accomplished before ever he asked to be saved. If he believed in Christ he was saved; he got eternal life.

There is difficulty now of Christians having peace. Before Christianity became a profession in the world, a Christian was counted and understood to be saved; but now *all* pretend to be Christians, and they who are really so want to know if they are true Christians; whereby the simple fact of redemption is very much lost sight of; viz., that "your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." God's judgment is passed already on your sins in Christ. If I look to Christ to be saved, as bearing my sins, His judgment is you have eternal life; that is just as much the judgment of God as if Christ had pronounced it on the great white throne. He knows the value of the work of His Son. *He* is the judge, and not *you*. "I

write unto you, little children." He can add a great deal to the little children; but to the fathers he has only one thing to say, "You have known him that is from the beginning." Whatever else it might be it ends all in this, "Known him that is from the beginning," that is Christ. If anything is brought to me that is not Christ, I reject it. If I know a person it is *himself* that I know. I am to know that my sins are forgiven me for His name's sake; but I am to know Him that is from the beginning also. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father."

The apostle distinguishes growth—The fathers have known Christ from the beginning, the true Christ—that guards the soul—knowing him perfectly; no ambiguity, no uncertainty; and all the exercises and *experiences* of the Christian, which are often so much dwelt on, are but the scaffolding of the soul to get at this—"known him that is from the beginning." The young Christian is full of joy, and is thus taken up with himself; whereas the old Christian

speaks less about the joy, but says, "It is Christ Himself possessed that makes me happy." His heart trusts in the Lord. The things of the world, even the things of the Church, do not disturb him; he counts on the love ever watchful and certain in its eye, and is not afraid at any evil tidings. He knows though heaven and earth were to dissolve or crumble into pieces, and the Church itself (which is impossible), *His throne* remains. There is a steadiness in the man's soul because he knows "Him that is from the beginning," knows a manifested Christ, One whom he hath "looked upon with his eyes, and his hands have handled." The apostle was speaking of a Christ he had known and seen and handled, and which was from the beginning, and says, There is the fathers' character, and he has nothing to add.

How far have your souls found steady rest in Christ? or, how far are they satisfied with Christ? Forsaken of friends are you still satisfied with Him? Or how far are these things that you crave and have to resist? Have you

done with the world? not as tired of its vanities and weary of its pleasure, but because your souls have found something in Christ that satisfies for all? Is He found such a manifestation of God to your souls that you rest in Him? then you can say, "None of these things move me." The two points to young men and children are—first, that they have overcome the wicked one, the prince of this world; secondly, that they have known the Father through believing in Christ, and have therefore the Spirit of adoption, and no doubt of the Father's love. The young men overcoming the wicked one is connected with their having the word of God abiding in them and overcoming the world; "Love not the world," &c. Then the little children are warned against the seductions of false doctrines, &c.; and he adds, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

## THE PROMISE OF THE LORD.

Matthew xviii.

It is a point not to be lost sight of in the study or ministry of the divine word that particular passages of Scripture ordinarily mainly depend for their force and bearing and their legitimate application on the connections in which they are found. The force of any given passage may be sought to be practically realized, but it will not be so unless the mind is in accordance with the conditions on which its realization is made to hinge. It is the same in regard to all true advancement in knowledge, as our Lord so plainly shews in His memorable words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

Perhaps there is no passage with which my readers are more familiar than verse 20 of this chapter. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Certainly there is not one on which more is made to depend,

and consequently the danger is the greater of its being misapplied. It is viewed generally as embodying the fundamental principle which distinguishes, as it is thought, christian from sectarian association. As such it is claimed by those for whom I write as a sort of watchword or summary charter of their special privileges. But it may be asked are there no conditions on which the truth of Christ's presence and power, which are often on the ground of this promise so confidently claimed, made to depend? Or will the mere acknowledgment of it as a dogma ensure its desired results?

In the first place, as an available resource (it can hardly be claimed as the normal characteristic of church association), it is essential that there be the exercise of faith. No divine principle is more certain in its action than this, "According to your faith be it unto you." But there is more than this. It is plain to me that there is the most intimate connection between this central truth of the chapter and all that pre-

cedes and all that follows it. It is indeed the gracious provision of the Lord Jesus in all times for His disciples, provided their moral condition and their position be found to answer to that which it was manifestly intended to meet. That which it presents is a resource for the despised, the consciously weak and dependent; and not a position of vaunting for pride and superciliousness. If any are willing, morally, and in spirit and purpose, to conform to what in this place is so markedly unfolded as the temper and mind of heaven, here is their gracious retreat, where in companionship with their Lord, who was rejected and spit upon by the religionists of the world, they may find the solace of His love, and the sanction of His authority to what they do.

So that whether the disciple of Christ be looked at individually, or considered in regard to his association with others, the one thing above all others that he is called upon to cultivate, is a childlike spirit. For it is plainly to the possessors of this spirit that the Lord pro-

mises His presence where two or three are gathered together in His name.

I know well that, in this hard age, to set people to the study of such a lesson will be deemed by the "wise and prudent" to savour more of childlike simplicity than of the trampling manhood-wisdom that is in universal repute not in the world alone but in that which styles itself the Church. Be it so. Nevertheless the declaration of our Lord and Master remains; "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." It is on this authority therefore I assert that no advancement in knowledge, no clearness of doctrine, no energy or zeal, no laboriousness in service can ever come into competition with this spirit or supersede the necessity of this paramount study. It is not that these characteristics might not develop themselves variously in the disciples who were thus addressed by their Lord and ours, but that the substratum of all, the foundation on which all else was to be built, was this spirit

of a little child. This is presented in absolute contrast to the spirit which originated the question of the disciples, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And it is in equal contrast to those emulations which have in every age been the bane of the Church in its earthly course.

And here I may note that before this point of relative greatness in a sphere where heaven's principles have their sway is settled by our Lord, He directs attention to the fact that there is another and a previous question to be considered, namely, that of the conditions on which an entrance to the kingdom of heaven will alone be allowed. That spirit which will alone gain an entrance there is given in sharp and well-defined contrast to that which so universally makes its way in this world, and which men in their self-love are apt to think may avail them in the next as well as this. But no. "Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as

little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Here then I find the Lord Jesus turning men back upon their course (for that is the meaning of the term *converted*) until they reach that temper and spirit, which it may be they have left behind them for many a year, until all their self-sufficiency, and self-consequence, and self-dependence is renounced, and the lowliness, and dependence, and simplicity of purpose of their childhood is regained. To such alone, and to such a spirit, the Lord declares will the gates of admission be opened to that heavenly sphere.

The question here, it must be remembered, is not of the activity of grace which meets a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, but of that condition of moral feeling to which a man must be brought (by grace no doubt), in order to be in unison with the mind of heaven, and to find himself in association with that company which is looking for the perfection of its happiness in the eternal presence of God and Christ in heaven.

Let us remember this then, when we find our admiration going forth, or when disposed to challenge for ourselves the attention and consideration of others, that this is what God and Christ approve—"the meekness of wisdom"—the simplicity of a childlike spirit. We live in a busy, active, pretentious, ambitious age; and in the world through which we are moving we cannot fail to see that what carries it with men is boastful pretension, energy of purpose, and an iron will. In the Church too, where nothing should be seen but the "meekness and gentleness of Christ," we are in danger of the contagion which reigns around, for we are men. But this does not change the temper of heaven nor the temper which heaven approves. It is still on record, for our instruction or correction, as the case may be, that "whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Now it seems to me that we are all greatly lacking in this characteristic of the true disciples of the Lord Jesus

Christ; and, moreover, that it is very little the object of our study and pursuit. Other things are so much more attractive to the mind, and tell so much more immediately and effectively on the natural apprehension, and upon Christians that are walking as men, that this first of all pursuits, in the estimation of Christ, is in danger of being left greatly in the rear. It is in this way, I believe, that we must account for the little progress in truth and knowledge that is made by the majority of Christians, and for the little power that accompanies the possession of truth amongst those who profess and feel themselves to be so much in advance of all others.

Let us look then for a moment—if we can find time for such a contemplation—at this expressive symbol of a true christian temper and spirit. “Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.” Here stands then this child, placed before us for our instruction by a Master who declares of Himself, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” What do we make of this

study? How do we handle this living model of what morally we ought to be? Is there any aptness in us to seize upon the one ruling characteristic that this living unconscious instructor embodies in every motion, and every look, and every word? Remember it is not an infant clinging to its mother's breast—the very expression of helplessness and absolute dependence—on which we are called to fix an inquiring gaze. It is a little child, old enough to understand the Saviour's call, and gentle enough to do implicitly His gentle bidding. Here stands our monitor then unconscious of its being set to teach the profoundest lesson that a human heart can learn. And, I ask again, what do we make of it? One thing we may well assure ourselves of, that it is practice and not theory that this child is set to teach. And, let me ask, is there no prevailing characteristic of childhood that is at once discerned by the observant mind, as there are the unmistakable characteristics of old age? If we have not noticed this, it is time we took our

lessons in the nursery again. Is not a little child the embodiment of a genuine simplicity that is untainted by the guilefulness of art? Is it not the expression of unquestioning candour, and unsuspecting trust, and unambitious aims?

Are we prepared for such lore as a little child can teach? Or are we impatient to push aside our monitor, that we may turn again to the schools of divinity or the halls of science in order to obtain the wisdom which is in far higher estimation in the world, and in the Church, and has a readier currency in both, than attaches to the spirit of a little child? Let us hear on this the decision of Him who places before us this model, and sets us down to study the lessons it would teach: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." And in what estimation

this spirit in His followers is held by the Lord Jesus, we further learn from verse 6 of our chapter: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

But here another point arises to our view. "Woe unto *the world* because of offences!" We have already heard from the lips of our Lord what maledictions will fall on those who are guilty of casting stumblingblocks in the path of His believing little ones. But now the scene is changed, and the warning is reversed. It is, Woe unto *the world* because of offences (or stumblingblocks). If the followers of Christ, instead of exhibiting a childlike spirit, are seeking to be great, like the world, they become simply stumblingblocks in the way of the world's reception of Christ. The world is quick to discover the inconsistency between the profession and the conduct of those who profess to be the followers of Christ, but whose claims

are so ill sustained by those who bear His name. The result is that men turn away in disgust from a profession of that which claims to be from heaven, and to represent that which is heavenly, when they see in it only the worst features of the temper of earth, and which bears upon it, as they judge, the marks of hypocrisy to boot. The history of the Church, in every department of it, alas! has afforded but too sad a comment on the words, "Woe to the world because of offences!" and also on those which follow: "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" It is this which gives occasion to the solemn exhortations of verses 8, 9: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast

into hell fire." The exigency of the followers of a Master who was spit upon in this world and whose path to heavenly glory lay through the ignominy of the cross, is such that sacrifices the most painful must be resolutely encountered, and humiliations the most intense must be willingly met, rather than the eternal issues of their course should be for one moment endangered. And again our Lord turns the attention of His disciples to the little child He had set before them. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Ver. 10.)

There is a deep lesson in this. But it is one that is so simple and natural that we are in the greatest danger of losing its point. It is simply this, that a Christian must take care whenever he meets a little child not to pass it by as an object unworthy of his regard. But it will be said, "This is only a feeling of nature." Be it so. Still it has its action and its reaction on the deepest

principles by which the christian character is formed. It is in perfect keeping with the spirit and aims of the world that the simplicity and dependence of childhood should be pushed aside. Of course it is a mere incumbrance when its important business and its ambitions are to be pursued. What can childhood contribute when greatness, or glory, or distinction is in view? Ah! what indeed? But to those who are called to disallow these aims it has its instruction and its voice; and we can never too often or too lovingly look upon an object that the world naturally passes by, but of whom it is said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Do we think it a mere expression of sentimental tenderness, designed to touch only a fond mother's heart, when "Jesus said, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God . . . . And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them?" No! It is an expression and an action that tells

as directly of the mind of heaven as the mightiest work that Jesus ever wrought. And in the recognition of the moral bearing of the Lord's instructions in this chapter, it is well to remember the place which the natural symbol all through it holds. If there is found in it the disciple that is like a little child, there is no less prominence given to the little child which we are to be like. And the Lord Jesus says, "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

The point to which we are next introduced is the practical doctrine of the Church—the Church in its simplest and most gracious elements. All that is brought before us here is the common tie of brotherhood, direct and unlimited and unrestricted intercourse with a Father in heaven, and immediate subjection to an ever present Lord. Such is the Church which in its practical position and working our Lord Jesus thus brings before us. Connected with this there is the gracious, simple, unin-

cumbered rule for the correction of offences—the internal discipline of the Church. “If thy brother shall trespass against thee,” &c. (Ver. 15—17.) Then there is presented the solemn assurance of heaven’s seal being appended to such a course, so contrasting with man’s corruption in his ecclesiastical courts to which in some shape or other Christians generally have been contented to refer: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Next there is opened the special secret of this ecclesiastical power—united dependence and prayer to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, with the promise of His special intervention, whatever the case may be; and also direct and immediate subjection to Jesus Christ as Lord. “Again I say unto you, That 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. For where two or three are gathered together

in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Ver. 19, 20.) Then, lastly, the necessity for the exercise of unlimited forgiveness on the part of the disciples one toward another is insisted on—illustrated by the parable of the two debtors, which runs on to the end of the chapter. And supposing there be seen a dispensational bearing in this parable, it would be a most dangerous mode of dealing with the moral force of our Lord's instructions, if on that ground we should discharge our consciences from the obligation of according to our brethren the measure of unlimited forgiveness, on the score that we *have* received, and do daily receive, unlimited forgiveness from our Father in heaven. But in truth our Lord has bound it upon us in terms from which there is no escape. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Ver. 35.)

Such then, as it appears to me, must be the moral characteristics; such the position; such the simplicity of depen-

dence and subjection; such the practical spirit of those who would claim as their fundamental principle "the promise of the Lord," "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Blessed be God! it is a foundation that will not fail wherever there is simplicity enough in two or three—if only two or three—that are content to rest on that and on nothing else. But if assumed only as a dogma it will end in a condition common to every sectarian movement, in which the rule and authority of man has ultimately become supreme, and the blessed rule and authority of Christ has been foregone. D.

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## THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS

*(Concluded from page 192.)*

(Titus ii. 11—14.)

It was intended, when the series of papers bearing this title was commenced, to have gone through the sum of the

New Testament witness upon the subject; but the last paper completed only the testimony of the Gospels and the Acts, leaving the large field of the Epistles and the Revelation unentered on. The limit of a very few pages, so far as the present publication is concerned, necessarily *now* leaves this amongst the many lapsed purposes of man's heart, while "the counsel of the Lord it shall stand;" and His truth, amidst all earthly changes, remains unchanged and is eternal.

The statements of this striking passage have their own direct and independent force relative to the hope that is designed by our Lord to animate His people's hearts. But their true bearing can hardly be seized when insulated from the important connections in which they are found. Like every part of revealed truth, the hope of the Lord's coming as presented in Scripture is intended to be pre-eminently practical. The subject may be taken up as an intellectual study, and you may get artistic

groupings of its various aspects. In Scripture it is always presented either as stimulating the responsibilities, or encouraging the patience, or animating the expectations, or, as here, forming the character of those who, whatever their relative condition on earth, are redeemed by Christ to have a common home in heaven. It is never given as a picture of the imagination.

The homeliest exhortations as to the conduct of old men and old women, the behaviour that is becoming in young women and young men, and the warning of servants against insolence and filching from their masters—and these all gathered by the gospel from a people whose national characteristic was that of incorrigible lying, and who are described by one of their own poets as “evil beasts and slow-bellies”—these introduce to our attention the wondrous declaration, “That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness

and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 10—14.)

This is a wonderful summary of the living practical character of Christianity, traced downward from its source, displaying its moral transforming power in men, and issuing in eternal association in glory with Him whose appearing in grace has made salvation ours.

First of all it is stated that the grace of God, which brings salvation *to all men*, has appeared. It is not restrictive in its character, i.e., to Jew or Gentile. The grace is salvation-bringing to all men; and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ it has appeared. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In Him it was embodied and presented; and it brought the salvation to all men, which was needed by all. But the

special point here is that as there has been a living personal appearing of the grace, there will also be a living personal appearing of the glory also. Our faith and hope are alike in God, and both are linked with the first and second appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who brought the grace will bring the glory too. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many [the essential basis of salvation]; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation:" [i.e., for final deliverance or glory.]

Next there is presented the power of Christianity in its subjects, as they are viewed in this world intermediate to the reception of the grace and their attainment of the glory. The first necessity of our souls is *salvation*—deliverance from the guilt and condemnation under which we lie as sinners against God. Hence that touching expression of grace, "God so loved the world that he gave his onlybegotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should *not perish*, but have everlasting life." It is the grace

of God that "brings salvation." But grace is transformative of the character also, and conforms in affections and aims to Him by whom it comes. It disciplines the soul in the ways of God. It teaches the denial of all impiety and worldly desires. It emancipates from the domination of the world and its evil principles, by the introduction of the claims of another Lord to the subjection of the soul. Still it is the grace that teaches this, and teaches it on the ground of a necessary conformity to the character of Him in whom the grace has been displayed. "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It teaches us "that we should live soberly [with due restraint as to our own desires], righteously [in uprightness as regards the claims of others], and piously [in all that regards our relationship to God] in this present age." Grace teaches this, because the glory is coming; and our moral habits are to bear witness, both to the one and to the

other. They are to bear witness to the grace which has brought us deliverance from all that enslaves the men of this present age; and to the glory which is about to be manifested, which will introduce us to the associations of the age to come: "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

I will now only briefly notice some of the passages relating to this blessed hope which, under other circumstances, might have been unfolded in their special connections. In Romans viii. 21—23 it is presented in connection with the redemption of the body from the power of death, and the creation's participation in the believer's glory. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the

adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." In 1 Corinthians i. 7, 8 there is a speciality in connection with the possession and exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in responsibility to Christ, that can only be indicated and left. "So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Chapter xv. of the same epistle presents it in connection with the resurrection of the believer and the establishment of the kingdom of God and Christ's supremacy. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies

under his feet." (Ver. 21—25.) In Philippians it is connected with the obtaining of "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And the apostle says, "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Chap. iii. 20, 21.) In Colossians it is the issue in glory of the position in grace which presents us as risen with Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Chap. iii. 1—4.) In Thessalonians its various aspects are interwoven with the whole position of the Christian from the first hour of his

conversion to God, through every responsibility and every trial until that solemn moment is reached, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." (2 Thess. i. 7—10.) The first chapter of the First Epistle presents this hope in connection with the preaching and reception of the gospel. "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (Ver. 9, 10.) Chapter ii. connects it

with the final joy of uninterrupted fellowship between the apostle and his beloved converts. "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (Ver. 17—20.) Chapter iii. gives the object and issue of all pastoral anxiety and labour on account of the sheep of Christ. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (Ver. 12, 13.) Chapter iv. presents this hope in connection with sorrow on account of departed friends, and brings in the special re-

velation of (what is now technically called) "the rapture of the saints." "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (Ver. 13—18.) Chapter v. gives the believer's moral position in the world in the prospect of "the day of the Lord," which will bring judgment upon the world. The whole

passage should be read, concluding with verse 23. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Second Epistle presents the righteous judgment of God upon the enemies of the gospel, and glory to those who have believed. This is specially in connection with the kingdom of God, as well as the truth of the First Epistle. This is seen in the First Epistle, chapter ii. 12. "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory;" and also in the Second Epistle, chapter i. 5. "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." Chapter ii. of the Second Epistle unfolds the apostasy and the man of sin, and the delusions of the last days of the history of Christianity on earth, until "that Wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." (Ver. 8.)

In 1 Timothy vi. 13 it is presented in connection with a good confession and its responsibilities. "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, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ver. 13, 14.)

The rest I must pass over, and close with the remark that the Book of Revelation begins with the declaration "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." (Chap. i. 7.) And it closes with the declaration, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." And "He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

So full, so rich, is the divine testimony concerning "that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great

God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," though that fulness has been but imperfectly sketched in the passages adduced. "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ."

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#### A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

The Editor has seen reason, the grounds of which it is not important here to state, for discontinuing the publication of the present work. If it should be resumed in another form, due notice will be given.

8, *Belle Vue, Clifton,*  
July, 1866.