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**COMMENTARY**

# DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
## OLD TESTAMENT

*by John Nelson Darby*

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# SYNOPSIS

## OF THE

# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

**BY**

JOHN NELSON DARBY

# OLD TESTAMENT

# TO THE READER

*(Translated from the French as appearing in "tudes sur La Parole par J. N. Darby".)*

***Dear Reader,***

I present to you in these pages the beginning of a work which I trust will be of use to you in the study of the precious Word of God. I also desire that the outlines you will find therein, giving you a glimpse of part of the wealth contained in the Word, may induce you to study it more carefully. I feel conscious, even more conscious than you could be, of the great and numerous imperfections that are found in this outline. However small one's value of the Word may be; however little one may have felt its divine character, any work of man referring to it will be, in the eyes of a believer, quite colorless and poor. I feel this, and wish to say a few words to explain to you my object in publishing these thoughts, and to let you know what to expect in perusing them.

A few years ago a brother suggested that I should undertake this work, but until now, I have shrunk from the task, more because of a sense of my inability for such an undertaking, than because of my being occupied in the Lord's service, although the latter may have accounted somewhat for the delay. The feeling that the Lord is near inclined me to devote myself to service rather than to undertake work in my study. The needs of brothers who are also in the Lord's field, and most of them in a more useful way than I am, caused me to decide to set about this work, without, I hope forsaking a fitting humility, which I would rather maintain than accomplish any kind of work whatsoever. Several matters, however, weighed in the balance to hinder my commencing this task.

Firstly, the immense responsibility, which, when it is a question of the Word of God, attaches to the one who would give guidance to the thoughts of Christians; and however modestly it might be, to present ideas as being the intention of the Spirit of God. How grave an error to wrongly direct the dear children of God in the understanding of His thoughts and of His will; or to present as the purpose of His precious communications, that which may not be it!

Another consideration also checked me; it was the fear that anyone might assume to find in this work, the whole contents of the Word. The grave and serious harm of all commentaries is that they make room for this thought, lending themselves thus to the slothfulness of heart and the lack of

spirituality which are satisfied with a few explanations, good, perhaps, in themselves, but which only give a few thoughts suggested by the Word and fall infinitely short of communicating its life, its power and its wealth. Nothing is more harmful than this laziness which prefers to dwell on a few thoughts rather than fathom the divine Word itself, which latter is denied to the soul who does not earnestly seek of the Lord, with diligence, spirituality and devotion, the knowledge which He alone can give. The reader therefore, will not find here any pretension to give him the whole contents of the Word. He will findat least, such has been my desire and the object of my work — a few indications which will help him in the study of the Bible, but which will be useless to him without this study. I should have rendered him an injurious service had I helped him to gather up ideas, at the same time diverting him from the living and true Word which puts us in touch with God Himself, places our hearts beneath that eye which sees all, which judges all; but which sees it in order to heal us and bless us.

A further and more personal consideration weighed with me a little, the fact that the task truly was very great. The influence of this thought vanished in the hope of being of service to my brethren; and, in the great joy I anticipated in performing the work, which joy indeed, I have not failed to experience. Even if my reader does not derive any great gain from it, I, at any rate, have the consolation that it has been of immense gain to me. Whatever may be, I do not regret having undertaken it. I beseech the reader not to read these pages without accompanying them with those of the Word, and to use them only for the study of the Word. My purpose is that the Word should be studied, and I even hope that it will be impossible to use these writings otherwise than in the study of the Word.

Finally, I did not propose to speak of the result the truth has produced in myself, nor give utterance to the godly emotions which gush up in the heart when the Word is rightly read. I intended to help my reader to understand that which should produce these feelings. I prefer to let them spring up through grace in his heart, rather than to impart to him much of what has taken place in mine. I simply express the desire that the effect may be not only the joy of knowledge, but of true communion with God.

I have only one word to add. I intended to publish a summary of all the books of the Bible, indicating as far as it may be given to me the intent and thought of the Holy Spirit in each book. As it is a great undertaking it seemed that the work could very well be published in parts. The Pentateuch suggests itself naturally as a group which could appear separately. My work on the other books is well advanced, so that I hope to be able, God willing, to resume shortly the publication of this work. It is sweet to think that my brethren will help me with their prayers that I may have guidance from God

in this work, and that His Spirit may preside over it, and that thus it may be a blessing to us all.

I must not finish this Preface without informing my reader that if he finds that which edifies in these pages, he will be largely indebted to the care and affectionate interest brought in by our brother M. H. Parlier, who has greatly helped me in editing.

May the teaching of the Holy Spirit Himself be granted to you, dear reader; may the Word become always more precious in these last days, and may an obedient spirit, mingled with love for all that belongs to Christ, be with you. This is the desire of your affectionate brother in Him.

***J.N.DARBY.***

# AVERTISSEMENT

## LA SECOND EDITION DES TUDES SUR LE PENTATEUQUE

La premire dition de la premire partie des tudes sur la Parole tant puise, j’ai profit de la publication de la seconde edition pour revoir rapidement ce que j’ai crit sur les cinq livres de Mose. Rien n’est chang du fonds. Je ne doute pas que les aperus que j’ai publis ne contiennent la vraie pense de Dieu dans les passages dont j’ai cherch exposer le contenu. On s’est plaint de ce que l’explication de la Gense tait trop breve et qu’elle manquait de developpement. J’ai beaucoup ajout cette partie; elle est augmente peu pers d’une moiti. J’ai voulu imprimer ces remarques supplmentaires part, pour ceux qui possdent la premire edition. Des circonstances hors de mon pouvoir ont empech, pour le moment, l’accomplissement de mon intention. J’espre les faire imprimer au plus tet. Au reste, ce ne sont que des developpements, et ceux qui ont la premire dition possdent di le resum de tout.

# PREFACE

The following Synopsis was originally written and published in French, at the desire and more immediately for the use of Christians speaking that language. It as been already translated into English, and introduced, Book by Book, into a religious publication appearing from time to time. It has been thought desirable to give it as a whole.

The Synopsis of the Book of Genesis, which was felt to too brief, has been considerably enlarged; and the whole revised and corrected, but without any material change.

In the original publication the review of that part of Leviticus which treats of the sacrifices which prefigured that of Christ, had been omitted, as such a review had been already published long ago in Notes on the Offerings, and more fully in French in Les Types du Levitique, since then translated into English also. To complete the Synopsis now published, this last tract has been, after revisal, introduced into the present work, of which it naturally formed a part.

A few words only are needed to introduce the reader to the present publication. He is not to expect a commentary, nor, on the other hand, to suppose that he has a book which he can read without referring continually to the Word itself in the part treated of. The object of the book is to help a Christian, desirous of reading the Word of God with profit, in seizing the scope and connection of that which it contains. Though a commentary may doubtless aid the reader in many passages in which God has given to the commentator to understand in the main the intention of the Spirit of God, or to furnish philological principles and information, which facilitate to another the discovery of that intention; yet if it pretend to give the contents of Scripture, or if he who uses it seeks this in its remarks, such commentary can only mislead and impoverish the soul. A commentary, even if always right, can at most give what the commentator has himself learned from the passage. The fullest and wisest must be very far indeed from the living fullness of the divine Word. The Synopsis now presented has no pretension of the kind. Deeply convinced of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, given to us of God, and confirmed in this conviction by daily and growing discoveries of their fullness, depth, and perfectness; ever more sensible, through grace, of the admirable perfection of the parts, and the wonderful connection of the whole, the writer only hopes to help the reader in the study of them.

The Scriptures have a living source, and living power has pervaded their composition: hence their infiniteness of bearing, and the impossibility of separating any one part from its connection with the whole, because one God is the living center from which all flows; one Christ, the living center round which all its truth circles, and to which it refers, though in various glory; and one Spirit, the divine sap which carries its power from its source in God to the minutest branches of the all-united truth, testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him whom God sets forth as the object and center and head of all that is in connection with Himself, of Him who is, withal, God over all. blessed for evermore.

To give all this as a whole and perfectly would require the Giver Himself. Even in learning it, we know in part, and we prophesy in part. The more — beginning from the utmost leaves and branches of this revelation of the mind of God, by which we have been reached when far from Him — we have traced it up towards its center, and thence looked down again towards its extent and diversity, the more we learn its infiniteness and our own feebleness of apprehension. We learn, blessed be God, this, that the love which is its source is found in unmingled perfectness and fullest display in those manifestations of it which have reached us even in our ruined state. The same perfect God of love is in it all. But the unfoldings of divine wisdom in the counsels in which God has displayed Himself remain ever to us a subject of research in which every new discovery, by increasing our spiritual intelligence, makes the infiniteness of the whole, and the way in which it surpasses all our thoughts, only more and more clear to us. But there are great leading principles and truths, the pointing out of which in the various books which compose the Scriptures, may assist in the intelligence of the various parts of Scripture. It is attempted to do this here. What the reader is to expect, consequently, in this Synopsis, is nothing more than an attempt to help him in studying Scripture for himself. All that would turn him aside from this would be mischievous to him; what helps him in it may be useful. He cannot even profit much by the following pages otherwise than in using them as an accompaniment to the study of the text itself.

From what has been said it will easily be understood that the writer can readily feel the imperfection of what he has written. Often he would have liked to have introduced the developments which he has enjoyed, when unfolding particular passages in detail and applying them to the hearts and consciences of others; but this would have turned him aside from the object of the work. He trusts, however, that the right direction is given to the scriptural researches of the reader: grace alone can make those researches effectual.

He cannot close this short introduction to the book without expressing the effect which the discovery of the perfectness and divinely ordered connection of the Scriptures produces in his mind as respects what is called Rationalism. Nothing is proved by the system so denominated but the total absence of all divine intelligence, a poverty associated with intellectual pretension, an absence of moral judgment, a pettiness of observation on what is external, with a blindness to divine and infinite fullness in the substance, which would be contemptible through its false pretensions, if it were not a subject of pity, because of those in whom these pretensions are found. None but God can deliver from the pride of human pretension. But the haughtiness which excludes God, because it is incompetent to discover Him, and then talks of His work, and meddles with His weapons, according to the measure of its own strength, can prove nothing but its own contemptible folly. Ignorance is generally confident, because it is ignorant; and such is the mind of man in dealing with the things of God. The writer must be forgiven for speaking plainly in these days on this point. The pretensions of infidel reason infect even Christians.

He would add that it has not been his object to unfold the blessed fruits the Word produces in the mind and ways of him who receives it, nor the feelings produced in his own mind in reading it, but to help the reader in the discovery of that which has produced them. May the Lord only make the Word as divinely precious to him as it has been to the writer; to both ever still more so!

# INTRODUCTION

I propose giving in this work, of which Genesis is the commencement, a short synopsis of the principal subjects of each book of the Bible, to aid in the study of this precious volume that our God has given to us. I do not at all pretend to give the full contents of each book, but only (as God shall grant to me) a sort of index of the subjects, the divisions of the books by subjects, and (as far as I am enabled) the object of the Spirit of God in each part, hoping that it may aid others in reading the book of God. The Bible, in its object, is a whole, which presents to us God coming forth from His essential fullness to manifest all that He is, and to bring back into the enjoyment of this fullness with Himself those who, having been made partakers of His nature, have become capable of comprehending and loving His counsels and Himself.

But before this purpose is fully revealed, man is brought upon the scene as a responsible being, and his history, as such, given to us in the various phases through which he has passed, up to the cross, where his enmity against God was manifested, and the foundation laid for the full revelation of that purpose, and the accomplishment of God’s good pleasure in man, and laid by that in which the whole divine character in love and righteousness was revealed and glorified, and God perfectly glorified in every respect in bringing man into glory. The creation has served as a sphere to this manifestation of God; but as a manifestation it would have been in itself altogether imperfect, though in a measure it declared His glory.

Sin moreover having entered, the state of the creation and the effects of providence, which regulated its order and details here below, tended, in the state in which man was, to give a false idea of God. For if he referred this creation and this government to God, he saw a power which belonged to Him alone; while there existed at the same time evil which overthrew every idea he could form of powerful goodness. The mind of man was lost in the effort to explain it, and superstitions and philosophy came in to complete the confusion in which he found himself. On the one hand, superstitions made falser still the false ideas that man had formed for himself of God; and on the other hand, philosophy, by the efforts which man’s natural intelligence made to get rid of the difficulty, plunged him into such obscurity and such uncertainty that he finished by rejecting every idea of God whatever, save the need which had made him seek one.

These superstitions were in truth nothing more than that Satan had possessed himself of the idea of God in the heart, in order to nourish, under this name, its lusts, and degrade it in consecrating them by the name of a God, who was in truth a demon; and philosophy was but the useless effort of the mind of man to rise to the idea of God — a height which he was incapable of attaining, and which in consequence he abandoned, making it a subject of pride to do without it. Even the law of God, while declaring the responsibility of man to God, and thus asserting His authority, only revealed Him in the exercise of judgment, requiring from man what he ought to be, without revealing what God was, save in justice; and in no way in relationship with the scene of misery and ignorance which sin had brought upon the human race. It did not show what God was in the midst of that misery, nor could do so; for its office was to require from man consistency with a certain line of conduct, of which the Legislator constituted Himself judge, at the end of the career of him who was subjected to it. The Son of God is God Himself in the midst of all this scene, the faithful Witness of all that He is in His relationship with it. In a word, it is the Son of God who reveals God Himself, and who becomes thus necessarily the center of all His counsels, and of all the manifestation of His glory, as well as the object of all His ways.

We shall find then three great subjects in the Bible — the creation (now under the effect of the fall); * the law, which gave to man, such as he is now, a rule — to man in the midst of this creation to see if he could live there according to God, and be there blessed; and the Son of God.

> [* I confine myself more especially to the lower creation where man was placed. There are fallen angels, and the created heavens are defiled through sin. But angels were a distinct creation, and present to celebrate with joy the creation as we view it, and as it is viewed in Genesis 1, after the first verse, as a scene with which man has to do. Still as responsible and creatures, where not preserved of God, they were liable to fall, and in fact did fall. But they were a distinct creation. Hence we have them not in the creation recounted in Genesis.]

The first two, namely, the creation and the law, are bound up with the responsibility of the creature. We shall find all that is connected with these two either guilty or corrupted. The Son, on the contrary — the manifestation of the grace and love of the Father, and of God’s love to the world, when this guilt was already there in lawless sin and lawbreaking; the express image of the subsistence of God, in whom the Father was seen — we shall see suffering in love in the midst of this fallen creation and the contradictions of a rebellious people, and when God had been perfectly glorified in respect of sin, accomplishing all the counsels of God in uniting all things in blessing by His power and under His authority, those even who

with hatred had rejected Him being forced to own Him Lord to the glory of God the Father, and at last, when He shall have subjected all things, giving up to God the Father the kingdom of His glory as Son of man, that God may be all in all.

Besides all this, there are in the counsels of God those with whom the God whom we know in Jesus surrounds Himself, who are to be brought into the likeness of Him with whom they are associated as sons, He the firstborn among many brethren who are to enjoy eternally with God His favor and blessing, as it rests on Him with whom and through whom they enjoy it. There is also an earthly people in whom God manifests the principles of His government here below and His unfailing faithfulness; it is to this last, consequently, that the law was given. Finally, in the purpose of God before the world was (but hidden until the fit moment when, its redemption being accomplished, the Holy Spirit could, by dwelling in it, consequent on the accomplishment of the work of redemption and the glorifying of Christ, reveal to it all the efficacy of its redemption and the whole extent of its blessing), there was a church, chosen in Christ, His bride, to be presented to Himself without spot or wrinkle, His body too, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all, united to Him by the Spirit with which all the members are baptized, and soon to be manifested in glory when He takes that headship.

The cross is the center of all this in every respect. There the history of man in responsibility, as the child of Adam ends, and there begins anew in grace reigning through righteousness. There good and evil are fully brought to an issue, hatred in man and love in God, sin and the righteousness of God against it. * There God is perfectly glorified morally, and man judged in sin and redeemed in righteousness, the dominion of evil destroyed, and that of man established in righteousness as God willed it should be, death and he that had the power of it set aside, and this by an act of love which set the Son of God as man at the head of all things in righteousness. All, through the cross, rests secure and immutable in result on the ground of redemption: what shall the end of the despisers of it be?

> [* This is morally of the greatest depth and fullness. We have man in absolute evil, hatred against God manifested in goodness; Satan in all his power over all Adam’s children; man in perfection, Christ, in love to His Father, and perfect obedience; God in righteousness against sin, and in love to the sinner; and all this in the very place of sin where man was. Hence all founded on it is immutably stable. A risen Christ is, as to the human state in itself, the result of this, man in a new eternal condition, beyond sin, death, Satan’s power and judgment.]

Hence we shall find, not only the creation, the law, and the Son of God, but the dealings by which God has prepared the way for, and led men to expect,

His manifestation; the development of all the principles on which He entered into relationship with men; the consequences of the violation of the law; and lastly, in its place, the manifestation of the church upon the earth, and the directions He has given to it, together with the course of events which are connected with its existence and its unfaithfulness on the earth; with that of the earthly people of God; and with man himself, responsible to God and clothed with authority by Him on the earth: the whole closing with the glory of Jesus, Son of man, maintaining the blessing and union of all things under the reign of God; and, in fine, God all in all. The history of Jesus; the position granted to the church in glory according to the counsels of God, the mystery hidden from the ages; her participation in the sufferings of Jesus, and her union with Him; and in general the testimony of the Holy Ghost given from on high, are clearly revealed in the New Testament. That of which we have spoken previously forms the course of the ages; the church forms no part of them.

This separates the Bible naturally into two parts: that which speaks of the first two subjects, the creation and man in his relationship with God without law, and His people under law; and that which speaks of the Son come upon the earth, and all that relates to the church and its glory — that is, in general, the Old and New Testament. We shall see, however, that, in the Old, promise and prophecy referred always to the Son, eternal object of the counsels of God: as, in the New, there were prophecies of the future dealings of God with the earth, and so far connected with the Old; and, further, the rejection of the Son gave occasion to the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth — a fact which modified the whole state of the people of God, and introduced special subjects which depended on this presence. For there is this peculiar in the historical part of the New, that the Son was presented first to the world, and to the people under the law, to put them anew to the test. The bearing of His coming at first was not the accomplishment of the counsels of God, but to present to man, still placed under the old order of things, the faithful testimony of what God was, if the heart of man had any capacity to receive it, or to discern Him who returned in grace into the midst of a fallen creation, and did so in the very form and nature of him in whom the fall had taken place; and to the Jews, if they had been willing to receive Him, the Lord of Glory, the object of all the prophecies and of all the promises; and, in fine (the world not having known Him, and His own not having received Him), to accomplish the sacrifice, which could lay the foundation of a new world before God, and place the redeemed in joy before the face of His Father, heirs of all that was established in Him the second Adam to make the church His body and His bride.

From all that I have said, it results also that the Old Testament contains two very distinct parts — often united, it is true, in the same book, and even in a single passage, still distinct in their nature — the history of man as he was, and God's way with him, or the historical part, whether before the law or under the law; and the revelation of the thoughts and intentions of God as to the future, which are always connected with Christ. This revelation sometimes takes the character of a positive prophecy, sometimes the form of a typical event which prefigures what God would afterwards accomplish. I may cite, as an example of this last way of expressing the thoughts of God, the sacrifice of Isaac. Evidently there is an historical instruction of the utmost importance in the touching example of Abraham's obedience; but every one easily recognizes in it the type of a sacrifice, for which God prepared for Himself a Lamb, of which Isaac, the beloved of his father, was but a feeble figure; and where resurrection, not in figure but in power, is the source of life and hope to every believer.

But perhaps I anticipate too much the details. Let us proceed to the general character of the books of scripture.

# GENESIS

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

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

But here some brief general remarks deserve a place. This revelation from God is not a history by Him of all that He has done, but what has been given to man for his profit, the truth as to what he has to say to. Its object is to communicate to man all that regards his own relationship with God. In connection with the second Adam he will know as he is known; and already, by means of the work of Christ, he has that unction of the Holy One by which he knows all things. But historically the revelation is partial. It communicates what is for the conscience and spiritual affections of man. The created world therefore is taken up as it subsists before the eyes of man, and he in the midst of it, and in so bringing it forward Genesis gives God's work as the author of it. What is here said is true of the whole Bible. Here it is evident in this, that nothing is said of the creation, but what places man in the position which God had made for him in the creation itself, or presents to him this sphere of his existence as being the work of God Thus

no mention is made of any heavenly beings. Nothing is said of their creation. We find them as soon as they are in relationship with men; although afterwards, as a truth, it is fully recognized of course that they are so created.

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

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

The first four days, God brings light and order out of darkness and confusion: light, the first day; the expanse as a scene of heavenly power over the earth, the second day; then He divided what was formed and orderly, on the one hand, from the moving powerful but shapeless mass of waters, on the other, and then ornamented the ordered habitable scene with beauty and fruitfulness on the third. The symbols of directing power were set visibly in their places on the fourth.

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

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

> [* Nothing can be more marked than the distinction of man — of that being in whom the purposes of God also were to be fulfilled; His delights were with the sons of men, His good pleasure in (not merely good will towards) men proved by His blessed Son becoming a man. Here no doubt it is the responsible man, but the difference from all other creatures is marked as strongly as possible. The sixth day's creation finishes with the usual formula, "And God saw that it was good" (chap. <01025>1:25), before man is spoken of. Then comes a solemn consultation to give him a special place, and the image and likeness of God are introduced by God as that after which He creates him. And it is repeated, "so God created man in his own image." I must say, to make a mere animal of him is monstrous and slights this passage, the emphatic declaration of God. As an order of being, he is evidently the counterpart of the ways of God, though this be only fully accomplished in Christ according to <19008>Psalm 8 which just brings this out: compare <45514>Romans 5:14 and <58205>Hebrews 2.]

We shall see, in chapter 2, another immensely important principle brought out as to man, when the question of his relationship to God is brought forward. Here his creation is a distinct one from all else; he is presented simply, apart from every other thought, as God's workmanship as a creature, the head and center of the rest, the ruler over them all. But this we may remark: while he represents God and is like Him we have nothing of righteousness and holiness here. This came in by redemption and the partaking of the divine nature. There was of course the absence of evil, and so far the likeness of God; but ignorance of it, not what God is in respect of it. It is much more here the place man holds, than his nature, though the absence of evil, and the spring of condescending affections as the center of being, must have been found there, had he not fallen. These last are more the likeness, his place more the image. He was the central authority of all things, and all things referred to him as their head. All authority and all affections were related to him as their center and head, and no sin, sorrow, or evil, or insubordinate self-seeking was there. Unfallen moral order would have been his delight.

The first three verses of chapter 2 belong to the first chapter. It is the rest of God, He ceasing from His own works, all very good.

In **CHAPTER** 2 we have man's relationship with God, and his own portion as such. Hence the LORD * God is introduced: not merely God as a creator, but God in relationship with those He has created. Hence we have the special manner of man's creation.

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

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

But we have in this chapter, more particularly, the special relationship of man with God, with his wife (type of Christ and His church), with the creation; and the two great principles, from which everything flows as regards man, established in the garden where man was placed in blessing; namely, responsibility in obedience, and a sovereign source of life — the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. In these two things, in conciliating these two, lies the lot of every man. * It is impossible out of Christ. It is the question raised in the law, and answered in grace in Christ. The law put life as the result of the perfect obedience of him who knew good and evil, that is, made it depend on the result of our responsibility. Christ, having undergone the consequence of man's having failed, becomes (in the power of a life which had gained the victory over death which was the consequence of that disobedience) a source of life eternal that evil could not reach, and that in a righteousness perfect according to a work which has taken away all guilt from him that has share in it, a righteousness moreover in which we stand before God according to His own mind and righteous will and nature, according to His own glory. His priesthood ** applies to the details of the development of this life in the midst of evil, and the place of divine perfectness in which we are set by His

work, and reconciles our present infirmities with our divinely given place before God. In the garden the knowledge of good and evil did not yet exist: obedience only in refraining from an act, which was no sin if it had not been forbidden, constituted the test. It was not a prohibition of sin as at Sinai, and a claim of good when good and evil were known.

[* In Eden the two principles were there, obedience and life; man failed, incurred death, and was excluded from life there. The law did not treat man as lost, though it proves him so, but takes up the two principles and makes life dependent on obedience. Christ takes the consequence of failure for us on the cross, and is the source of divine life to us, and that in a new resurrection state.]

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

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

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

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

immediate connection and intercourse with God, according to the place he was set in.

As soon as God had redeemed a people, He dwelt among them. His abiding presence is the consequence of redemption and through it only (Exodus 29:46). Here He created, blessed, and visited. Adam, created the conscious center of all around him, had his blessing and security in dependence on and intercourse with God. This, as we shall see, he forfeited, and became the craving center of his own wishes and ambition, which he could never satisfy.

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

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

weakness and the fall were. It is the Seed of the woman who bruises the serpent's head.

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

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

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

What follows is the present result as to the government of God; the temporal sentence pronounced on Adam and his wife, until death, under the power of which he was fallen, seized him. There was a sign however of deeper mercies. Life is recognized as still there though death had come in: Eve is the mother of all living; a faith, it would seem, real, though obscure, at any rate, ours. But there is yet more. Before they are driven out, and shut out from all return back to the tree of life according to nature, God clothes them with a garment which covers their nakedness, a garment which had its origin in death (the death of another), which had come in, but which hid the effects of the sin that had introduced it. Man was no longer naked. So, though out from God's presence in nature, we have not yet indeed the serpent's head bruised, though this is sure to be accomplished; the prince of

this world is judged (though he be it still), and we know it by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, when Christ, whom the world led by Satan slew, was seated at God's right hand; but if that be not yet accomplished, we are before God clothed with the clothing which He has put upon us, that best robe. It is not now a promise or a figure, but an accomplished work — a work of God. God has made our coat; the world may mock at such a thought, we know what it means. But he is justly driven out of the garden, an outcast from paradise and God, and hindered from partaking of the tree of life, that he may not perpetuate here below a life of disaster and of misery. The way of the tree of life was henceforth inaccessible to man, * according to nature, as the creature of God. There is no return to the paradise of man in innocence. Adam, already in sin and far from God, is the parent of a race in the same condition as himself. **

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

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

But grace could work. The grace of a God above the evil of man, and Abel approaches Him by faith.

Hereon follows the separation of the families of God and of the enemy, of the world and of faith. Abel comes as guilty, and, unable as he is to draw near to God, setting the death of another between himself and God, recognizes the judgment of sin — has faith in expiation. Cain, laboring honestly outwardly where God had set him to do so, externally a worshipper of the true God, has not the conscience of sin; he brings as an offering the fruits which are signs of the curse, proof of the complete blinding of the heart, and hardening of the conscience of a sinful race driven out from God. He supposes that all is well; why should not God receive him? There is no sense of sin and ruin. Thus is brought in sin, not only against God which Adam had fully wrought, but against one's neighbor, as it has been displayed in the case of Jesus; and Cain himself is a striking type of the state of the Jews.

In these two chapters we have sin in all its forms, as a picture set before us, in Adam's and Cain's conduct — sin in its proper original character against God, and then more particularly against Christ (in figure) in the conduct of Cain, with its present consequences set forth as regards the earth. We may

remark, in both Adam's and Cain's case, how the government of God on the earth is set in prominence as to the effects of sin. Separation from God of a being capable of, and naturally formed for, intercourse with Him, is there, but left rather for the moral weighing of the soul. The publicly revealed judgment is that of consequences on earth. It is clearly said no doubt, "He drove out the man" with whom He was to have held intercourse (chap. 3); and "from thy face," says Cain, "am I driven out" (chap. 4). But what is developed is the earthly condition. Adam is shut out from a peaceful and unlaborious paradise, to labor and till the ground. Cain is cursed from the earth in this very position, and a fugitive and a vagabond; but he will be as happy there as he can, and frustrate God's judgment as far as he can, and settle himself in comfort in the earth as his, where God had made him a vagabond; * and that is the world. Here it is first pictured in its true character.

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

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

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

In the second chapter then we have man in the order of created blessing, the state in which he is; in the third, man's fall from God, by which his intercourse with God on this ground is foreclosed; in the fourth, his wickedness in connection with grace in the evil state resulting from his fall; what the world thereupon became; man being driven out from the presence of Him who accepted by sacrifice in grace, and ordering its comforts and pleasures without God, yet born with; and a remnant preserved, and the heir of God's counsels, Seth, set up, and men calling on the name of God in relationship with them, that is, on Jehovah.

Driven from the presence of God, Cain seeks, in the importance of his family, in the arts and the enjoyments of life, temporal consolation, and tries to render the world, where God had sent him forth as a vagabond, a settled

abode and as agreeable as possible, far from God. Sin has here the character of forgetfulness of all that had passed in the history of man; of hatred against grace and against him who was the object and vessel of it; of pride and indifference; and then despair, which seeks comfort in worldliness. We have also the man of grace (Abel, type of Christ and of them that are His) rejected, and left without heritage here below; man, his enemy, judged and abandoned to himself; and another (Seth) the object of the counsels of God, who becomes heir of the world on the part of God. We must remember however that they are only figures of these things, and that in the antitype the Man who is heir of all is the same as He who has been put to death.

In **CHAPTER** 5 we have the family of God upon the earth, subject to death, but depositary of the counsels and of the testimony of God. Here we may remark Enoch, who has his portion in heaven, and who bears witness to the world of the coming of Jesus in judgment, but is himself taken up there before it; and Noah, on the other hand, warned for himself, preaching righteousness and judgment, and passing through the judgments to begin a new world — figures of the church and the Jews in connection with Christ's coming.

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

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

overwhelming flood. The judgment of God is accomplished; but He remembers His mercy.

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

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

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

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

In these chapters then we have the old earth closed and the new begun on new principles. This lasts till the judgment by fire. Man's failure in the old world is set forth, and God's judgment thereon, in Adam and Cain. Now the special judgment and the special blessing in connection with Israel begins to show itself, for we are yet on the earth here. The historical course of Noah's family is brought out in connection with these two points, the blessing and the curse in Shem and Ham. This is God's survey of the new

world, in its three heads Shem, Ham, and Japheth, in a brief declaration of what characterized their position in the earth. Its whole history is stated in a few words. How mighty in everything is the word! He who knows all can state all briefly and surely. We begin afresh with chapter 10 with the generation or history of Noah's sons.

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

**CHAPTERS** 10, 11 give us the history of the world as peopled and established after the deluge, and the ways of men in this new world; the great platform of all the development of the human race as peopling this world after the flood, and the principles and judgments on which it is founded. Chapter 10 gives the facts, chapter 11 how it came about in judgment, for chapters 10 and 11 are not to be taken as chronologically consequent; for the division into nations and tongues was consequent on the attempt at unity in human pride in Babel; and then, lastly, we have the family Jehovah owned, to trace the descent in it to the vessel of promise: together with God's orderings of the world. The posterity of Noah is given by families and nations (a new thing in the earth), out of which, from the race of Ham, arises the first power which rules by its own force and founds an empire; for that which is according to flesh comes first. We have then, that the moral history of the world may be known as well as the external form it assumed, the universal association of men to exalt themselves against God, and make to themselves a name independently of Him, * an effort stamped on God's part with the name of Babel (confusion), and which ends in judgment and in the dispersion of the race, thenceforth jealous of and hostile to one another. ** Lastly we have the genealogy of the race by which God was pleased to name Himself; for God is Jehovah, + the God of Shem.

[* The idea of a building high enough to escape the flood is an idea of which there is not the smallest trace in this passage. It was the pride of man seeking a center and a name without God, and coalescing together. The rise of imperial power and dominion came after this, in which individual will and energy gained the ascendancy. They are two phases of human effort without God.]

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

[+ All in chapter 9 is simply Elohim, God, till we get to verse 26, where it is Jehovah, the God of Shem.]

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

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

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

The East, as we call it, Palestine, down the Euphrates, Egypt, etc., was in the hands of Ham. There power first establishes itself by the will of one in Nimrod. A mighty hunter — force and craftworks to bring untamed man, as well as beast, under his yoke. And cities arise; but Babel was the beginning of his kingdom; others he went out and built, or conquered. Then come the well-known Egyptians, Mizraim. Another branch of this family is marked as forming the races in possession of the inheritance destined of God for His people.

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

The way was this. Man sought to make a center for himself. Adam, living in the earth, would have been so, and its link with God; as Christ will be hereafter, and ever was in the purpose of God, for Adam was the image of

Him that was to come. But will has none but itself. Noah, whose influence would have been just, has no place in the whole history (after his worship), save that he lost the place of authority by falling into sin, in the loss of self-restraint. * Will characterized all now; but in a multitude of wills, all impotent as centers, what can be done? A common center and interest is sought independent and exclusive of God. They were to fill the earth; but scattered in peaceful quietness, to be of no importance, they would not. They must get a name for themselves to be a center. And God scatters into nations by judgment what would not fill the earth by families in peace. Tongues and nations must be added to families, to designate men on the earth. The judged place becomes the seat of the energetic will of one — of the apostate power. The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel. Tongues were a restraint, and an iron band round men.

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

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

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

Here therefore we change entirely the whole system and order of thought; and a principle, in exercise without doubt from the beginning as to individual salvation, but not manifested in the order of things, declares itself, and comes into evidence in the history of the earth. Abraham is called, chosen, and made personally the depositary of the promises. But remark that here, in order that this great principle may be preserved in its own purity as an act of God, the occasion given in the fact we have referred to is not mentioned. We find it in <0624>Joshua 24. God comes down, after judgment, in sovereign grace to have a family of His own by the calling of grace — an immense principle.

But it is well to dwell a moment on what was really a most important epoch in the history of God's ways with the world, where the proper history of faith begins, though of course there were believers individually before. But as Adam was the head of the ruined race, so Abraham was the father of the faithful, the head of the race of God on the earth, both after the flesh and after the Spirit. Christ the fullness of all blessing we know, in whom we have far higher blessings than those revealed in Abraham. Still in God's ways upon the earth Abraham was the head of the accepted race. Idolatry, as we have seen, had at this time gained a footing in the family of Shem himself. "Your fathers," says Joshua (<0624>24:2), "dwelt in old time beyond the flood, Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods." Now these gods were demons (<4610>1 Corinthians 10:20; it is a citation of <0532>Deuteronomy 32:17). That is (now that God had interfered in judgment * and in power), these demons had possessed themselves of this position in the spirit of man, and taken the place in his mind of the sources of the authority displayed and of blessing still bestowed. They presented themselves to him as authors of those judgments, of all which drew forth the worship, the gratitude, and the terror of the natural heart of corrupted man, expressed in his worship according to the principles on which he was, on which he alone could be, in relationship with those superior beings, to whom he attributed the power to answer his desires or to avert the things which he feared. It was not merely man corrupted and in rebellion against God, it was his religion itself which corrupted him; and he made of his corruption a religion. The demons had taken the place of God in his mind, and having the ascendancy over his conscience, if man did not forget it, hardened or misled it. He was religiously bad; and there is no degradation like that. What a state! What folly! How long, O Lord?

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

But if the human race plunge thus into darkness, taking demons for their God, and, incapable of self-sustainment, substitute for their own rebellion

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

From chapter 12 then there is developed altogether a new order of events, which refer to the call of God, to His covenants, to His promises, to the manifestation of His people as a distinct people on the earth, to the counsels of God. Before the deluge, it was man such as he was — fallen before God; and though there was a testimony from the beginning, still no dispensational intervention of God in His own ways, but man, with that testimony as to divine institutions, * left to himself, resulting in such violence and corruption as brought on the deluge in judgment on the world. Afterwards, God having interposed in judgment and begun the world that now is, there was the government of that world and its failure and the consequences of this failure; but, the nations being established and having submitted themselves to the power of demons, the call of God, the deposit of promise in him who was chosen of God, His elect ones (seed of the depositary of the promises), and subsequently His people, rise up to our view.

> [* Sacrifice may be called an institution of God perhaps, but it was individual. There was no establishment of a people who were God's upon earth.]

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

That we may fully understand this, we must remember that the world had been constituted by the judgment of God passed upon the enterprise of building the tower. Countries and nations had been formed, as it is to this day. That was the world. Satan had full hold of it, and the very world which God had providentially formed Abram had to leave. God would have a

family, a people for Himself, not of it, though out of it. Another fact adds to Abram's importance. There had been saints individually, known and unknown, but no head of a race since Adam. Adam fallen was the head of a fallen race. Abram was called to be the root of the tree of promise, of God's people natural or spiritual. He was the father of the circumcision, and of all them that believe.

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

We have then here Abram called by the manifestation of the glory of God (compare <44701>Acts 7) for the journey of faith. The promises are given to him, whether of a numerous posterity, or of the blessing of all the families on the earth in him. * He sets out, he arrives. There are not many experiences, though there will be deeper knowledge of God, in a path which is purely of faith: power is there, and man walks with God. In the history of Jacob we have many. Arrived in Canaan, Abraham enters into possession of nothing, for his life must still be of faith. And here we see, by comparing this passage with <58110>Hebrews 11, the effect of being left as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, not yet in possession of what is promised. Abraham goes in the obedience of faith to the promised land, and there has not so much as to set foot upon; but in virtue of this — as God, though He could prove, could not leave faith without an answer; nor, indeed, where tried, without leading it on to the knowledge of further blessing, for He never does — he has before him the city which hath foundations, and the yet better country. The energy of faith through grace put him in a position which, as it was not possession, necessarily set him in connection with higher and better things; for he was under the personal calling of God for blessing: so, practically, we are come into the body and heavenly things below. But there is the path of faith — not possession — and the heavenly scene opens before us. Abraham in Ur could not see the heavenly portion; a stranger in the land of promise, it was his natural object under grace. Such is our own case. Only Abraham rises above his calling; we enter by the Spirit into what we are called to.

[* This last promise is repeated only in chapter 22, during Abraham's history, and then to the seed alone; the promise of his posterity and of the land to him and to his seed is often repeated. It is to this promise given to Abram in chapter 12 and confirmed to the seed in chapter 26, that the apostle refers in Galatians. The earthly seed, on the contrary, was to be numerous. The translation of <48316>Galatians 3:16, should be, "now to Abraham

were the promises made, and to his seed." And in the following verse, not in Christ but to Christ. He was the seed of promise.]

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

The rest of the chapter is the history of his personal want of it. Pressed by circumstances, he does not consult God, finds himself in the presence of the world, where he has sought help and refuge, and denies his true relationship with his wife (just as has been done in respect of the church), is cherished by the world, which God at last judges, sending Abram again out from it. During this period, and until he was returned to the place from which he started, he had no altar. When he left Egypt and returned to his strangership in Canaan, he had what he had before. But he must return first to the same place and find his altar again. What a warning for Christians as to the relationship of the church with Christ! * And, however the world may be a help for the church, this relationship cannot be maintained when we seek that help.

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

I would again recall here a remark made elsewhere, that in types the woman presents the position in which those prefigured are placed; the man, the conduct, faithful or unfaithful, of those that are there.

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

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

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

These last circumstances are the occasion of the manifestation of the kingly Priest, King of righteousness, and King of peace; that is, Christ, millennial King of the world, blessing victorious Abram, and, on Abram’s behalf, the Most High God, who had delivered his enemies into his hand.

In this picture, then, we have the final triumph of the Lord and the family of faith over the power of the world, realized in spirit by the church (and finally in glory) for a heavenly hope and association with Christ; and literally by the Jews on the earth, for whom Christ will be Melchisedec-priest in full accomplished position; Priest on His throne,

Mediator in this character, blessing them, and blessing God for them; God Himself then taking, fully and indeed, the character of possessor of heaven and earth. The Most High God is His proper millennial name; Almighty with the patriarchs, Jehovah with Israel, and Most High for the millennium. The discussion of where the Most High is found, in connection with the promises to Abraham and the Messiah, is beautifully brought out in <1910>Psalm 91, and Jehovah the God of the Jews is recognized as He who is. It is a kind of dialogue. These are connected with the earth. Our place, and the divine name we are in relationship with God by, are outside all these and properly heavenly. It is the Son who has revealed the Father, and now the Holy Ghost, who gives us the consciousness of sonship, and shows a man, the heavenly Christ, at the Father's right hand in glory, when He had by Himself accomplished the purification of our sins.

But the contrast of the heavenly-minded who do not settle on the earth, and of those who do, with the world's power over the latter, and the entire victory of the former over the power of the world, and then Christ's reign, King and Priest, and God's taking all into His hand by Him, are clearly and wonderfully brought out. *

> [* This closes the general history of these great elements of God's ways. Heavenly things are, no doubt, out of sight, save we look behind the scene, where Abram's faith went. Still the path of faith, the snare of the world, the moral victory of unselfish faith, which has God and His promises for its portion, and its actual final victory, and God's possession of heaven and earth under the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, Priest on His throne, are fully brought out, and the whole scene completed This makes chapters 12-14 a section by itself.]

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

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

But Abram feels yet his connection with the earth as an abiding place in connection with the flesh, and it was indeed God's purpose so to bless him. That is in its nature Jewish, and we have consequently the Jewish portion unfolded. The whole scene descends thus here to earthly hopes, and promises, and covenant, and the land. Abram's mind goes down; for it is going down — when God says (on his having refused everything from the world, in view of the world to come as a future hope), 'I am thy reward,' as He had been his shield — to say, What wilt thou give me? But the divine word uses it, to unfold on God's part His purposes in this respect, which, as regards the government of this world, are of real importance. I have no heir, says Abram; nothing to continue, by a family tie, the possession of my inheritance on earth, according to promise; for on earth, where men die, there must be succession. And so it was to be. But still, as to the earth, it was to be by dependence on Jehovah, by promise, and by faith. Although connected here with the earth, it was not according to nature: on this footing all was foreclosed against Abram — he had no seed. Hence, the seed of faith and promise comes forth — not indeed the one seed — but the Jews as children of promise. The principle is set forth and faith counted for righteousness while Abram believed God. Thus, for this world, Israel was the seed of promise, the heir. Then comes covenant as to the land, according to promise made in the call of Abram. The Lord binds Himself to Abram according to death, as we have seen (for indeed it is assured in the death of Christ, without which they could have nothing). This is, as to present fulfillment, connected with the suffering of the people in Egypt, and their subsequent deliverance, when the oppressors of the people and the usurpers of the inheritance would both be judged.

The character of the act by which the covenant was made, we have already noticed. The reader may compare Jeremiah 34:18, 19, as to the force of this act. It is not here, moreover, a promise by which Abram is called out by faith, but the assuring the inheritance to his seed by covenant, and here without condition. It is the promise to Israel, the seed of promise, the heir in connection with the earth and flesh. Remark, moreover, that the prolonged sorrow and oppression of God's people — the delay of the promised heir — is in connection with the patience of God towards those that are to be judged. (Compare 2 Peter 3:9.) We may remark that the oppressors of Israel are judged for the sake of Israel, the usurpers of his inheritance for him.

Here the laying out of God's plans and purposes closes, even as to the earthly people, and man's ways, and God's ways for their fulfillment, begin to be unfolded with chapter 16 *, with the paths of those, or hindrances from those, with whom His people may be connected in any way. These are developed up to chapter 23 when Abraham ceases to be the representative of the stem of promise. Sarah dies, the vessel of the seed of promise, and the risen heir comes into notice as the one whom God sets forth. They that are born after the flesh precede those who are born according to promise.

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

We cannot but remark, what gives so striking a character to the book of Genesis, and such freshness to all that is in it (particularly to what we have gone through hitherto), how all the great principles of man's estate and of God's ways are brought out in it. It is a heading and summary of all man's state and God's ways with him in it — not of redemption, though sacrifice and covering of sin be found, nor of its glorious results. Redemption is in Exodus. Man's state and God's ways and fundamental promises are here.

**CHAPTER** 16. Abram seeking, at Sarah's instigation, to anticipate the will of God and the accomplishment of the promise in its time, we have the covenant of the law in Hagar, the source of distress and disquietude. God, however, takes care of the seed according to the flesh. The application of this as a figure is clear from Galatians 4. The pride of man under the law is marked in Hagar's spirit, yet her son cannot be heir. The haste of man, who will not wait God's time, will not wait on Him as to means of accomplishment (so was it with Jacob for the blessing) is full of moral warning to us; it is ever the source of disquietude and sorrow. Hagar, too, was an Egyptian — a remembrance, also, of the want of faith in Abram. The law and flesh, and indeed sin, ever go together (see John 8:34-36); and in connection with the unbelief of nature, that is, Egypt.

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

Though chapter 15 stands alone as a whole, chapter 16 is so far connected with it, that it is the fleshly attempt on Sarah's part to have the seed which was assured by the word of the Lord to Abram in the beginning of chapter 15. Here all is failure; but the purposes of God will be accomplished according to promise, and not of the flesh and man's will.

In **CHAPTER** 17 we have a fresh revelation of the Lord to Abram, and, I think, are upon higher and holier ground. It is not here calling, or worship, or the world and victory over it in Lot (12-14 *), or a revelation by the word of how God would accomplish His earthly promises, and what His people should go through (15)not what God was for Abram, but what He was Himself. It is not, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward; but I am God Almighty. This is not all He was, but it is what He was — His own name; and Abram is called upon to walk correspondently to this name. Hence, also, he does not worship or request anything from God, however high the privilege, but Elohim talks with him. The various parts of His purposes are unfolded, and what Abram is to be before Him in whom he believed. It is the starting-point of God's history of His connection with, and ways in, the world, Jew and Gentile starting from His original sovereign title. That which brings in the Gentiles as well as Israel is before us. It is not the individual seed of promise, as in chapter 22, to which the promise of chapter 12 was confirmed, but the title of God with the first vessels of promise as root of a people set apart to God. In general God's covenant was with him. It is not a legal binding, but a free engagement of God in grace, according to His own mind, that Abraham should be the father of many nations. It is in three parts. God would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him; the land wherein he was a stranger is to be to him and to his seed after him; and nations and kings should come out of him. All these promises are without condition; but principles are set forth binding on Abraham, and expressive of the character of those who enjoy the privileges of God — circumcision and free sovereign promise. Circumcision in contrast with law (see <430722>John 7:22), but expressive of the death of the flesh (compare <450400>Romans 4:10-13) **, and next, the promise of the seed is given; but this when Abraham, as to the body, was now dead; and as the character of circumcision was peremptory — for flesh cannot have to say to God in light — so was it as to the promise; it was to the son of promise. Though God might outwardly bless the seed according to flesh, the covenant was exclusively with the heir of promise. Death of flesh (for we are away from God), and simple sovereign grace, are peremptory. The barren woman must be the mother of thousands. Abraham rejoices in the promise, and acts obediently in the order of God.

[* In chapter 12 it is the path of faith, though with failing, that failing the not owning the separated relationship of God's people (the church) to the heir of

the world. Then chapters 13, 14 the believer in a worldly place taken as his portion, the victory of the separated ones, the faith which would not take a shoe-latchet. Chapter 15 the revelation of a numerous seed and Israel's place. Chapter 16 the attempt to have the promise in flesh — Hagar. See Galatians.]

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

There is another element here, a common one to this purport in scripture; God's giving a name to Abram and to Sarai also. It signifies the title of direct authority, and entering into relationship on this ground. So Adam, so Pharaoh, so Nebuchadnezzar. Here God having revealed His own name gives one to Abram in connection with Himself. Thenceforth He is the God of Abraham, revealing Abraham's place, and the sign of the covenant in separation to Himself too; Abraham is the father of many nations; Ishmael even is preserved and blessed; but the promised seed stands alone, also has his name (laughter), the child of mere promise of her whom God named too, intimating, though not revealing, resurrection (compare <45 4:19>Romans 4:19-22). For this world, Israel as to promise holds the place of Sarah thus named, but when dead according to the flesh.

**CHAPTER** 18 is again a new unfolding of God's ways, here especially in connection with the seed, already in a general way, as part of God's purpose that it should be Abraham's seed according to grace and promise when Hesh had no hope, and not according to the flesh, but now specifically revealed as a present thing to Abraham. This seed of promise is here the main object in view, and the present immediate object of hope. This is so on to the end of chapter 21. But I apprehend, he * is here seen as heir of the world and judge; while Abraham's personal relationship with God is in grace, by promise, where he is not seen; and, so far, has the ground of faith, and, in figure, a Christian position. Hence, God Himself being known (not merely His gifts), Abraham rises higher than in chapter 15, and, instead of asking gifts for himself, intercedes for others. All is the effect of the gift of the heir being known. After chapter 22 the proper figures of the church as yet unrevealed come in, because the seed is raised: we get, however, great individual principles here.

[* That is, the Seed, but who is withal Jehovah, the First and the Last.]

Abraham is accustomed to the divine presence, and it is quickly felt by him; and although he says nothing referring to the divine glory till the Lord is pleased to discover Himself, yet from the first he acts with an instinctive

deference which was as fully accepted by Him who came. In verse 3 Abraham addresses himself to One, yet speaks in his hospitality to all, and to this they all answer, and inquire withal for Sarai; but in verse 10 it is again individual, the effectual promise of the Lord. In the rebuke of Sarah's unbelief Jehovah reveals Himself. He judges flesh and its unbelief, as He promises. Abraham accompanies the three on their way; two go on, and Abraham is left alone with Jehovah. In this respect it is a lovely scene of holy consciousness and yet deferential waiting on the good pleasure of God. The immediate promise of the arrival of the seed is given. Abraham enjoys the most intimate communion with Jehovah, who reveals His counsels to him as to His friend. Intercession is the fruit of this revelation (compare [2166]Isaiah 6). Judgment falls on the world; and whilst Abraham, on the top of the mountain, communes with God of the judgment which was to fall upon the world below, where he was not, Lot, who had taken his place in it, is saved so as by fire. Righteousness which walks with the world puts itself in the position of judge, and is at the same time useless and intolerable. Abraham escapes all judgment, and sees it from on high. Lot is saved from the judgment which falls upon the world in which he found himself. The place where Abraham enjoyed God is for him a place of sterility and fear: he is forced to take refuge there in the end, because he is afraid to be anywhere else.

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

Lot, in the following chapter, because of his connection with the heavenly man, depositary of God's counsels and wisdom, and intercessor, himself down in the plain of this world, which he had chosen, as the Jews have, is delivered by providential power; but he passes through the tribulation, and suffers the loss of all that for which he had refused the heavenly condition, and sought the earth, as ignorant of the judgment as he was of the heavenly treasure. Such is the position of the people of faith when sunk into the world of judgment. Soon abandoned to the uncertainty of unbelief in the presence of visible judgment, he seeks his refuge in that place of Abraham's blessing to which he had previously been afraid to flee, and which he had earlier abandoned for the ease of the well-watered plain; but he is in miserable darkness, the parent of a perpetual thorn to the people of God. But this last part is only historically given, that Israel might know the origin of Moab and Ammon; and furnishes a general principle for all times.

Thus faith had its place, and the world had been judged. So will it be in the days of the Son of man; but here the heir is not yet actually brought in, but expected, and the path of faith, or the opposite, till He comes depicted.

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

But these two chapters must be somewhat more developed. Like Abram's going down to Egypt, we have unbelief working in respect of the path into which he had been called by grace, shown, as it ever is, in reference to walking in the intimacy of the relationship in which God had set him, of which woman is the expression in the types. Here Sarah is the mother of the heir of the world, the wife of Abraham, according to promise, and, for Abraham, according to the church's hope, as we have seen (though Israel were the vessel according to flesh). This position he denies. Sarah is again his sister. This was worse than before, for she is, to faith, mother of the heir of the world. Abimelech was wrong, and acted to please himself, but acted unconscious of it. Abraham before God was in the falser position of the two. God warns Abimelech, and preserves Sarah by His own power, whom Abraham's want of faith had connected with the world; and Abimelech returns her, with the cutting reproof to the church, as here typified, that she at least ought to have known her own relationship to Christ. Still, in the main, Abraham was in the place of faith and blessing;

and, as God's prophet, to whom none should do harm, intercedes for the faulty Abimelech, for here all is grace. There is another point to notice here, that this was an arrangement of unbelief when first he started from his father's house (chap. 20:13), so soon was the germ of unbelief at work in the called of promise. But God maintains the divine title to the allegiance of the church at all times. But now the heir is born, the heir of promise.

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

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

But on this introduction of the heir, he necessarily becomes the main subject; and chapter 22 opens with it: "It came to pass after these things," for, indeed, a new scene now opens. The heir of the promise is sacrificed and raised again in figure, and the promise is confirmed to the seed. * The ancient depositary or form of the covenant (even that of promise), mother of the heir (Sarah), now disappears. Abraham sends Eliezer, the steward of his house, to seek a wife for the risen heir, for his only son Isaac, from the country whither Isaac was not to return — in the world such as it is: beautiful figure of the mission of the Holy Spirit, who, fulfilling His office (after the Lord's death and resurrection) with the elect of God who are to form the Lamb's wife in the counsels of God, conducts her (already adorned with His gifts, but waiting the moment when she shall see Him who is heir of all things that belong to His Father) across the desert to her heavenly bridegroom. The call and readiness of the appointed bride is

beautifully depicted, and she goes with him, who prefigures the Spirit, to the bridegroom who is heir of all. But mark how false and wretched the position of the espoused wife, if Isaac had lost his hold upon her heart — her home in nature left, and she in the wilderness with one who was nothing to her, if not her guide to Isaac. The walk of the Spirit, moreover, in man, is depicted in the most instructive manner in the details of this history, in the conduct of Eliezer: his simple subjection to what was for him the word of God even when all seemed well (vers. 21-23); heart-reference in thankfulness to God the first feeling (ver. 26); purpose of heart in service (ver. 33), and the like.

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

We have next the election of God which now sets apart the earthly people, Jacob. It is remarkable how little we have of Isaac, nothing but his remaining in heavenly places, I mean of course in the figure, a wife being sought for him on earth. We are on earth; yet the heavenly thing is to us fully revealed and we have the earnest of all. In Abraham, promise and principles are brightly unfolded to us; and the earthly people of promise in Jacob are fully developed; principles which we have all through. Jacob values the promises of God; but if Lot was attracted by the well-watered plain, the unbelief of Jacob was manifested in the use of carnal means to obtain possession of the promises, instead of waiting upon God. Thus his years were “few and evil”; and he was continually the object of similar deceit too. Remark here, that while the experience of Abraham was altogether higher and better, and he had far fuller communion with God in His mind, as it is with a faithful Christian enjoying the things that are not seen, giving up readily in the world, and interceding for others, yet the unfaithful believer has much more experience in his path, because he is not living with God. This we see in Jacob. He prevails by faith through grace, but he wrestles for himself, Abraham intercedes for others. But if we have in Isaac a risen Christ, bridegroom, as to the figure, of the church which the Holy Ghost has descended to seek here below for Him who is on high; in Jacob we have Israel, driven out of the land of promise, kept of God to enjoy it afterwards. I believe, however, that in his marriages we have the Lord, who, while loving Israel (Rachel), has yet first received the Gentiles or the church, and then the Jews.

These subjects conduct us to the end of chapter 25 — the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, the calling of the church in the figure of Rebecca, and the election of Israel, the younger to the promise and blessing in the earth.

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

In the Epistle to the Galatians the bearing of this part of scripture is considered. I only remark here that the promise made to Abraham (chap. 12) is here confined to the one sacrificed and risen seed, Isaac. There were other promises to a seed numerous as the stars in heaven (itself a promise); but the promise of the blessing of the families of the earth was giver first to Abram alone (chap. 22). Hence the Apostle Paul speaks of one seed. The promise is not spoken of elsewhere to Abram. It is confirmed to the risen seed. In the end of the chapter, besides the general stem of the nations, Rebecca's origin is set forth.

In **CHAPTER** 23, as we have said, the vessel of promise, Sarah disappears, to make way for Rebecca, the son's bride; but with it, while Abraham has no portion in the land and must buy his sepulcher, he has the sure pledge that he will hereafter have it He buries his dead there.

And now the heir's bride must be sought. Remark, first that she receives tokens of grace; then, as an espoused one gifts. She shows her willing mind through grace, and is led of Eliezer in loneliness across the desert, leaving her father's house to possess all with Isaac, to whom his father has given everything We have here fully the church in a figure: Isaac, who is the risen man — between the man of promise, Abraham, and Jacob when Israel the earthly people comes into the scene — must no on any account go back to the country of nature, out of which his wife was to be called. He is exclusively the heavenly man Rebecca must go to him. With him before her, her journey was blessed; he once out of her mind, she was a stranger who had left all to be homeless and portionless for nothing. Such is the church. But to return was to give up Isaac.

Next mark, in the working of the Holy Ghost presented in Eliezer, entire confidence in God. he asks, and is answered, but it must be entirely according to the word (here Abraham's), "Is she of the kindred?" Next, when the blessing is known, thanksgiving comes before joy; and next,

entire and exclusive consecration to the service he had to perform. He will not eat till he has told his errand, and then no hesitation: he has one work and nothing else. Would it were so with all who are Christ's! Eliezer conducts her to Isaac, who is gone out and comes to meet her; and there, to the son's comfort, she replaces Sarah, the vessel of promise, in the yet better place of the risen heir s wife.

Abraham's course was finished. Promises have given place to the church called by grace. But all that spring from him have a place in the record of God; but Isaac is heir of all, though Ishmael be great and have princes before him. *

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

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

Here (chap. 26) Isaac replaces Abraham as heir upon the earth. It is a new revelation, when Isaac is himself in a strange land, like the one made to Abraham at the first; only that Isaac was already in connection with the calling of God, but not in enjoyment of the promise. There was a famine in

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

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

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

Jacob's history now begins. * Heir of the promises, and valuing them, he uses means to have them, evil and low in character. God answers his faith, and chastens his evil and unbelief. God could have brought the blessing in His own way (or made Isaac cross his hands as He did Jacob); Jacob, led by his mother, followed his own way, and did not wait for God. But the

blessing was prophetic, and not to be recalled. The ways of God and His purpose were not to be changed. Isaac was guilty, and Jacob more so: all was overruled to answer faith and chasten evil in the believer. Esau had deliberately given up the right, when he had the choice: God was not in his thoughts: he cannot receive the blessing when the consequences are there. Man must act by faith alone, when the consequences are not seen, in order to be blessed, when the time for blessing comes.

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

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

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

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

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

Jacob's personal history is the sad tale of deceit and wrong done to him; but God, as He had promised, preserving him throughout. What a difference from Eliezer and Abraham, where the power and character of the Holy Ghost is seen! Here providence preserves, but it is Jacob's history. He is bitterly deceived as he had deceived, but preserved according to promise. At the return of Jacob the hosts of God came to meet him. He receives a new and wondrous proof of God's mighty and gracious care, which should have recalled Bethel to him. But this does not remove his terror. He must anew use the means of unbelief, and sends children and wives and all on before, and presents after presents to appease Esau; but his strength was not there. God would not leave him in the hands of Esau, but He deals with him Himself. He wrestles with him, sustaining at the same time his faith in the wrestling; and, after making him feel his weakness, and that for all his life, gives him, in weakness, the place and part of victor. He is a prince with God, and prevails with God and with men — victory in conflict with a God who is dealing with him, but no revelation of, or communion with Him.

This is a wonderful scene: the dealings of God with a soul that does not walk with Him. It is not, however, the calm communion of Abraham with Jehovah: Abraham intercedes for others, instead of wrestling for himself. So also, though God gives Jacob a name and so far recognizes his relationship with Himself, He does not reveal to Jacob His name, as He had done to Abraham. Jacob, too, still employs his deceitful ways; for he had no thought of going to Seir, as he said. But he is delivered from Esau, as from Laban, and at last establishes himself at Shechem, buying lands where he ought to have remained a stranger. God removes him out of it, but by strange and humbling circumstances; still God's fear on the nations preserves him. He is not yet back to the point where God had given him the promises and assured the blessing; that was at Bethel. Here, however, he was able to build an altar, using, at the same time, the name which exalted his own position, and which took the ground of the blessing which had been granted to him; an act of faith, it is true, but which confined itself to the blessing, instead of rising up to the Blesser. This, indeed, he was not properly able to do yet. God was dealing with him, and he was, in a

measure, thinking on God; but proper communion was not there: so is it in like case with us.

However, God led him onward, and now tells him to go up to the place whence he had set out, and there build an altar, where he had entered into covenant with God, the faithful God, who had been with him all the way in which he went. But what a discovery is made here! He must now meet God Himself, and not simply be dealt with for his good — Gods name still unknown, no full revelation of Him. And this is a great difference. Now he must meet Him.

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

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

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

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

At the same time another scene presents itself. His brethren, who had rejected him, forced by famine, are brought, by the path of repentance and humiliation, to own him at length in glory, whom they had once rejected when connected with themselves. Benjamin, type of the power of the Lord upon earth among the Jews, is united to him who, unknown, had the power of the throne among the Gentiles; that is, Christ unites these two characters. But this brings all the brethren into connection with Joseph.

Finally, Jacob and his family are placed, as a people apart, in the most favored country of all that was under the power of the throne of the great king. Nothing can be more touching than the conduct of Joseph towards his brethren; but I must leave these reflections to the hearts of my readers, placing them as far as my hearty desires can, under the precious influence of the Spirit of God. The rapid survey I have given, gives the type a clearer application than more detail would, and that is what is of the deepest interest here.

Only remark that here the repentance is immediately in connection with the rejection of Joseph; this is brought on the conscience of Joseph's brethren. So in the end will it be with Israel. It is not here in reference to the law — that we shall have after Sinai — but in typical connection with the Messiah Their consciences are fully convinced, and they go back to all the circumstances of his rejection. It is only gradually that Joseph reveals himself, and with many exercises of heart, which his dealings work in his brethren. In the end Judah is brought into prominence in connection with Benjamin. It is when Judah takes the sorrow of Israel to heart, in connection with Benjamin, and the loss of Joseph, and puts himself into it, that Joseph, in his glory, is revealed to them as their brother it is a lovely scene. The perfect grace of Joseph at the end is a wonderful picture of Christ's revelation of Himself (chap. 45:4-8, et seq.).

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

The coming down to Egypt was according to God. so we have here Israel viewed as abiding God's time, even when oppressed, not as cast out and wandering as the effect of disobedience. Both are true. God, remark, appears to him as the God of Isaac his father, not of Abraham: his blessing comes under the risen Christ. What hangs on promises Israel has lost by the rejection of Christ; but God can appear for him in pure grace, in connection with a risen Savior, and fulfill them according to His own faithfulness; * and so it is in figure here. Therefore is Israel blessed in spite of all, though long oppressed and a stranger. When he is in connection with Joseph, the scene changes; that is, in his connection, in the world, with a glorified Christ revealed to him there, he has the best of the land, which is brought into universal order and subjection as belonging to Pharaoh, whom Joseph represented, and whose authority he exercised over it. Beersheba, the border of Israel — from henceforward he was a stranger — is the place of this revelation of God.

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

One cannot fail to see in the history of Joseph one of the most remarkable types of the Lord Jesus, and that, in many details of the ways of God in regard to the Jews and Gentiles.

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

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

Remark the beauty of the grace in Joseph (chaps. 45:7, 8, and 50:17, 19, 20).

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

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

I rather think, as already noticed, that in the other tribes we have a distinct contrast of what Israel is as oppressed, before Christ — who has taken the full Joseph character in glory, and has answered the faith of the remnant expressed in verse 18 and after; and that thus, in these characters of the tribes, we have the whole history of Israel. Judah and Joseph have been already marked out and distinguished in the history — Judah as surety for and connected with Benjamin, and Joseph in all his history. Thus, after

Judah, in Zebulun and Issachar we have Israel mixed with the world, busied in its waters to seek profit, and a slave to it for rest and quiet; but this ends in Dan and apostasy, so that the remnant, in the spirit of prophecy, wait for the salvation which is to come with the true Joseph. All is prosperity when this is looked to. Once overcome, he overcomes at the last: his bread is fat and yields royal dainties in his own land, not seeking them by mixture with, and subjection to, the world. And Naphtali is in the liberty of God, and full of goodly words. In Joseph and Benjamin we have the crowning of all blessing in the double character of Christ, the heavenly Heir of all, and power and strength upon the earth that subdues all.

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

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

[* Joseph is so characterized in Deuteronomy also.]

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

Personally the fear of God was in Joseph from beginning to end: a mighty principle, and the true basis of power. Whatever his glory, he does not forget Canaan or the earthly promise — he sends his bones there: nor has

Christ. So Joseph, when Israel is gone, forgives his brethren their wrong, and nourishes them with his riches. So is it with Christ: He is above the wrong and the just fears of them that rejected Him; He will bless Israel from His own stores of heavenly glory. The Lord hasten it in its day!

# EXODUS

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

First, we have the historical circumstances which relate to the captivity of Israel — the persecutions which this people had to endure, and the providential superintendence of God answering the faith of the parents of the infant Moses, and thus accomplishing the counsels of His grace, which not only preserved the child's life, but placed him in an elevated position in the court of Pharaoh. The things that are done on the earth He doeth them Himself. He prepares all beforehand when nothing is as yet apparent to man.

But, although providence responds to faith, and acts in order to accomplish God's purposes, and control the walk of His children, it is not the guide of faith, although it is made so sometimes by believers who are wanting in clearness of light. Moses's faith is seen in his giving up, when grown to age, all the advantages of the position in which God had set him by His providence. Providence may, and often does, give that which forms, in many respects, the servants of God for their work, as vessels; but cannot be their power in the work. These two things must not be confounded. It gives that, the giving up of which is a testimony of the reality of faith and of the power of God which operates in the soul. It is given that it may be given up. This is part of the preparation. This faith acted through affections which attached him to God, and consequently to the people of God in their distress, and manifested itself, not in the helps or reliefs which his position

could well have enabled him to give to them, but in inducing him to identify himself with that people because it was God's people. Faith attaches itself to God, and appreciates, and would have part in the bond that exists between God and His people; and thus it thinks not of patronizing from above, as if the world had authority over the people of God, or was able to be a blessing to them. It feels (because it is faith) that God loves His people; that His people are precious to Him — His own on the earth; and faith sets itself thus, through very affection, in the position where His people find themselves. This is what Christ did. Faith does but follow Him in His career of love, however great the distance at which it walks.

How many reasons might have induced Moses to remain in the position where he was; and this even under the pretext of being able to do more for the people; but this would have been leaning on the power of Pharaoh, instead of recognizing the bond between the people and God: it might have resulted in a relief which the world would have granted, but not in a deliverance by God, accomplished in His love and in His power. Moses would have been spared much affliction, but lost his true glory; Pharaoh flattered, and his authority over the people of God recognized; and Israel would have remained in captivity, leaning on Pharaoh, instead of recognizing God in the precious and even glorious relationship of His people with Him. God would not have been glorified. Yet all human reasoning, and all reasoning connected with providential ways, would have induced Moses to remain in his position: faith made him give it up. All would really have been spoiled.

Moses, then, identifies himself with the people of God. A certain natural activity, and the unconscious habits of a strength which was not purely from on high, accompanied him, perhaps; however, it is the first devotedness which is pointed out by the Holy Ghost * as the good and acceptable fruit of faith. But it ought to have been more entirely subject to God, and to have had its starting-point in Him alone, and in obedience to His expressed will. We have, in this case, an example of the way in which the Lord often acts. The earnest energy of faithfulness is allowed to be manifested, but the instrument is put aside for a moment, in order that the service may depend directly and entirely upon God. There was something analogous to this even in Jesus, save that there was not in Him either false reckoning, or error, or external providences in consequence to deliver Him from them. In Him the perfection of the energy of life within, acted always in the knowledge of who His Father was, and at the same time submitted to His will in the circumstances in which He had morally placed Him. But the Lord appeared as Son with the doctors in the temple, and then was subject to Joseph and Mary till the time and way appointed of God, only alike

perfect in both. Moses, fearful even amid faithfulness, and dreading the power which lent him, unconsciously perhaps, a certain habit of energy (for one is afraid of that from which one draws one's strength), and repulsed by the unbelief of those towards whom his love and his faithfulness carried him, for "they understood him] not," fled to the desert; a type, as to the fact itself, of the Lord Jesus, rejected by the people whom He loved.

[* <58B124>Hebrews 11:24-26. This is often the case with God's children, faithful in their principles and desires, they have not done with self and its energies; indeed this is always the case till self is utterly judged and known and, so to speak, replaced by Christ, and doing simply God's will. But the world is always stronger than the Christian's energy in the flesh.]

There is a difference between this type and that of Joseph. Joseph takes the position (as put to death) of Jesus raised to the right hand of the supreme throne over the Gentiles, in the end receiving his brethren from whom he had been separated. His children are to him a testimony of his blessing at that time. He calls them Manasseh ("because God," says he, "has made me forget all my labors, and all the house of my father"), and Ephraim ("because God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction"). Moses presents to us Christ separated from His brethren; * and although Zipporah might be considered as a type of the church (as well as Joseph's wife), as the bride of the rejected Deliverer during his separation from Israel, yet, as to what regards his heart, his feelings (which are expressed in the names that he gives to his children), they are governed by the thought of being separated from the people of Israel: his fraternal affections are there — his thoughts are there — his rest and his country are there. He is a stranger everywhere else. Moses is the type of Jesus as the deliverer of Israel. He calls his son Gershom, that is to say, a "stranger there;" "for," says he, "I have sojourned in a strange land." Jethro presents to us the Gentiles among whom Christ and His glory were driven when He was rejected by the Jews.

[* As a figure he came to his own and they rejected him; see lower down. Stephen notices this morally (<440701>Acts 7); and so Christ is separated from His brethren in the world till He returns in power.]

But at last God looks upon His people, and not only gives the faith that identifies itself with His people, but displays the power which delivers them. That Moses, who was rejected as a prince and a judge, must now appear in the midst of Israel and of the world as a prince and a deliverer.

Stephen made use of these two examples, in order to convict the consciences of the Sanhedrim of their similar and still greater sin in the case of Christ.

God — who to appearance had left Moses in the power of his enemies, without recognizing his faith — manifests Himself now to him when alone, in order to send him to deliver Israel and to judge the world.

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

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

> [* Compare <40501>Matthew 5 and <43701>John 17. His millennial name is Most High. See the interesting connection of three of these names in <19101>Psalm 91. That of Father is not found in the psalms: the Son has revealed it. The other three connect themselves with the earth and the government of the world., Father puts us in the place of sons with God, in the same relationship with God in which Christ Himself is, and, when the time comes, to be like Him and to be heirs of God.]

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

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

Moses, and was to strengthen him and to rejoice him when he had already obeyed.

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

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

authority and of His right over His people, and of authoritative demand upon Pharaoh that he should recognize them. Upon his refusal to do so, he would be judged by the power of God.

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

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

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

in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the Christian's place. God will purge Jerusalem by the spirit of burning.

> [* In <5801>Colossians 3 we find God's judgment of him in whom Christ (compare <4510>Romans 8:10); in Romans 6 faith reckons it so: in <4701>2 Corinthians 4 it is practically realized. And God proves the faith, but to confirm the soul in it. See <4701>2 Corinthians 1 and 4.]

At the news of the goodness of God, the people adore Him; but the struggle against the power of evil is another matter. Satan will not let the people go, and God permits this resistance, for the exercise of faith, and for the discipline of His people, and for the brilliant display of His power where Satan had reigned. We have to learn, and perhaps painfully, that we are in the flesh and under Satan's power; and that we have no power to effect our own deliverance, even with the help of God. It is the redemption of God in Christ's death and resurrection, realized in the power of the Spirit given when He had accomplished that redemption and had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, that delivers; for forgiveness, and escape from judgment, is not deliverance. One refers to sins and God's righteously passing over them, the other to sin and its power.

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

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

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

value for it looks at it as a question of the measure of your feelings. Faith looks at God's thoughts.]

The people, their loins girded, having eaten in haste, with the bitter herbs of repentance, begin their journey; but they do so in Egypt: yet now God can be, and He is, with them. Here it is well to distinguish these two judgments, that of the firstborn, and that of the Red Sea. As matters of chastisement, the one was the firstfruits of the other, and ought to have deterred Pharaoh from his rash pursuit.

But the blood, which kept the people from God's judgment, meant something far deeper and far more serious than even the Red Sea, though judgment was executed there too. * What happened at the Red Sea was, it is true, the manifestation of the illustrious power of God, who destroyed with the breath of His mouth the enemy who stood in rebellion against Him — final and destructive judgment in its character, no doubt, and which effected the deliverance of His people by His power. But the blood signified the moral judgment of God, and the full and entire satisfaction of all that was in His being. God, such as He was, in His justice, His holiness, and His truth, could not touch those who were sheltered by that blood. ** Was there sin? His love towards His people had found the means of satisfying the requirements of His justice; and at the sight of that blood, which answered everything that was perfect in His being, He passed over it consistently with His justice and even His truth. Nevertheless God, even in passing over, is seen as Judge; hence, so long as the soul is on this ground, its peace is uncertain though the ground of it be sure — its way in Egypt, being all the while truly converted — because God has still the character of Judge to it, and the power of the enemy is still there.

[* As a figure this may be looked at as final judgment according to the estimate of sin in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; for the people were brought to God, and the evil enemies come under death and judgment which, as accomplished in Christ, save us. But as the secret of God's dealings experimentally known in our souls, it has another sense; it begins the desert journey, though that has its full character only from Sinai. The path in the wilderness forming no part of the counsels, but only of the ways of God; it may as to redemption be dropped but then Jordan and the Red Sea coalesce. The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection for us; Jordan our death and resurrection with Him, but here we have got into what is experimental.]

[** There is further a difference between the passover and the great day of atonement. Here the blood met the eye of God passing through the land in judgment. On the great day of atonement it purified His habitation from our defilements, and, we can say, opened up the way to God's throne and presence; gave us boldness to enter into the holiest by a new and living way. In the passover was added, as it had the character of first deliverance and

forgiveness, the bitter herbs of judgment of sin in ourselves, and feeding on the slain Lamb, with loins girded and shoes on our feet, to leave the place of sin and judgment from which as the consequence of sin we had been fully sheltered.]

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

As a moral type, the Red Sea is evidently the death and resurrection of Jesus, so far as the real effecting of the work goes in its own efficacy, as deliverance by redemption, and of His people as seen in Him; God acting in it, to bring them, through death, out of sin and the flesh, giving absolute deliverance from them by * death, into which Christ had gone, and consequently from all the power of the enemy. As to our standing and acceptance we are brought to God: our actual place is thus in the world, become the wilderness on our way to glory. We are made partakers of it already through faith. Sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood, we are delivered, by His power which acts for us, from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The blood keeping us from the judgment of God was the beginning. The power which has made us alive in Christ, who has gone down into death for us, has made us free from the whole power of Satan who followed us, and, as to conscience, from all his attacks and accusations. We have done with the flesh as our standing, and Satan's power, and, brought to God, are in the world with Him. The world, who will follow that way, ** is swallowed up in it.

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

new creation; it is not death to sin. The blood-shedding, however, in one respect, has a more glorious character. God is glorified in it, though by crossing Jordan we are experimentally placed higher. That too is the fruit of the blood-shedding, in which there is not only the bearing of sins to meet our responsibility, but a glorifying of God, so as to bring us withal into God's glory with Him, which is beyond all questions of responsibility.]

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

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

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

Hereupon we enter the desert. They sing (chap. 15) the song of triumph. God has led them by His power to His holy habitation. But they are on this journey, not in Canaan. He will lead them into the place which He has made, which His hands have established. Their enemies shall be unable to oppose themselves to this. So with us. There is a third thing which is found in this beautiful song — the desire to build a tabernacle for Jehovah. This is one of the great privileges which are the result of redemption. God did not dwell with Adam innocent, nor with Abraham, vessel of promise and root of the enjoyment of it. But when redemption was accomplished, on the one hand, God was fully revealed; and, on the other, man perfectly redeemed. Then God naturally, so to speak, comes to dwell with men as amongst

them (<02946>Exodus 29:46). Here it is an external deliverance; for us an eternal; but the principle, a blessed and important one, is clearly brought out. And note this desire is not our dwelling with God, though the thoughts are linked one with another, but His dwelling with us; and the heart's desire is that He should do so down here. It will never really be effectually so, till verse 17 be accomplished; but the desire is good, like David's, and we are now builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. There are the three things: we are brought to God's holy habitation; there is the desire to prepare Him one; and, then, that which He has prepared. The tabernacle belonged to the wilderness; what they sing is the deliverance effected already by the power of God, and the hope of entering into the sanctuary which the hands of Jehovah have made. *

[* It is practically important to see that the wilderness is no part of God's purpose; of His ways, a most important part. They were brought to God by redemption — Christ's death and resurrection — but not in Canaan. The thief went straight to Paradise with Christ. He has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. See <02301>Exodus 3, 6 and 15, where there is no question of the wilderness; see on the other hand, <05801>Deuteronomy 8, where it is reviewed when through it. For the difference of our spiritual judgment of ourselves, and God's judgment of us, see <05901>Deuteronomy 9 and <04232>Numbers 23:21.]

The deliverance, then, of the people is accompanied by a full and entire joy, which, having the consciousness of this complete deliverance by the power of God, grasps the whole extent of His intentions towards them, and knows how to apply this same power to the destruction of all the power of the enemy. * They sing the deliverance of God, note, before a step has been taken in the desert. The soul, in connection with Egypt (that is in the flesh on the ground of a child of Adam), not only is responsible, but its position with God, dependent on its acting up to this responsibility, is still uncertain and in fear. The desert may be never so bitter and trying; but we are free and with God there (brought to His holy habitation), through the redemption and deliverance of God. But the redeemed one is looked at still as on the way to glory, not yet in possession of the promised dwelling-place of God. We are come to God's habitation, to God Himself, but the prepared place is future. Edom and Moab will be still as a stone, but the people have yet to pass over. This difference is important to notice. However, the redeemed soul is looked at in both ways; as in Christ, where as to acceptance all is settled "as he is so are we in this world" giving boldness for the day of judgment (<62017>1 John 4:17); and as in the wilderness, where faith is put to the test. For the wilderness is what the world is for the new man.

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

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

[** Exodus 29:46.]

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

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

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

by redemption, and their exercises and blessings are under grace. The question of direct access to God is not yet brought before us. The rock indeed is smitten — as it must be to have the living water at all; but this is the figure of what is historical, the event of Christ's death, not the figure of access to God within the veil. It is all the earthly part of God's ways, even in grace.

However sure of victory they may be in fighting the Lord's battles, the entire dependence of the people, at every moment, on the divine blessing, is presented to us in this, that if Moses (who with the rod of God represents to us His authority on high) keeps not his hands lifted up, the people are beaten by their enemies. Nevertheless, Aaron the high priest, and Hur (purity?) maintain the blessing, and Israel prevails. The cause was a hidden one. Sincerity, valiant efforts, the fact that the battle was God's battle, were, though right, of no avail — all depended upon God's blessing from on high. One would have thought, indeed, that if God made war, and unfurled the banner, it would soon be over; but no! from generation to generation He would make war upon Amalek. For, if it was the war of God, it was in the midst of His people.

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

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

But having thus terminated the course of grace, the scene changes entirely. They do not keep the feast on the mountain, whither God, as He had promised, had led them — had "brought them, bearing them, as on eagles' wings, to himself." He proposes a condition to them: If they obeyed His

voice, they should be His people. The people — instead of knowing themselves, and saying, “We dare not, though bound to obey, place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it” — undertake to do all that the Lord had spoken. The blessing now took the form of dependence, like Adam’s, on the faithfulness of man as well as of God. Still farther was it from being, as ours, based on a fulfilled and accomplished redemption; it was not even based on an unconditional promise, as in the case of Abraham. * The people, however, are not permitted to approach God, who hid Himself in the darkness. In fact they undertook obedience far from God, in a state in which they could not approach Him in that majesty to which obedience was due. Nevertheless God gave all possible solemnity to the communication of His law, and sees it good that the people should fear before Him; but what can fear do towards giving power at a distance from Him? The feeling may, perhaps, be proper; but it is not proper to undertake to obey in such a state. Terror, and the condition of obedience when the people are far from God — such is the character of the law, a rule sent out to man, taken in its largest character, when man cannot approach God, but a barrier is set up, and the question of righteousness as the way of life raised and claimed from man when man is a sinner.

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

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

We have (as we may observe by the way) a beautiful type (chap. 21) of the devotedness of Christ to the church and to His Father, and His love to us. Having served already faithfully His full service as man, during His lifetime, He would remain a servant even in death for the sake of the Father, the church, and His people. He made Himself a servant for ever. (Compare <43C13>John 13 for the present time, and <42C12>Luke 12 even for glory).

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

[* Death was the penal sanction, as it was also, because such, the delivering power in grace.]

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

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

The glories in every way of Christ the Mediator are presented in the tabernacle; not precisely, as yet, the unity of His people, considered as His body, but in every manner in which the ways and the perfections of God are manifested through Him, whether in the full extent of the creation, in His people, or in His Person. The scene of the manifestation of the glory of God, His house, His domain, in which He displays His being (in so far as it can be seen); the ways of His grace and His glory; and His relationship through Christ with us — poor and feeble creatures, but who draw nigh unto Him — are unfolded to us in it, but still with a veil over His presence, and with God, not the Father. * The question is, How is man with God — can he approach? not love coming out to seek, and reception by the Father. God is on the throne justly requiring righteousness and holiness according to His own nature, not in sovereign love seeking men when in a state contrary to it. This, and the relationship of sons, make the whole basis different as to the relationship with God. But the moral ground of its possibility is found in these types, with the contrast already mentioned.

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

Thus the tabernacle had two aspects — the glory which was His own, and the means of the relationship of God with His people. This is true even of the Lord Jesus. I can view His cross in its absolute perfectness, according to the thoughts and the heart of God; I can also find there that which answers all my wants and failures.

It would lead me too far to enter into the details of the construction of the tabernacle and its utensils, but I will make some general remarks. There is a certain appearance of disorder in the description, in that it is interrupted by the description of the vesture, and of the order of consecration, of Aaron. Thus the altar of burnt offering comes before the priest's vesture and consecration, the laver after. But this arises from what I have just said. There are things which are the manifestation of God, the place of meeting with Him and what belongs to it, others which refer to the presentation of man to God, and his service in these places; these things are linked together, for there are some manifestations of God which are the points and means of the approach of man, as the cross; for there indeed man in the height of his sin, and God in infinite love and laying the ground of righteousness, and righteousness for us, meet. It is the central point in all moral history, where every issue of good and evil was settled for eternity; and while it is the point at which man draws nigh, there is something there besides the act of drawing near, or even of serving God. *

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

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

First, then, there are the things which are found in the holy of holies, and the holy place: the ark of the covenant, the table of the shewbread, and the candlestick with seven branches. This is what God had established for the

manifestation of Himself within the house where His glory dwelt, where those who enter into His presence could have communion with Him. In result none could enter into the most holy place, for the high priest only went in to place the blood on the mercy-seat, and not for communion then, and with a cloud of incense that he might not die * (see Hebrews 9). But it was in itself the place of approach to God. Then we have the arrangement and structure of the tabernacle which enclosed all these things, and which was divided into two parts; and then the altar of burnt-offerings, and the court where it stood, to the end of verse 19, chapter 27. We will consider these things first. It is there the first part ends.

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

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

The ark of the covenant was the throne where God manifested Himself, if any could go in righteousness, * and as the seat of His sovereignty over every living man — the God of the whole earth. It was also, however, the throne of relationship with His people. The law — the testimony of what He required of men — was to be placed there. Over it was the mercy-seat, which covered it in, which formed the throne, or rather the basis of the throne, as the cherubim (formed of the same piece), which were its supporters, did its sides. In itself it seems to me a marvelous connection of the human and divine righteousness in the Lord Jesus. The law was hid in it, and, in divine government of man on earth, this formed the perfect rule; it was the measure of responsibility of man as a child of Adam, in its abstract foundations, which the Lord adduces — the perfection of creature relationship with God; and we know that the law was in Christ's heart. He was perfect in human obedience and love to His Father. He lived perfectly up to the responsibility of man according to God in His inner man. ** But He also glorified God — all that God is in love, divine righteousness, truth, majesty. All God is was glorified by the Son of man, and not only the Son of man goes righteously into the glory of God, but God is fully revealed as the place of access for us in that character: righteousness is proved by His going to His Father. The shittim-wood and the tables of the law are there, but all is clothed with the gold — GodÕs own righteousness is there too. It

is with this communion is, + only as yet the veil hid it within. The character as yet was a judicial throne. At that time man (save Moses owned in grace) could not go in, and God did not come out. Now He has come out in grace, clothing Himself in humiliation that He in perfect grace may be with us; and man is gone into the glory according to the title of an accomplished redemption.

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

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

[+ Only now, as already noticed, there is another relationship entered into with the Father. This is relationship, not nature, though of course that nature is necessarily involved in it. Hence, but only after His resurrection, Christ says, I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God. There is that with God according to the character here spoken of, but there is that with the Father in the relationship and liberty in which Christ Himself is, and into which we are adopted. This difference of nature and relationship is strikingly brought out in John's writings — grace, and what the divine nature makes necessary. See <4004>John 4 as to worshippers, and <6001>1 John 1. The Father could not be revealed but by the Son. But also the veil was rent in the cross, and we are before God in divine righteousness according to what He is as such. In the full character of this as to both, we are in Him. Elsewhere I have touched on the difference of the sense of relationship with God as sons, and the knowledge of the Father as such, personally revealed in the Son. The first is Paul's ground, and he seldom goes beyond it; the latter, John's. The epistle to the Hebrews gives direct access to God in the holiest, but the Father is not found in it.]

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

Here, then, God manifested Himself as the Supreme God in His moral being, armed with power to enforce respect to His laws, and to keep account of all that was done. This character of God in Himself also is why the bloodwitness of all that had been done for those who were thus responsible, and satisfying all the moral nature of Him who sat there, was

put upon the mercy-seat; but every year, a witness that the work which did that was yet undone. * Nor was it exactly there that God was directly in connection with His people; but thence came forth the communications which were to be made to them: “And there will I meet with thee,” said God to Moses, “and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all the things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.” Moses, who receives the thoughts of God for the people, was there to have his intercourse with Jehovah, and that without the veil. **

[* Hence there was still an unrent veil.]

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

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

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

Outside the veil was the table with its twelve loaves and the golden candlestick. Twelve is administrative perfection in man — seven, spiritual completeness, whether in good or evil The two are found outside the veil, inside which was the most immediate manifestation of God, the Supreme, but who hid Himself, as it were, yet, in darkness. Here was light and nourishment: God in power manifested in man; administrative power revealed amongst men, and, in historical fact, in connection with the twelve

tribes. But faith recognizes both in Christ, and the light of the Holy Ghost makes us know it, if priests, to enter into the holy place, before it is actually revealed in power, while all is otherwise darkness, and God is giving the light of the Holy Ghost. *

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

The twelve tribes were, for the time being, that which answered externally to this manifestation. It is found in the new Jerusalem. The primary idea was the manifestation of God in the holy place in man, and by the Spirit.

Next we have the tabernacle itself, which was one, though separated into two parts. There were (as the word teaches us) two meanings in the tabernacle and in its form. In general it was where God dwelt and revealed Himself, hence, the heavens, God's tabernacle; and the Person of Christ, God's dwelling. * The heavenly places themselves, says the apostle, had to be purified with better sacrifices (Hebrews 9:23). So Christ has passed through the heavens, as Aaron up to the mercy-seat (Hebrews 4:14). Again, it is used in the same sense as a figure of the created universe (Hebrews 3:3, 4), where it is also used as a whole as a figure of the saints, as the house over which Christ is as Son. The veil was, we know on the same divine authority, the flesh of Christ, which concealed God in His holiness of judgment — in His perfectness as sovereign justice itself, but manifested Him in perfect grace to those to whom His presence revealed itself.

> [* We may add Christians: "whose house are we." The body is never the subject in Hebrews: we are pilgrims here walking by faith Nor is the Father.]

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

> [* If we examine the details more closely, it will be found that in the tent and veil there was no gold, but there were cherubim; in the ephod gold, but no cherubim; in the hangings before the holy place neither Within, in both holy place and holy of holies, all was gold. So Christ as man (and the veil we know was His flesh) had the judicial authority and will have it as man, not only in government, but in final divine judgment; but He was man, and walked as man; within all was divine The priesthood in its Aaronic character

could not have the cherubim that is judicial authority in heaven, but His presence there is identified with divine righteousness. As He appeared outside down here all was perfect grace, but in outward appearance He took neither.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[* Here we must remark that while final judgment refers to, and is measured by, out responsibility, forgiveness cannot be separated from our entrance into the presence of God (though in experience there may be progress as to this), because it is by a work of Christ in which the veil was rent and God fully revealed. This the great day of atonement showed, for there the blood was brought in to God, and yet it was for sins, but sins as defiling God’s presence, as well as their being all carried away. But at the brazen altar there was both the love that gave and the value of the sacrifice, so that divine favor and complacency were brought in; “therefore doth my Father

love me." Here sin-offerings and burnt offerings were offered, but they both referred to acceptance, negatively and positively, not simply to the holiness of God as the blood on the day of atonement. We have redemption by His blood, the forgiveness of sins, but according to the riches of His grace.]

[** It is interesting to know that the word burn is not at all the same in Hebrew for the sacrifice for sin, and for the burnt-offering: in the case of the latter, it is the same as for the burning of incense. I add here a word upon the sacrifices. In the sacrifice for sin burned outside the camp, God came out of His place to punish, to take vengeance for sin. Christ has put Himself in our place, has born our sins, and died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In the sacrifice for sin His blood was shed, our sins washed away. But this blood, infinitely precious, has been carried by the high priest inside the holiest, and put upon the mercy-seat; and thus the sure foundation of all our relationship with God has been laid; since, as to him that comes, sin exists no longer in the sight of God. But it is not only that God has fully reached sin in judgment in the death of Christ, but the work which Christ has accomplished has been perfectly agreeable to God. "I have glorified thee on the earth." God was glorified in Him; and God owed it, in justice to Christ, to glorify Him with His own self. The very being of God, in righteousness and in love, had been fully glorified (publicly before the universe) though the eye of faith alone is open to see it, and hence it was the part of this very righteousness to place Christ in a position that corresponded to the work. The love of the Father towards Him surely did not turn from this. Thus it was not only that the holiness which takes vengeance on sin, had already dealt with that sin in the death of Jesus, and had nothing more to do as to the putting of it away, but (for him who knows that in his Adam-nature there is no resource, and still less in the law) there is, by grace, through the faith of Jesus, the righteousness of God Himself, a justifying righteousness — not merely the putting away of sins, but the positive value of all that Christ has done as glorifying God in this. We are accepted in the Beloved. God must raise Christ in consideration of that which He had done, and place Him at His right hand; and we are cleared from our sins according to the perfectness of God, between whom and Christ alone this work was accomplished, and, He being entered in as man in virtue of that work, since He has carried His blood there, we also — objects of that work — are in virtue of it accepted as He is. Thus then the sinner, believing in God, draws near to the brazen altar where the sacrifice is offered (the way being open to him by the blood), and (now we can add, the veil being rent) draws near unto God manifested in holiness, but according to the sweet-smelling savor of the sacrifice of Christ, an expression inapplicable to the sacrifice for sin burnt outside the camp (there He was made sin), according to all the sweet-smelling savor of the devotedness and obedience of Christ upon the cross, that is to say, unto death. Notice that, besides this, the priests draw near as priests, and even into the holy place. But of this more hereafter.]

All the manifestations of God thus arranged, we come now to the services that were rendered to Him in the courts, and in the places where He manifested Himself (chap. 27:20). The priests were to take care that the light of the candlestick should be always shining outside the veil which hid

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

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

The garments were composed of everything that is connected with the Person of Christ in this character of priesthood; the breastplate, the ephod, the robe, the broidered coat, the curious girdle, and the mitre. The ephod was, par excellence, the priestly garment; made of the same things as the veil, only that there was no gold in the latter, and there were cherubims (but all enclosed inside the veil was gold, for God's government and judgment were in Christ as Son of man): in the ephod, gold but no cherubim, because the priest must have divine righteousness, but was not in the place of rule and government (compare Numbers 4). It signified also the essential purity and the graces of Christ. The girdle was the sign of service. The girdle was of the same materials as the ephod to which it belonged. Arrayed in these robes of glory and beauty, the high priest bore the names of the

people of God in the fullness of their order before God; upon his shoulders, the weight of their government, and upon the breastplate on his heart — breastplate which was inseparable from the ephod, that is, from his priesthood and appearing before God. He also bare, according to the perfections of God's presence, their judgment before Him. He maintained them in judgment before God according to these things. They therefore looked for answers through the Urim and Thummim that were in the breastplate; for the wisdom of our conduct is to be according to this position before God. Upon the hem of the robe of the ephod ** there was the desirable fruit, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost, which depended on the priesthood. I think that Christ, in entering heaven, made Himself heard through the Holy Ghost in His people — hem of His garment (compare <19D301>Psalm 133); and He will make Himself heard through His gifts when He comes out also. Meanwhile He bears within also the iniquity of the holy things in holiness before the eternal God. (This holiness is upon His very forehead.) Not only His people, but their imperfect services are presented according to the divine holiness in Him.

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

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

The dress of the high priest demands a little further explanation. That which characterized him in service was the ephod, to which was inseparably attached the breastplate in which the Urim and Thummim were placed. With the ephod, therefore, the description begins. It was that in which, as thus clothed, he was to appear before God. It was made as the veil, with the addition of gold, for the veil was Christ's flesh, the actings of which could not be separated from what was divine; but in the exercise of priesthood He appeared before God within the veil, that is, figuratively, in heaven itself; and there what met, and had the nature and integral essence of (along with the heavenly grace and purity) divine righteousness, had its place and its part as found in Him: as it is written, looking at Him in a somewhat different aspect, but alike as to this, * "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The groundwork of the priesthood, then, was absolute personal purity in man, in its highest sense as a nature flowing intelligently from God, and in the priesthood glorified, ** every form of grace interwoven with it, and divine righteousness. It was service, and the priest was girded for it, but service before God. The loins were girt, but the garments otherwise down to the feet. This was especially the case with the robe all of blue.

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

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

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

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

This was not, however, all. The Urim and Thummim were there — light and perfection. The high priest bore the judgment of the children of Israel in their present ways and as to their present relationship * upon his heart before Jehovah, and this according to the light and perfection of God. This we need, to get blessing. Stood we before God, such as we are, we must draw down judgment, or lose the effect of this light and perfection of God, remaining without. But, Christ bearing our judgment according to these, our presentation to God is according to the perfection of God Himself — our judgment born; but then our position, guidance, light, and spiritual intelligence are according to this same divine light and perfection. For the high priest inquired and had answers from God according to the Urim and Thummim. This is a blessed privilege. **

[* The great day of atonement met the guilt.]

[** We must remember that all this is not children with a Father, but man drawing near to God, only with Christ there for us. We are seen on earth (not in heavenly places), and He appearing in the presence of God for us, securing our place according to God (only for us the veil is rent, a very great difference); yet we are here on earth with a heavenly calling. Compare Hebrews. There note, the priesthood, as now exercised on high, is not for committed sins, but for grace to help in time of need that we may not sin. The sins are born and put away once and for ever as the basis of priesthood. See chapters 9, 10 and <580801>8:1, and <580301>1:3 Advocacy with the Father applies when we have to restore communion. Compare <430101>John 13 and <041901>Numbers 19.]

Introduced into the presence of God according to divine righteousness in the perfection of Christ, our spiritual light, and privileges, and walk, are according to this perfection. The presentation in divine righteousness gives us light, according to the perfection of Him into whose presence we are brought. Hence we are said (<620107>1 John 1) to walk in the light as He, God, is in the light — a solemn thought for the conscience, however joyful a one for the heart, telling us what our conversation ought to be in holiness. * Christ bearing our judgment takes away all imputative character from sin, and turns the light which would have condemned it and us, into a purifying enlightening character, according to that very perfection which looks on us. This breastplate was fastened to the onyx stones of the shoulders above, and to the ephod above the girdle below. It was the perpetual position of the people, inseparable from the exercise of the high priesthood as thus going before the Lord. What was divine and heavenly secured it — the chains of gold above, and the rings of gold with lace of blue to the ephod above the girdle beneath. Exercised in humanity, the priesthood, and the connection of the people with it, rests on an immutable, a divine, and heavenly basis. Such was the priestly presentation of the high priest. Beneath this official robe he had a personal one all of blue.

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

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

sound of the testimony; and they will be when He comes out again. The fruits of the Spirit, we know, were also in the saints. *

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

But not only were there fruits and gifts. Worship and service — the presenting of offerings to God — was part of the path of the people of God. Alas! they also were defiled. It formed thus also part of the priest's office to bear the iniquity of their holy things.

Thus the worship of God's people was acceptable, in spite of their infirmity, and holiness was ever before Jehovah in the offerings of His house — born on the forehead of the high priest as His people were on the one hand presented to Him, and on the other directed by Him, according to His own perfections through the high priest. *

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

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

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

priest's garments, it would have been the intercourse of an accepted people through the high priest. Hence we have it in spirit, though this be not the whole truth as regards our position. **

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

[** We must always remember that we have only the shadow of good things to come. The great principles of the heavenly scenes are depicted, but not the change by the rending of the veil through which we enter ourselves boldly into the holiest, Christ being in glory at the right hand of God, and that through an eternal redemption. Also, as noticed already, the Son not being come, the Father's name and relationship does not come in.]

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

[* Aaron is always united to his sons in such types, for Christ cannot be separated from His own or they would become nought. But he had been anointed personally without blood, a thing that has been verified in Christ's history. He was anointed while on earth; His disciples after His death. He received the Spirit for the church in a new way (Acts 2:33), when He was risen from among the dead in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant: for it is according to the efficacy of that blood in behalf of His people, that He has been raised as their Head. In Christ's anointing on earth the Holy Ghost was witness to Christ's own personal righteousness and sonship; in ours He is the witness of our being clean through His blood, the righteousness of God in Him, and sons by adoption.]

[** Aaron is first simply anointed with the anointing oil poured upon his head (chap. 29:7). Then the sons are brought, and the ram of consecration brought, and some of its blood put upon Aaron's ear, and then on the tip of the ear of his sons, their right thumb and the great toe of the right foot. It might be supposed that it was only on Aaron's ear, but comparing with

[Leviticus 8:23 it would seem that “their,” in verse 20 here, includes Aaron. The great principle is our association with the blessed Lord; but He was obedient unto death, and no act or walk needed to be purified. The great principle for us is, that nothing should pass into the thought, no act be done, nothing occur in our walk which is not according to the perfection of consecration in Christ’s sacrifice: we have its value upon us as to imputation, but here it is consecration, for both are in His blood.]

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

All the sacrifices were offered. That for sin, the burnt-offering of a sweet-smelling savor, the ram of consecration (which had the character of a peace-offering), accompanied by the meat-offering. These sacrifices have been explained elsewhere, and I only recall their import: Christ made sin for us, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; first need of the soul, the sin-offering; Christ obedient unto death, devoting Himself to the glory of His Father — but according to God’s nature, and the existence of sin, and that in us — and to us as belonging to the Father, the burnt-offering; the communion of God, of the Savior, of the worshipper, and of the whole church, the peace-offering; and Christ devoted in holiness of life upon the earth, but proved even to death, the meat-offering.

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

Then, connected with this priesthood, comes the perpetual sweet-smelling savor of the burnt-offering, in which the people present themselves before God — sweet-smelling savor which is found there, as it were in the midst of the people, according to the efficacy of which they stand in His presence round about. There God met the people. With the mediator He met above the ark without veil, and gave him commandment for the people according to His own perfection. Here He puts Himself on a level with the people, though speaking with the mediator. The dwelling of God in the midst of the

people is sanctified by His glory. The tabernacle, the altar, the priests, are sanctified, and He dwells in the midst of the people surrounding Him. For this purpose had He brought them out of Egypt (ver. 46): a blessed picture of how, in a far higher and better way, God dwells in the midst of us. * He never dwelt with man, we may moreover remark, till redemption was accomplished: not with Adam innocent, nor with Abraham, or others; but, so soon as redemption is accomplished, He says, “They shall know that I am Jehovah their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them” (chap. Exo 29:46).

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

Having thus established the priesthood, and the relationship of the people with God who dwelt in the midst of them, the intercession of Christ in grace (all that was in Him ascending as a sweet savor to Jehovah), is presented (chap. Exo 30:1-10); and His service in making the manifestation of God in the Spirit shine forth (ver 7). The people were identified with this service through redemption (vers. 11-16). They could neither be there, nor serve; * but they were all represented as redeemed. We then have the laver between the brazen altar and the tabernacle — purification ** for communion with God, and for service to Him therein: the hands and feet (for us only the feet, as our walk alone is concerned), every time they took part in it.

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

[** It was the washing of water by the word, the purification of the worshipper (first, of the heart) to constitute him one by being born again of the word. But this was not the laver. The priests had their bodies washed first to be such, but it is not said this was in the laver. There they washed their hands and their feet, when they had come into priestly service by the sacrifices, being already washed as to their bodies. That is, they were priests already when they washed their hands and feet in the laver; their bodies had been washed, and the consecrating sacrifices offered; and then in respect of practice, according to the purity of divine life by the Spirit, there was the washing through the word, and especially if they had failed (compare John 13). For communion requires not only acceptance but purification. Without this the presence of God acts on the conscience, not in giving communion, but in showing the defilement. Christ, even as a man, was pure by nature, and He kept Himself by the words of God’s lips. With us, this purity is received from Him; and we must also use the word to purify ourselves. The idea and measure of the purity are the same for Christ and for us: “he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” “to purify himself, even as he is pure.” For the ordinary

relationship of the people, looked at as worshippers, it was the red heifer (Numbers 19); its ashes, which typified this purification on failure, were put into running water; that is, the Holy Spirit applied, by the word, to the heart and conscience, the sufferings of Christ for sin to purify man; sufferings which could have all their moral and purifying power, since the ashes of separation showed forth that sin had been consumed in the sacrifice of Christ Himself for sin, as to imputation, by the fire of the judgment of God. The blood of the heifer had been sprinkled seven times before the door of the tabernacle — the place where, we have just seen, God met the people; but to worship and serve there must be the actual purification according to the standard of Christ: at least as far as realized, so that the conscience be not bad. This being in His presence, and the judgment of failure, is the means of progress also. Note, the rules as to the red heifer, show that however it came (for there were cases viewed merely humanly which were inevitable, but, they show that however it came), God could not have impurity in His presence.]

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

The institution and obligation of the Sabbath was associated with the tabernacle of the congregation, as a sign, as it had been with every form of relationship between God and His people: for to be made partakers of God’s rest is what distinguishes His people.

In fine, God gave Moses the two tables of the law.

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

[* The tabernacle had a double character. It was the manifestation of the heavenly things, and a provision for a sinful people to be brought near again to God there. It is interesting to consider the tabernacle under another aspect; for, as a pattern of heavenly things, it is of the highest interest. First, it signifies the heavens themselves; for Christ is not entered into the tabernacle, but into heaven itself. In a certain sense, even the universe is the house of God; but, moreover, the unity of the church as a heavenly building is presented by it: we are His house, the tabernacle of God in Spirit. These two meanings are closely connected in the beginning of Hebrews. Christ, God, has built all things, and we are His house. He fills all in all, but He dwells in the church; it is a concentric circle, although quite different in its nature. Compare the prayer in Ephesians 1, which also connects these two

things under the headship of Christ, and still more distinctly in Ephesians 3; Ephesians 1 being headship, not dwelling, though the relationship be the same. Compare Ephesians 4:4-6, though there it is in the form of Spirit, Lord, and God, that is, not simply dwelling in. What most fully answers is the prayer of Ephesians 3, where, note, “height,” etc., is not of the love, but of the whole scene of God’s glory, we being at the center to look out into it all, because Christ, who is the center, dwells in us. In another point of view, the person and the fullness of Christ Himself are there; for God was in Him, and thus the rending of the veil is applied by the apostle to the flesh of Christ, or, if you please, the veil itself; “through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” It is evident that the dwelling place of God is the central idea of these things, just as a man lives in his house, in his property, etc.]

Such being the state of the people, God tells Moses to go down; and now everything begins to be put on another footing. God, in His counsels of grace, has not only seen the people when they were in affliction, but in their ways. They were a stiff-necked people. He tells Moses to let Him alone, and that He would destroy them, and make of Moses a great nation. Moses takes the place of mediator, and, true to his love for the people as God’s people, and to the glory of God in them, with a self-denial which cared only for this glory, sacrificing every thought of self, intercedes in that magnificent pleading which appeals to what that glory necessitates, and to the unconditional promises made to the fathers. * And Jehovah repented. The character of Moses shines in all its beauty here, and is remarkable amongst those which the Holy Ghost has taken pleasure in delineating, according to the precious grace of God, who loves to describe the exploits of His people, and the fruit they have born, though He Himself is the source of them.

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

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

bless them in every state of things, as in the interest of His glory, and insists on holiness in them, at all cost, in conformity with that glory, that it may not be blasphemed in those who are identified with it.

Levi, responding to Moses's call, says to his brethren, the children of his mother, "I have not known you;" and consecrates himself to Jehovah. Moses now, full of zeal though not according to knowledge, but which was permitted of God for our instruction, proposes to the people his going up, and "peradventure" he shall make an atonement for this sin. And he asks God to blot him out of His book rather than that the people should not be forgiven. God refuses him; and, while sparing them through his mediation, and placing them under the government of His patience and long-suffering, puts each one of them under responsibility to Himself — that is, under the law, declaring that the soul that sinned He would blot out of His book.

Thus the mediation of Moses was available for forgiveness, as regards government, and to put them under a government, the principles of which we shall see by-and-by; but it was useless as regards any atonement which would protect them from the final effect of their sin (its effect as regarded their eternal relationship with God), and withdraw them from under the judgment of the law. * God spares them and commands Moses to lead the people to the place of which He had spoken, and His angel should go before him.

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

What a contrast do we here remark, in passing, with the work of our precious Savior! He comes down from above — from His dwelling-place in the glory of the Father — to do His will, and did it perfectly; and (instead of destroying the tables, the signs of this covenant, the requirements of which man was unable to meet), He Himself bears the penalty of its infringement, bearing its curse; and, having accomplished the atonement before returning above, instead of going up with a cheerless "peradventure" in His mouth, which the holiness of God instantly nullified, He ascends, with the sign of the accomplishment of the atonement, and of the confirmation of the new covenant, with His precious blood, the value of which was anything but doubtful to that God before whom He presented it. Alas! the church has but too faithfully reflected the conduct of Israel during the absence of the true Moses, and attributed to providence what she had fashioned with her own hands, because she would see something.

We have now to examine a little what was taking place among the people, and on Moses's part, the faithful and zealous witness, as a servant of God in His house; for we shall find a new mediation going on peacefully, if one may so speak, and holily, weighing by faith, these relationships where the mercy and the justice of God meet in their application to His government. It is not the indignation of holy wrath, which had indeed its place at the sight of the evil, while it knew not what to do — for how put the law of God beside the golden calf? Jehovah says that He will send an angel, and that He will not go in the midst of the people, seeing it is stiff-necked, lest He should destroy them by the way. But I will state succinctly the facts connected with this new intercession, which are of touching interest.

God had first said that He would come up in a moment in the midst of them to destroy them. This present excision of the people in judgment, Moses's intercession had averted, and Jehovah calls upon Israel now to put off their ornaments, that He might know what to do unto them. Holy grace of God! who, if He sees the insolence of sin before His eyes, must strike, but wills that the people should at least strip themselves of that, and that He may have time (to speak the language of men) to reflect as to what He should do with the sin of a people now humbled for having forsaken Him.

However, God does not forsake the people. Moses enters holily, and by the just judgment of conscience, into the mind of God by the Spirit; and, before the tabernacle of the congregation was pitched, he entirely leaves the camp, and makes a place for God outside the camp, afar off from the camp, which had put a false God in His place, and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox which eateth grass. He calls it the tabernacle of the congregation — the meeting-place between God and those who sought Him. This name is in itself important, because it is no longer simply God in the midst of a recognized assembly, which was one of the characters we have already observed connected with the tabernacle. * Moses being outside the camp, God now declares that He will not go up in the midst of them, lest He should destroy them by the way, as He had threatened. Moses begins his intercession, having taken an individual position, the only one now of faithfulness to God; but his connection with the people being so much the stronger by his being nearer to God, more separated unto Him. This is the effect of faithful separation when it is for God's glory, and one is brought near to God in it.

[* He anticipates by faith, jealous of God's glory, the tabernacle which was to be set up according to the thoughts and commandments of God, which he had seen in communion with Jehovah. That was indeed the principal thing; but it was without the camp, and a sort of disorder in the eyes of men, and was without the ornaments and the forms commanded of God in the tabernacle, and there was not one express word of God for it to be done.

Nevertheless, the presence of God was there, and the main thing for faith was there; that is, a tent where God was seen, and where He might be sought, even in a manner in which faith was more manifest than when the tabernacle was regularly set up. Then the pillar came down as a blessed testimony to the faith of Moses.]

It must be remarked here, that God had taken the people at their word. They had said, acting according to their faith, or rather to their want of faith, "This Moses that brought us up out of Egypt." God says, "Thy people, which thou broughtest out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." Hence God says to Moses, "Thou," addressing Himself to the mediator. Moses says to God, "Thy people." This earnest power of faith does not, though separating from evil, loose God from this blessed claim (chap. 32:1, 7, 12-34). Afterwards, however, the people having stripped themselves of their ornaments, and Moses being in the position of mediator, God says (chap. 33:1), "Thou and the people which thou hast brought up." * Everything now hangs upon the mediator.

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

Moses having taken his place outside the camp, God reveals Himself to him as He never had done before. The people see God standing at the door of the tabernacle which Moses had pitched; and they worship, every man at his tent door. Jehovah speaks unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend. We shall see that it is to these communications that God alludes when He speaks of the glory of Moses (Numbers 12:8), and not to those on Mount Sinai. Moses, as mediator in the way of testimony, goes into the camp; but Joshua, the spiritual chief of the people (Christ in Spirit), does not depart out of the tabernacle * Moses now recognizes what God had told him, that he has to bring up the people; he is there as the mediator on whom everything depends. But he dares not entertain the thought of going up alone, of going up without knowing who would be with him. God has fully acknowledged him in grace, and he desires to know who will go before him. He therefore asks, since he has found grace (for so God had told him), that he may know His way, the way of God; not only to have a way for him (Moses) to get to Canaan, but "thy way;" thus will he know God, and in His path and conduct, will find grace in His sight. God replies that His presence shall go, and He will give rest to Moses: the two things he perfectly needed as crossing the wilderness. Moses then brings in the people, and says, "Carry us not up hence," and that "we have found grace, I and thy people." This also is granted of Jehovah; and now he desires for himself to see the glory of Jehovah; but that face which is to go and lead Moses and the people, God cannot show unto Moses. He will hide him while He passes by, and Moses shall see His back parts. We cannot meet God on His way as independent of Him. After He has passed by, one sees

all the beauty of His ways. Who could have been beforehand in proposing such a thing as the cross? After God of Himself has done it, then all the perfectness of God in it overflows the heart.

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

God then lays down two principles: His sovereignty, which allows Him to act in goodness towards the wicked — into this He retreats that any may be saved — for in justice He would have cut off the whole people: and the conditions of His government under which He was putting the people, His character such as it is manifested in His ways towards them. Hid whilst He passes by, Moses bows down at the voice of God, who proclaims His name and reveals what He is as JEHOVAH. These words give the principles contained in the character of God Himself in connection with the Jewish people — principles which form the basis of His government. It is not at all the name of His relationship with the sinner for his justification, but with Israel for His government. Mercy, holiness, and patience, mark His ways with them; but He does not clear the guilty. Moses, ever bearing the people of God on his heart, beseeches God, according to the favor in which he stands as mediator, that the Lord Himself, thus revealed, may go up in their midst; and this, because they were a stiff-necked people. How should he bring such a people safe through without Him?

The relationship between Moses personally and God was fully established, so that he could present the people such as they were, because of his (Moses's own) position; and, consequently, make of the difficulty and sin of the people a reason for the presence of God, according to the character He had revealed. It is the proper effect of mediation; but it is exceedingly beautiful to see, grace having thus come in, the reason God had given for the destruction of the people, or at the very least for His absence, becoming the motive for His presence. * It, no doubt, supposed forgiveness as well. This Moses asks for, and adds, in the consciousness of the blessing of the name and being of God, "Take us for thine inheritance." In answer to this prayer, God establishes a new covenant with the people. The basis of it is complete separation from the nations which God was going to drive out from before the people. It supposes the entrance of the people into Canaan in virtue of the mediation of Moses, and the presence of God with the people consequent upon his intercession. He is commanded to maintain their relationship with Him in the solemn feasts under the blessing and safeguard of God.

[* We know this ourselves; my sinfulness in itself would be the reason for God's giving me up. But now I am in grace, I can plead it with God as a reason, blessed be His name, for His going with me; never should I

overcome and get safe across the wilderness, if He was not with me. Surely the flesh is there. But it is wondrous grace. Nothing shows more clearly the difference between justifying forgiveness, and governmental mercy, than this part of Israel's history. God forgives, but does not clear the guilty — atonement was not made: no doubt, even in possibility of government all was based on it.]

It is well to have the order of facts clear here as to Moses's position. He broke the tables; the Levites at his summons slay their friends and relations; and then he pitches the tabernacle far off from the camp. There the cloud comes down (chap. 33:9). There the basis of all was laid, first in absolute sovereign grace, and then in the character of Moses's personal relationship. This was at the door of the tabernacle outside the camp. Then chapter 34 he goes up again, and there, he being in this relationship, quite a new governmental covenant is made, founded on God's character mediatorially, and the law put into the ark. They were put back in principle under law; real atonement could not be made, of course, by Moses (chap. 34:10-17). But Israel was never directly and properly under the covenant of the law, but mediatorially under chapter 34:5-10; though the commandments were, of course, before them as their rule. But this new covenant of chapter 34 was what they were under as to the law; and hence they, as under the law, were apostate and left of God before they got it; and Moses and the cloud of God's presence outside the camp. People sought the Lord and went there. Utter separation from all mixture with the idolatrous people, and consecration, characterizes the new covenant of chapter 34. In chapter 23 they were told to destroy their altars and serve Jehovah who would cut these nations off But the covenant is not so characterized. It is of moment to see that God retreats into His own sovereign grace to spare them. But this was at the door of the tabernacle and with Moses alone; the covenant of gracious government was based on it. That was on the mount. The people were only on that ground. There was no real basis of relationship; the law, which would have been one, broken, and no atonement made, nor could be. Moses had a special revelation of grace. But this seems to have been personal and unrecorded.

I have rather enlarged upon these conversations of Moses with the people, because (and it is very important to remark it) Israel never entered the land under the Sinai covenant, that is, under simple law (for all this passed under Mount Sinai); it had been immediately broken. It is under the mediation of Moses that they were able to find again the way of entering it. However, they are placed again under the law, but the government of patience and grace is added to it. In Deuteronomy 10:1, we see there is no longer question of introducing the law openly into the camp where God had been dishonored. It was to be put into the ark, according to the predetermined

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

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

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

[+ Here, however, is seen the excellency of the Lord Jesus, who in all things must have the pre-eminence Moses, naturally far off, is separated from his natural state, in order to draw near unto God. Christ was naturally near there,

and more than near; He separates Himself from nature to meet the adversary on the behalf of man.]

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

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

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

Thus was the tabernacle set up, and everything put into its place, according to the commandment of God. Thereupon (which we might have remarked before), the whole is anointed with oil. Christ was thus consecrated, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; and, moreover, Christ having made peace by His blood, having all things to reconcile (being the One who first descended, and afterwards ascended, to fill all things with His presence, according to the power of redemption in righteousness and love divine), the unction of the Holy Ghost must carry the efficacy of this power in redemption everywhere. Therefore had the tabernacle been

sprinkled with blood. It is the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost which is spoken of, not being born again. God takes possession of the tabernacle by His glory, and the cloud of His presence and of His protection becomes the guide of the people (now forgiven), happy, and so greatly blessed, in being under the government and guidance of God, and at the same time His habitation and His inheritance. But all still depended on human obedience, the people's obedience, nor was atonement, though revealed in figure, accomplished in fact.

# LEVITICUS

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

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

[* This is the character in which God puts Himself thus into relationship. Consequently most of the directions given suppose those to whom they apply to stand already in the relation of a people recognized of Him as His people. But the people being really without, and the tabernacle presenting the position in which God was putting Himself in order to be approached, the instructions which are given in cases supposing the people or the individuals to be thus placed, furnish those who are without with the means of drawing near to God, when they are in that position, though no previous relationship have existed. It is very important to observe this: it is the basis of the reasoning of the apostle, in Romans 3, for the admission of the Gentiles and so of any sinner whomsoever. It is true, nevertheless, that most of the directions apply to those who are already in proximity with the throne. Besides, all, in spite of themselves, have to do with it, although they do not approach it, and especially now that, as a testimony of grace, the blood is on the mercy-seat, and the revelation and testimony of glory without a veil, the result of grace and redemption, gone out. The conditions of relationship with the throne that God establishes, where He condescends to be approached by His creatures, are presented, which includes the details of those He sustains with His people. The reader will remember, as regards our drawing nigh to God, the position of the Christian is entirely changed from that of the Jew. Then (Hebrews 9) the way into the holiest was not made manifest, and no one, not even the priests, could go into the presence of God within the veil; and the services were a remembrance of sins. Now, the work of Christ being accomplished, the veil is rent. It is not a people in a certain

relationship with God yet always remaining without, drawing near to the altar, or, at best, some to the altar of incense. It is full grace going out to the world; and then, redemption being accomplished, and believers righteous before God, their having all perfect boldness to enter the holiest. Hence, our subject is not the character of approach, but the figures of the means by which we approach, in order to have communion with God. I need hardly add, the Father's love does not come in question. It was a throne of judgment which was in the sanctuary, and who could approach that?]

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

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

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

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

presented. But we have all the lines and explanations of what is contained in it, in that which we hold in our hand — of Him who composed the great reality. Blessed be His name!

To apply this to the sacrifices in the beginning of Leviticus, the establishment of the tabernacle embraces two points quite distinct, the display of the plans of God in grace, * and the place of access to Him, and also the means of meeting the necessity and sin which gave occasion for its present exercise. All its structure was according to a pattern given in the mount — a pattern of heavenly things including the intercourse between heaven and earth, and shows forth the order which finds its accomplishment in the better tabernacle not made with hands. But the economy of the tabernacle was only actually set up after the sin of the golden calf, when the jealousy of God against sin had already broken forth; and His grace was ministered from the throne in the sanctuary by offerings which met transgression, and transgression which in result barred the entrance of the priests at all times into the sanctuary, but supplied in grace all that met the need of a sinful people.

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

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

mount, was set up; but it established the principle on which it was founded in the most striking manner.

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

This meeting of Jehovah with the people, or the mediator, was twofold: apostolic, or sacrificial; that is, for the purpose of communicating His will; or of receiving the people in their worship, their failures, or their need, even as Christ Himself is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession — expressions which allude to the circumstances of which we treat. Jehovah's presence in the tabernacle, for the communication of His will (with which we have to do only inasmuch as what occupies us is an example of it *), is thus spoken of in Exodus 25, 29. In ‹0251›chapter 25, after describing the structure of the ark and its appendages in the most holy place, it is said, "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony which I will give thee. And there I will meet with thee Moses], and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment with the children of Israel." This was for the mediator with Jehovah alone in secret. In ‹0291›chapter 29 we read, "A continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before Jehovah: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there will I meet with the children of Israel." That is where, though through a mediator, as all was now since the law was broken, Jehovah met the people, not Moses alone, with whom He communicated from between the cherubim in the most holy place.

[* For prophecy is a thing apart.]

On this ground Leviticus commences.

God speaks not from Sinai, but out of the tabernacle, where He is sought; where, according to the pattern of His glory, but according also to the need of those who seek His presence, He is in relationship with the people by mediation and sacrifice. In Sinai, in terrible glory, He demanded, and proposed terms of, obedience, and thereupon promised His favor. In this the communication was direct, but the people could not bear it. Here He is accessible to the sinner and to the saint, but by a provided mediation and

priesthood. But then the center and ground of our access to God thus is Christ's obedience and offering. This therefore is first presented to us when God speaks in the tabernacle.

The order of these sacrifices is first to be remarked. The order of their application is uniformly opposed to the order of their institution. There are four great classes of offerings:

**1,** The burnt-offering;

**2,** The meat-offering;

**3,** The peace-offering; and

**4,** The sin-offering.

I name them in the order of their institution, but, in their application, when offered together, the sin-offerings always come first, for there it is restoration to God; * and, in approaching God by sacrifice, man must approach by the efficacy of that which takes away his sins, in that they have been born by another. But in presenting the Lord Jesus Himself as the great sacrifice, His being made sin is a consequence of His offering Himself in perfectness to God, and though as made sin for us, still in His own perfectness, and for the divine glory, we say, His Father's glory; this is a great but blessed mystery. He gives Himself up, coming to do His Father's will, and is made for us sin, Him who knew no sin, and undergoes death.

[* As to acceptance, the Christian has no more conscience of sins; but the Israelite had never learnt this; and hence, as we have seen, his way of approaching served, as to the means, to portray the sinner's first coming to God. The import of Christ's sacrifice is often too little seen. Man must come as a sinner, and about and owning his sins. He cannot come truly otherwise, but when entered in peace into God's presence, feeble as we may be, we view it from God's side, and daily see more of the reality and value of this great fact which stands alone in the history of eternity, and on which all and eternal blessing is immutably founded. Every point and power of good and evil was there brought to an issue; the absolute enmity of man's heart against God revealed in grace; Satan's complete power over men; man (Christ) perfect in obedience and love to His Father in the very place needed when He was made sin; God perfect in justice against sin (it became Him), and perfect in love to the sinner. And this being accomplished, the perfect ground was laid in justice, and in what was accomplished and immutable, for the display of God's love and God's counsels, in what morally could not change.]

Furthermore, our sins being put away, the source of communion is thus in the excellency of Christ Himself, and in His offering, who offers Himself to God, without spot; glorifying God by death inasmuch as sin was there

before Him and death by sin; and He gives Himself wholly up to God's glory in respect of this state, * and then our presentation according to the preciousness of this on high, though the actual bearing of our sins be of absolute necessity to introduce us into this communion. In this is the difference of the great day of atonement. Then the blood was put on the mercy-seat in the holiest; but this, while giving access there on the ground of perfect cleansing through an offering of infinite value, was in respect of actual sins and defilement, not the pure sweet savor of the offering in itself to God. Yet it supposed sin. The offering would not have had its own character nor value if it had not. Hence, as presenting Christ, and our approach to God when sin has been fully dealt with and holiness tested, the burnt-offering, meat-offering, and peace-offering (in which latter our communion with God is presented to us), come first, and then the sin-offerings apart; needful, primarily needful to us, but not the expression of the personal perfectness of Christ, but of His sin-bearing, though perfectness were needed for that.

> [* It is to be remarked that we read of no positive sin-offerings before the law. The clothing of Adam may suppose it, and <0407>Genesis 4:7 may be taken to speak of it, but they are not professedly offered; burnt-offerings frequently. These suppose sin and death, and no coming to God but by sacrifice and death, and reconciliation through it. But the sacrifice is viewed in the perfect self-offering of Christ, so that God should be perfectly glorified in that which was infinitely precious in His sight, and all He was, righteousness, love, majesty, truth, purpose, all glorified in Christ's death so that He could freely act in His grace. Sin is supposed in it, and perfectness of self-sacrifice to God there where it was; but God glorified rather than individuals' sins born. Hence worship according to the sweet savor of it is involved in it. A man far departed from God, as such I cannot come to God at all but on this ground, and it will remain valid for eternity and secure all things: the new heaven and earth are secured as the dwelling-place of righteousness by it. But my actual sins being put away is another thing. In one, the whole relationship of man, indeed of all things with God, is in question; in the other, my personal sins. Hence all acceptable sacrifice was of the former kind: sacrifices for sins when the relationship of a people with God was established, where every act referred to His actual presence.]

It is evident, from what I have said, that it is Christ we are to consider in the sacrifices which are about to engage our attention: the various forms of value and efficacy which attach to that one all-perfect sacrifice. It is true, we may consider the Christian in a subordinate point of view as presented to us here, for he should present his body a living sacrifice. He, by the fruits of charity, should present sacrifices of sweet savor, acceptable to our God by Jesus Christ; but our object now is to consider Christ in them.

I have said that there are four great classes presented to us — burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, peace-offerings, and offerings for sin.

These may be seen thus classed in chapter 10 of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But then there is a very essential distinction which divides these four into two separate classes — the sin-offerings, and all the others. The sin-offerings, as such, were not characterized as offerings made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah (although the fat was in most of them burnt on the altar, and in this respect the sweet savor was there, and so it is once said, chapter <03004>4:31; for indeed the perfection of Christ was there though bearing our sins), the others were distinctly so characterized. Positive sins were seen in the sin-offerings: they were charged with sins. He that touched those of them which fully bore this character, as being for the whole people * (<03601>Leviticus 16, <04901>Numbers 19), was defiled. But in the case of the burnt-offering, though not brought for positive sins, sin is supposed; there blood was shed, and it was for propitiation, but burnt on the altar, and all was a sweet savor to God. It was Christ's whole sacrifice of Himself to God, and perfect as an offering in every respect, though sin, as such, was the occasion of it. By this sacrifice, in result, sin will be put away out of God's sight for ever — what joy! see <43029>John 1:29 and <58926>Hebrews 9:26. But then we brought to the consciousness of our state of sin say, He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. This is a consequence, but the basis is that, besides bearing our sins, He glorified God perfectly there where He was made sin. It was as in the place of sin that His obedience was perfect and God perfectly glorified in all He is (<43301>John 13 and 17). Indeed there is but one word for sin and sin-offering in the original. They were burnt, but not on the altar; the fat, save in one case, of which we may speak hereafter, was (chap. 4). The other offerings were offerings made by fire of a sweet savor unto Jehovah — they present Christ's perfect offering of Himself to God, not the imposition of sins on the substitute by the Holy One, the Judge.

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

These two points in the sacrifice of Christ are very distinct and very precious. God has made Him to be sin for us, Him who knew no sin: but also is it true, that through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. Let us consider this latter, as first in the order presented in Leviticus, and naturally so.

The first sort of sacrifice, the most complete and characteristic of those characterized by being offerings made by fire of a sweet savor, was the burnt-offering. The offerer was to bring his offering, * in order to his acceptance with God, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and to kill it before Jehovah.

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

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

The veil, the apostle tells us, signified that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest while the old economy subsisted. * Immediately outside the veil — its efficacy, however entering within, and whence, indeed, on certain occasions, incense was taken in a censer and offered within — stood the golden altar of incense. In the same, or outer chamber of the tabernacle, called the holy, as distinguished from the most holy place, or holy of holies, stood, on either side, the shewbread and the candlestick — types, the former of Christ incarnate, the true bread in union with and head of the twelve tribes, on the one hand; and the latter, of the perfection ** (still, I have no doubt, in connection with Israel in the latter day) of the Spirit, as giving light, on the other. The church owns Christ thus, and the Holy Ghost dwells in it, but what characterizes it, as such, is the knowledge of a heavenly and glorified Christ, and the Holy Ghost, as in divine communications, present in unity in it. These figures, on the other hand, give us Christ in His earthly relation, and the Holy Ghost in His various displays of power, when God’s earthly system is established. Compare <38040>Zechariah 4, and <66100>Revelation 11 where there is the testimony to, but not the actual perfection of, the candlestick; God’s testimony on the earth. The Epistle to the Hebrews affords us all needed light as to how far and with what changes, these figures can be applied now. But that epistle never speaks of the proper relationships and privileges of the church and Christians. These are viewed as pilgrims on earth, an earthly people. There is no union with Christ. He is in heaven and we in need on earth; no mention of the Father’s name, but only so much the more precious as to our access to God, and needed supplies of grace for our path down here. It is properly Christian; we are partakers of the heavenly calling; but it may reach out and give what is available for the remnant, slain after the church is gone. Into the holy place the body of the priests, and not merely the high priest, entered continually, but they only. We know who, and who alone, can now thus enter, even those who are made kings and priests, the true saints of God: only, we can add, that the veil that hid the holiest and barred the entrance is rent from top

to bottom, not to be renewed again between us and God. We have boldness to enter into the holiest. The veil has been rent in His flesh. He is not merely bread from heaven or incarnate, but put to death, denoted by flesh and blood, and the door fully opened for us to enter in spirit where Christ is. Our ordinary privilege and title is in the holy place — type of the created heaven, as the most holy is of the heaven of heavens, as it is called. In a certain sense, as to spiritual approach and intercourse, the veil being rent, there is no separation between the two, though in the light which no man can approach unto God dwells inaccessible. In the heavenly places we now are as priests, though only in spirit.

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

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

In approaching to this was the outside court, the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. * In entering this part, the first thing met with was the altar of burnt-offering, and between that and the tabernacle the laver, where the priests washed ** when they entered into the tabernacle, or were occupied at the altar, to perform their service. It is evident that we approach solely by the sacrifice of Christ, and that we must be washed with water by the word before we can serve in the sanctuary. We have need also, as priests, of having our feet, at least, washed by our Advocate on high for our continual service there. (See <430>John 13) +

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

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

[+ In the first edition, I had added here the “renewing of the Holy Ghost,” referring to <560>Titus 3. But though the Holy Ghost surely renews the heart continually, yet I doubt the justice of the application of this passage here. The renewing seems more absolute there, anakainoseos. I might have simply left it out, perhaps, but that I would call the attention of the reader to the fact that “regeneration” is not the same word as being “born again.” It is paliggenesia, not anagenneesis. It is only found again, to denote the millennium, in <400>Matthew 19. It is in its import, the “washing of water,” or being “born of water,” not the reception of life by the Spirit. Water is a change of condition of what exists, not in itself receiving of life, which is being “born of the Spirit.” it is the anakainosis.]

Christ also thus approached, but it was in the perfect offering of Himself, not by the offering of another. Nothing can be more touching, or more worthy of profound attention, than the manner in which Jesus thus voluntarily presents Himself, that God may be fully, completely, glorified in Him. Silent in His sufferings, we see that His silence was the result of a profound and perfect determination to give Himself up, in obedience, to this glory — a service, blessed be His name, perfectly accomplished, so that the Father rests in His love towards us.

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

So in the burnt-offering; he who offered, offered the victim up wholly to God at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Thus Christ presented Himself for the accomplishment of the purpose and glory of God where sin was. In the type the victim and the offerer were necessarily distinct, but Christ was both, and the hands of the offerer were laud on the head of the victim in sign of identity.

Let us cite some of the passages which thus present Christ to us. First, in general, whether for life or for death, thus to glorify God; but exactly as taking the place of these sacrifices, the Spirit thus speaks of the Lord, in [58]10Hebrews 10, citing [19]40Psalm 40: "Then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Christ, then, giving Himself up entirely to the will of God is what replaces these sacrifices, the antitype of the shadows of good things to come. But of His life itself He thus speaks ([43]10John 10:18): "I lay it down of myself, no one taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father." It was obedience, but obedience in the sacrifice of Himself; and so, speaking of His death, He says, "The prince of this world Satan] cometh, and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." So we read in [42]9Luke 9: "And it came to pass when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God" ([58]9Hebrews 9:14).

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

The sacrifice was to be without blemish; the application of this to Christ is too obvious to need comment. He was the Lamb "without blemish and without spot." The offerer * was to kill the bullock before Jehovah. This completed the likeness to Christ, for, though evidently He could not kill Himself, He laid down His life: no one took it from Him. He did it before Jehovah. This, in the ritual of the offering, was the offerer's part, the individual's, and so Christ's as man. Man saw, in Christ's death, man's judgment — the power of Caiaphas, or the power of the world. But as offered, He offered Himself before Jehovah.

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

And now comes Jehovah's and the priest's part. The offering was to be made the subject of the fire of the altar of God; it was cut in pieces and washed, given up, according to the purification of the sanctuary, to the trial of the judgment of God; for fire, as a symbol, signifies always the trial of the judgment of God. As to the washing with water, it made the sacrifice typically what Christ was essentially — pure. But it has this importance, that the sanctification of it and ours is on the same principle and on the same standard. He is in this sense our sanctification. We are sanctified unto obedience. He came to do the will of His Father, and so, perfect from the beginning, learns obedience by the things which He suffered; perfectly obedient always, but His obedience put ever more thoroughly to the test, so that His obedience was continually deeper and more complete, though

always perfect. He learned obedience, what it was to obey, and that by growing sufferings and the sense of what was around Him, and finally by the cross. * It was new to Him as a divine Person — to us as rebels to God — and He learned it in all its extent.

[* Much deep instruction is connected with this, but its development belongs to the New Testament. See <45 6> Romans 12 and 6, and 1 Peter.]

Furthermore, this washing of water, in our case, is by the word, and Christ testifies of Himself that man should live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This difference evidently and necessarily exists, that as Christ had life in Himself, and was the life (see <43 1> John 1:4; <62 1> 1 John 1:1, 2,) we, on the other hand, receive this life from Him; and while ever obedient to the written word Himself, the words which flowed from His lips were the expression of His life — the direction of ours.

We may pursue the use of this water of cleansing yet farther. It is the power of the Spirit also, exercised as by the word and will of God; * so even the commencement of this life in us. “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (<59 1> James 1:18). And so in <60 1> 1 Peter 1:23, we are born of the incorruptible seed of the word. But then this finds us walking in sins and living in them, or, in another aspect, dead in them. These are really the same thing, for being alive in sins is being spiritually dead towards God; only the latter sets out with our whole state discovered; the former deals with our responsibility. In Ephesians we are viewed as dead in sins; in Romans alive in them; in Colossians chiefly the latter, but the former is touched on. The cleansing must be, therefore, by the death and resurrection of Christ; death to sin and life to God in Him. Hence, on His death, was shed forth out of His side water and blood, cleansing as well as expiating power. Death then is the only cleanser of sin as well as its expiation. “He that is dead is freed ** from sin,” and water thus became the sign of death, for this alone cleansed. This truth of real sanctification was necessarily hidden under the law, save in figures: for the law applied itself to man, alive, and claimed his obedience. Christ’s death revealed it. In us — that is, in our flesh — good does not dwell. Hence, in the symbolical use of water in baptism, we are told that as many of us as are baptized unto Christ, are baptized unto His death. But it is evident that we cannot stop at death in itself. In us it would be the herald and witness of condemnation, but, having life in Christ, death in Him is death to the life of sin and guilt. It is the communication of the life of Christ which enables us thus to treat the old man as dead, and ourselves as having been dead in trespasses and sins. The body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness, if Christ be in you. So we are told as to the truth of our natural state (it is not here what faith holds the old

man to be if Christ be in us): “You, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him.” When we were dead in sin, He hath quickened us together with Him; and, as baptized unto His death, it is added, “that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” It is only in the power of a new life that we can hold ourselves to be dead to sin. And, indeed, it is only by known redemption we can say so. It is when we have apprehended the power of Christ’s death and resurrection, and know that we are in Him through the Holy Ghost, that we can say, I am crucified with Him; I am not in the flesh. We know then, that this cleansing, which was apprehended as a mere moral effect in Judaism, is, by the communication of the life of Christ to us, that by which we are sanctified, according to the power of His death and resurrection, and sin as a law in our members is judged. The first Adam, as a living soul, corrupted himself; the last, as a quickening Spirit, imparts to us a new life.

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

[** Literally, “justified.” You cannot accuse a dead man of sin. And note, it is not “sins” here, but “sin.”]

But, if it is the communication of the life of Christ which, through redemption, is the starting-point of this judgment of sin, it is evident that that life in Him was essentially and actually pure; in us, the flesh lusts against the Spirit. He, even according to the flesh, was born of God. But He was to undergo a baptism, not merely to fulfill all righteousness as living — though perfectly pure — in a baptism of water, but a trial of all that was in Him by the baptism of fire. “I have,” says He, “a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”

Here, then, Christ, completely offered up to God for the full expression of His glory, undergoes the full trial of judgment. The fire tries what He is. He is salted with fire. The perfect holiness of God, in the power of His judgment, tries to the uttermost all that is in Him. The bloody sweat, and affecting supplication in the garden, the deep sorrow of the cross, in the touching consciousness of righteousness, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” — as to any lightening of the trial, an unheeded cry — all mark the full trial of the Son of God. Deep answered unto deep, all Jehovah’s waves and billows passed over Him. But as He had offered Himself perfectly to the thorough trial, this consuming fire and trying of His inmost thoughts did, could, produce nought but a sweet savor to God. It is remarkable that the word used for burning the burnt-offering is not the same as that of the sin-offering, but the same as that of burning incense.

In this offering, then, we have Christ's perfect offering up of Himself, and then tried in His inmost parts by fiery trial of God's judgment. The consuming of His life was a sacrifice of a sweet savor, all infinitely agreeable to God — not a thought, not a will, but was put to the test — His life consumed in it; but all, without apparent answer to sustain, given up to God; all was purely a sweet savor to Him. But there was more than this. The greater part of what has been said would apply to the meat-offering. But the burnt-offering was to make atonement, an expression not used in chapter 2. There the personal intrinsic perfectness of Christ was tested, and the manner of His incarnation, what He was as man down here unfolded, but death was the first element of the burnt-offering, and death was by sin. There where man was (otherwise for him it could not be); where sin was; where Satan's power as death was; where God's irreversible judgment was, Christ had to glorify God, and it was a glory not otherwise to be displayed: love, righteousness, majesty, in the place of sin and death. Christ, who knew no sin, made sin for us, in perfect obedience and love to His Father goes down to death; and God is glorified there, Satan's power of death destroyed, God glorified in man according to all He is, sin being come in, in obedience and love. He was in the place of sin, and God glorified, as no creation, no sinlessness, could. All was a sweet savor in that place, and according to what God was as to it in righteousness and love.

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

glorified God perfectly in it, the sweet savor of His sinless sacrifice, is our good odor of delight before God, and is ours; its acceptance, even Christ's, is ours.

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

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

I now turn to the meat-offering. This presents to us the humanity of Christ; His grace and perfectness as a living man, but still as offered to God and fully tested. It was of fine flour without leaven, mingled with oil and frankincense. The oil was used in two ways; it was mingled with the flour, and the cake was anointed with it. The presenting (Christ's presenting

Himself as an offering to God) even unto death, and His actually undergoing death, and shedding blood, * must have come first; for, without the perfectness of this will even unto death, and that shedding of blood by which God was perfectly glorified where sin was, nothing could have been accepted; yet Christ's perfectness as a man down here had to be proved, and that by the test of death and the fire of God. But the atoning work being wrought, and His obedience perfect from the beginning (He came to do His Father's will), all the life was perfect and acceptable as man, a sweet savor under the trial of God — His nature as man. ** Abel was accepted by blood; Cain, who came in the way of nature, offering the fruit of his toil and labor, was rejected. All that we can offer of our natural hearts is "the sacrifice of fools," and is founded on what is failure in the spring of any good, on the sin of hardness of heart, which does not recognize our condition — our sin and estrangement from our God. What could be a greater evidence of hardness of heart than, under the effects and consequences of sin, driven from Eden, to come and offer offerings, and these offerings the fruit of the judicial toil of the curse consequent on sin, as if nothing at all had happened? It was the perfection of blind hardness of heart.

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

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

But, on the other hand, as Adam's first act, when in blessing, was to seek his own will (and hence by disobedience he was, with his posterity such as he, in this world of misery, alienated from God in state and will), Christ was in this world of misery, devoting Himself in love, devoting Himself to do His Father's will. He came here emptying Himself. He came here by an act of devotedness to His Father, at all cost to Himself, that God might be glorified. He was in the world, the obedient man, whose will was to do His Father's will, the first grand act and source of all human obedience, and of divine glory by it. This will of obedience and devotedness to His Father's glory, stamped a sweet savor on all that He did: all He did partook of this fragrance.

It is impossible to read John's, * or indeed any of the Gospels, where what He was, His Person, specially shines forth, without meeting, at every moment, this blessed fragrance of loving obedience and self-renouncement.

It is not a history — it is Himself, whom one cannot avoid seeing, and also the wickedness of man, which violently forced its way through the coverture and holy hiding-place which love had wrought around Him, and forced into view Him who was clothed with humility — the divine Person that passed in meekness through the world that rejected Him: but it was only to give all its force and blessedness to the self-abasement, which never faltered, even when forced to confess His divinity. It was "I am," but in the lowliness and loneliness, of the most perfect and self-abased obedience; no secret desire to hold His place in His humiliation, and by His humiliation: His Father's glory was the perfect desire of His heart. It was, indeed, "I am" that was there, but in the perfectness of human obedience. This reveals itself everywhere. "It is written," was His reply to the enemy, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "It is written" was His constant reply. "Suffer it thus far," says He to John the Baptist, "thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." "That give," says He to Peter, though the children be free, "for me and for thee." This historically. In John, where, as we have said, His Person shines more forth, it is more directly expressed by His mouth: "This commandment have I received of my Father," "and I know that his commandment is life eternal." "As the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." "I have kept," says He, "my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not."

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

Many of these citations are on occasions where the careful eye sees through the blessed humiliation of the Lord, the divine nature — God — the Son, only more bright and blessed, because thus hidden; as the sun, on which man's eyes cannot gaze, proves the power of its rays in giving full light through the clouds which hide and soften its power. If God humbles Himself, He still is God; it is always He who does it. "He could not be hid." This absolute obedience gave perfect grace and savor to all He did. He appeared ever as one sent. He sought the glory of the Father that sent Him. He saved whoever came to Him, because He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him: and as they would not come without the Father's drawing, their coming was His warrant for saving them, for He was to do implicitly the Father's will. But what a spirit of obedience is here! He saves whom? whomsoever the Father gives Him — the servant of His will. Does He promise glory? "It is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared of my Father." He must reward according to the Father's will. He is nothing, but to do all, to accomplish all, His Father pleased. But who

could have done this, save He who could, and He who at the same time would, in such obedience, undertake to do whatever the Father would have done? The infiniteness of the work, and capacity for it, identify themselves with the perfectness of obedience, which had no will but to do that of another. Yet was He a simple, humble, lowly man, but God's Son, in whom the Father was well pleased.

Let us now see the fitting of this humanity in grace for this work. This meat-offering of God, taken from the fruit of the earth, was of the finest wheat; that which was pure, separate, and lovely in human nature was in Jesus under all its sorrows, but in all its excellence, and excellent in its sorrows. There was no unevenness in Jesus, no predominant quality to produce the effect of giving Him a distinctive character. He was, though despised and rejected of men, the perfection of human nature. The sensibilities, firmness, decision (though this attached itself also to the principle of obedience), elevation, and calm meekness which belong to human nature, all found their perfect place in Him. In a Paul I find energy and zeal; in a Peter ardent affection; in a John tender sensibilities and abstraction of thought united to a desire to vindicate what he loved, which scarce knew limit. But the quality we have observed in Peter predominates, and characterizes him. In a Paul, blessed servant though he was, he does not repent, though he had repented. He had no rest in his spirit when he found not Titus, his brother. He goes off to Macedonia, though a door was opened in Troas. He wist not that it was the high priest. He is compelled to glory of himself. In him, in whom God was mighty towards the circumcision, we find the fear of man break through the faithfulness of his zeal. John, who would have vindicated Jesus in his zeal, knew not what manner of spirit he was of, and would have forbidden the glory of God, if a man walked not with them. Such were Paul, and Peter, and John.

But in Jesus, even as man, there was none of this unevenness. There was nothing salient in His character, because all was in perfect subjection to God in His humanity, and had its place, and did exactly its service, and then disappeared. God was glorified in it, and all was in harmony. When meekness became Him, He was meek; when indignation, who could stand before His overwhelming and withering rebuke? Tender to the chief of sinners in the time of grace; unmoved by the heartless superiority of a cold Pharisee (curious to judge who He was); when the time of judgment is come, no tears of those who wept for Him moved Him to other words than, "Weep for yourselves and your children," — words of deep compassion, but of deep subjection to the due judgment of God. The dry tree prepared itself to be burned. On the cross, when His service was finished, tender to His mother, and entrusting her, in human care, to one

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

True, the power of the Spirit did this afterwards in calling men out together in open confession, but the character and Person of Jesus did it morally. There was a vast work done (I speak not of expiation) by Him, who, as to outward result, labored in vain. Wherever there was an ear to hear, the voice of God spoke, by what Jesus was as a man, to the heart and conscience of His sheep. He came in by the door, and the porter opened, and the sheep heard His voice. The perfect humanity of Jesus, expressed in all His ways, and penetrating by the will of God, judged all that it found in man and in every heart. But this blessed subject has carried us beyond our direct object.

In a word, then, His humanity was perfect, all subject to God, all in immediate answer to His will, and the expression of it, and so necessarily in harmony. The hand that struck the chord found all in tune: all answered to the mind of Him whose thoughts of grace and holiness, of goodness, yet of judgment of evil, whose fullness of blessing in goodness were sounds of sweetness to every weary ear, and found in Christ their only expression. Every element, every faculty in His humanity, responded to the impulse which the divine will gave to it, and then ceased in a tranquillity in which self had no place. Such was Christ in human nature. While firm where need demanded, meekness was what essentially characterized Him as to contrast with others, because He was in the presence of God, His God, and all that in the midst of evil, — His voice was not heard in the street, — for joy can break forth in louder strains when all shall echo, “Praise his name, his glory.”

But this faultlessness of the human nature of our Lord attaches itself to deeper and more important sources, which are presented to us in this type negatively and positively. If every faculty thus obeyed and were the instrument of the divine impulse in its place, it is evident that the will must be right — that the spirit and principle of obedience must be its spring; for it is the action of an independent will which is the principle of sin. Christ, as a divine Person, had the title of an independent will. “The Son quickens whom he will;” but He came to do His Father’s will. His will was obedience, sinless therefore, and perfect. Leaven, in the word, is the symbol

of corruption" — the leaven of malice and wickedness." In the cake, therefore, which was to be offered as a sweet savor to God, there was no leaven: where leaven was, it could not be offered as a sweet savor to God. This is thrown into relief by the converse: there were cakes made with leaven, and it was forbidden to offer them as sweet savor, an offering made by fire. This occurred in two cases, one of which, the most important and significative, and sufficing to establish the principle, is noticed in this chapter.

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

It is important for a troubled but tender and faithful conscience to remember that Christ has died, not merely for our sins, * but for our sin; for surely this troubles a faithful conscience much more than many sins past.

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

As the cakes then, which represent the church, were baked with leaven, and could not be offered for a sweet savor, so the cake, which represented Christ, was without leaven, a sweet savor, and offering made by fire unto Jehovah. The trial of the Lord's judgment found a perfect will, and the absence of all evil, or spirit of independence. It was "thy will be done" which characterized the human nature of the Lord, filled with and animated by the fullness of the Godhead, but the man Jesus, the offering of God.

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

This leads us to another great principle presented to us in this type: namely, the cake was to be mingled with oil. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and in ourselves, born simply of the flesh, we are naturally nothing but corrupted and fallen flesh" — of the will of the flesh." Though we are born of the Spirit of God, this does not uncreate the old nature. It may attenuate to any conceivable degree its active force, and control altogether its operations; * but the nature remains unchanged. The nature of Paul was as disposed to be puffed up when he had been in the third heaven, as when he had the letter of the chief priest in his robe to destroy the name of Christ if he could. I do not say the disposition had the same power, but the disposition was as bad or worse, for it was in the presence of greater good.

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

But the will of the flesh had no part whatever in the birth of Christ. His human nature flowed as simply from the divine will as the presence of the divine upon earth. Mary, bowing in single-eyed and exquisite obedience, displays with touching beauty the submission and bowing of her heart and understanding to the revelation of God. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord Jehovah], be it unto me according to thy word." He knew no sin; His human nature itself was conceived of the Holy Ghost. That holy thing which was born of the virgin was to be called the Son of God. He was truly and thoroughly man, born of Mary, but He was man born of God. So I see this title, Son of God, applied to the three several estates of Christ: Son of

God, Creator, in Colossians, in Hebrews, and in other passages which allude to it; Son of God, as born in the world; and declared Son of God with power as risen again from the dead.

The cake * was made mingled with oil, just as the human nature of Christ had its being and character, its taste, from the Holy Ghost, of which oil is ever and the known symbol. But purity is not power, and it is in another form that spiritual power, acting in the human nature of Jesus, is expressed.

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

The cakes were to be anointed with oil; and it is written how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. It was not that anything was wanting in Jesus. In the first place, as God, He could have done all things, but He had humbled Himself, and was come to obey. Hence, only when called and anointed, He presents Himself in public, although His interview with the doctors in the temple showed His relation with the Father from the beginning.

There is a certain analogy in our case. It is a different thing to be born of God, and sealed and anointed with the Holy Ghost. The day of Pentecost, Cornelius, the believers of Samaria on whom the apostle laid their hands — all prove this, as also many passages on the subject. We are all "the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." "This spake he," says John, "of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The Holy Ghost may have produced, by a new nature, holy desires, and the love of Jesus, without the consciousness

of deliverance and power — the joy of His presence in the knowledge of the finished work of Christ. As to the Lord Jesus, we know that this second act, of anointing, was accomplished in connection with the perfectness of His Person, as it could, because He was righteous in Himself, when, after His baptism by John (in which He who knew no sin placed Himself with His people, then the remnant of Israel, in the first movement of grace in their hearts, shown in going to John, to be with them in all the path of that grace from beginning to end, its trials and its sorrows), He, sinless, was anointed by the Holy Ghost, descending in a bodily shape like a dove, and was led of the Spirit into the conflict for us, and returned conqueror in its power, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee. I say conqueror in its power; for if Jesus had repulsed Satan simply by divine power as such, firstly, there evidently could have been no conflict; and secondly, no example or encouragement for us. But the Lord repulsed him by a principle which is our duty every day — obedience, intelligent obedience; employing the word of God, and repulsing Satan with indignation the moment he openly shows himself such. * If Christ entered into His course with the testimony and joy of a Son, He entered into a course of conflict and obedience (He might bind the strong man, but He had the strong man to bind).

> [* The two first temptations (Matthew 4) were the wiles of the enemy. In the last he is openly Satan.]

So we. Joy, deliverance, love, abounding peace, the Spirit of sonship, the Father known as accepting us: such is the entrance to the Christian course, but the course we enter on is conflict and obedience: leave the latter, and we fail in the former. Satan’s effort was to separate these in Jesus. If Thou be the Son, use Thy power — make stones into bread — act by Thine own will. The answer of Jesus is, in sense, I am in the place of obedience — of servitude; I have no command. It is written, Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. I rest in My state of dependence.

It was power, then, but power used in the state and in the accomplishment of obedience. The only act of disobedience which Adam could commit he did commit; but He, who could have done all things as to power, only used His power to display more perfect service, more perfect subjection. How blessed is the picture of the Lord’s ways! and that, in the midst of the sorrows, and enduring the consequences of the disobedience, of man, of the nature He had taken in everything save sin. “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, seeing the state we are in,] in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Jesus, then, was in the power of the Spirit in conflict. Jesus was in the power of the Spirit in obedience. Jesus was in the power of the Spirit in casting out devils, and bearing all our infirmities. Jesus was also in the power of the Spirit in offering Himself without spot to God; but this belonged rather to the burnt-offering. In what He did do, and in what He did not do, He acted by the energy of the Spirit of God. Hence it is that He presents an example to us, followed with mingled energies, but by a power by which we may do greater things, if it be His will, than He — not be more perfect, but do greater things; and morally, as the apostle tells us, all things. On earth He was absolutely perfect in obedience, but by that itself He did not, and, in the moral sense, could not, do many things, which He can do, and manifest now, by His apostles and servants. For, exalted at the right hand of God, He was to manifest, even as man, power, not obedience; "Greater things than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father."

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

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

How much of our graces is presented to the acceptance of man, and consequently the flesh often mistaken for grace, or mixed with it, being judged of according to the judgment of man! But in Jesus all His graces were presented to God. True, man could, or ought to have discerned them

as the odor of the frankincense, diffusing itself around, where all was burnt to God; but it was all burnt as a sweet savor to God. And this is perfection.

How few so present their charity to God, and bring God into their charity, exercising it for and towards Him, though in behalf of man, so that they persevere nothing the less in its exercise, though the more they love, the less they be loved! it is for God's sake. So far as this is the case, it is indeed a sweet odor to God; but this is difficult: we must be much before God. This was perfectly the case with Christ; the more faithful He was, the more despised and opposed; the more meek, the less esteemed. But all this altered nothing, because He did all to God alone: with the multitude, with His disciples, or before His unjust judges, nothing altered the perfectness of His ways, because in all the circumstances all was done to God. The incense of His service and His heart, of His affections, went ever and always up, and referred themselves to God; and surely abundant frankincense, and sweet its odor, in the life of Jesus. The Lord smelled a sweet savor, and blessing flowed forth, and not the curse, for us. This was added to the meat-offering, for in truth it was in effect produced in His life by the Spirit, but always this frankincense ascended; so of His intercession, for it was the expression of His gracious love. His prayers, as the holy expression of dependence, infinitely precious and attractive to God, were all sweet odor, as frankincense, before Him. "The house was filled with the odor of the ointment." And just as sin is taking self instead of God, this was taking God instead of self, and this is perfection. And it is power too, because then circumstances have no power over self And this is perfection in going through the world. Jesus was always Himself in all circumstances; yet for that very reason we feel them all according to God — not self. We may add, too, as Satan led to one and so slavery to him, so the other is in the power and leading of the Holy Ghost.

There was yet another thing forbidden, as well as leaven, in the sacrifice — namely, honey, that which was most sweet to the natural taste, as the affections of those we love after the flesh, happy associations, and the like. It is not that these were evil. "Hast thou found honey?" says the wise man, "eat so much as is sufficient, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." When Jonathan took a little he had found in the wood, in the day of service and the energy of faith for Israel, his eyes were lightened. But it cannot enter into a sacrifice. He who could say, "Mother, behold thy son," and "Son, behold thy mother," even in the terrible moment of the cross, when His service was finished, could also say, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" * when He was in the simplest accomplishment of His service. He was a stranger to His own mother's sons, as Levi, in the blessing of Moses, the man of God — Levi, who was offered as an offering to God of the

people (<04>Numbers 8:11), “who said unto his father and his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.”

> [* In the first case in which this happens, after saying it, He goes down immediately with His disciples, and His mother <430212>John 2:12), and brethren. He could be in the midst of all that influences man naturally, yet separate from it because He was inwardly perfect. All the gospels, and personally <431926>John 19:26, show these natural relations formed of God fully owned.]

Yet another thing remains to be observed. In the burnt-offering all was burnt to God, for Christ offered Himself wholly up to God. But the human nature of Christ is the food of the priests of God; Aaron and his sons were to eat what was not burned in the fire, of the meat-offering. Christ was the true bread, come down from heaven, to give life unto the world, that we (through faith, priests and kings) may eat thereof and not die. It was holy, for Aaron and his sons alone to eat; for who indeed ever fed on Christ but those who, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, live the life of faith, and feed on the food of faith? And is not Christ the food of our souls, as sanctified to God, yea, sanctifying us also ever to God? Do not our souls recognize in the meek and humble holy One — in Him who shines as the light of human perfectness and divine grace amongst sinful men — what feeds, nourishes, and sanctifies? Cannot our souls feel what it is to be offered to God, in tracing, by the sympathy of the Spirit of Jesus in us, the life of Jesus toward God, and before men in the world? An example to us, He presents the impress of a man living to God, and draws us after Him, and that by the attraction of what He was — Himself the force which carries on in the way He trod, while our delight and joy are in it. Are not our affections occupied and assimilated in dwelling with delight on what Jesus was here below? We admire, are humbled, and become conformed to Him through grace. Head and source of this life in us, the display of its perfection in Him draws forth and develops its energies and lowliness in us. For who could be proud in fellowship with the humble Jesus? Humble, He would teach us to take the lowest place, but that He had taken it Himself, the privilege of His perfect grace. Blessed Master, may we at least be near to and hidden in Thee!

This is true, but there is a difference to be made here. In the peace-offerings there was also an eating of the Hesh of the sacrifice besides what the priests had. Those who ate were Israelites and clean, and they ate together as a convivial feast. There was a common enjoyment, fellowship, founded on the offering of the blood and of the fat to God, that is of Christ as offered to God in death for us — the sin-offerings are assimilated in this last (<030410>Leviticus 4:10, 26, 31, 35), and the partaking of those who partook of the feast was carefully connected with this. This was common and just joy,

thanksgiving for blessings, or voluntarily as rejoicing in the Lord's blessing, it was "Shalom," and was fellowship in it, the fruit of redemption and grace. The case of the meat-offering was that of one, himself consecrated to God, entering into and feeding on the perfectness of Christ Himself as offering Himself to God. The priests alone ate of it as such.

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

We must remember in this offering, as in the former, that the essential characteristic, common indeed to all, was its being offered to God. This could not be said of Adam: in his innocence he enjoyed much from God; he returned, or should have returned, thankfulness for it; but it was enjoyment and thankfulness. He was not himself an offering to God. But this was the essence of Christ's life — it was offered to God; and hence separated from all around it, essentially separated. * He was holy, therefore, and not merely innocent: for innocence is the absence of — ignorance of — evil, not separation from it. God (who knows good and evil, but is infinitely above and separated from the evil, as it is opposite to Him) is holy. Christ was holy, and not merely innocent, being consecrated in all His will to God, and

separate from the evil, and living in the energy of the Spirit of God. Also, as offered, the essence of the offering was the fine flour, oil, and frankincense, representing human nature, the Holy Ghost, and the perfume of grace. Negatively there was to be no leaven or honey: so, as to the manner, there was the mingling with oil and the anointing with oil; also, for every sacrifice, the salt of the covenant of God: here noticed, because in what concerned the grace of His human nature, what concerned man (a man offering Himself to God — not as dying, but as living, though tested even to death), it might have been supposed to be wanting, that it was as man's act just as good. But its being offered on the altar to God, burned as a sweet savor, and the three things first named, formed the substance and essence of the meat-offering.

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

The peace-offering now presents itself to our notice. It is the offering which typifies to us the communion of saints, according to the efficacy of the sacrifice, with God, with the priest who has offered it in our behalf, with one another, and with the whole body of the saints as priests to God. It comes after those which presented to us the Lord Jesus Himself in His devoting Himself to death, and His devotedness and grace in His life, but even unto death, and the testing of fire, that we may understand that all communion is based on the acceptability and sweet odor of this sacrifice; not only because the sacrifice was needed, but because therein God had all His delight.

I have already remarked that, when a sinner, that is a guilty person, approached, the sin-offering came first; for the sin must be born and put away that he might approach as qualified to do so. But, being cleansed and clean, he approaches; and so here, according to the sweet savor of the offering of God, the perfect acceptability of Christ, who knew no sin, but consecrated Himself in a world of sin to God, that God might be perfectly glorified — and His life also, that all that God was in judgment might be also glorified — glorified by man in His Person; and hence infinite favor flow forth on them that were received and that came by Him. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." He does not say here, because I have laid it down for the sheep; that was rather the sin-offering. He speaks of the positive excellence and value of His act; for in this Man wrought all perfectness. In this all the majesty and truth, the righteousness against sin, and love of God were infinitely glorified in man, though much more than a man, and, where poor estranged man had got by sin, in Him who was made sin for us. "Now is the Son of

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

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

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

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

Next, all the fat, especially of the inwards, was taken and burnt on the altar of burnt-offering to the Lord. Fat and blood were alike forbidden to be eaten. The blood was the life, and necessarily belonged essentially to God; life was from Him in an especial manner; but fat also was never to be eaten but burnt, and so offered to God. The use of this symbol, fat, is sufficiently familiar in the word. "Their heart is fat as grease." "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." "They are enclosed in their own fat, with their mouth they speak proudly." It is the energy and force of the inward will, the inwards of a man's heart. Hence, where Christ expresses His entire mortification, He declares "They could tell all His bones; and, in <19A208>Psalm 102, "By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin."

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

the midst of evil — good in the energy of offering to Him — good in perfect obedience.

If the eye of God passed, as the dove of Noah, over this earth, swept by the deluge of sin, nowhere, till Jesus was seen in it, could His eye have rested in complacency and peace; there on Him it could. Heaven, as to the expression of its satisfaction, whatever its counsels, was closed till Jesus (the second and perfect Man, the Holy One, He who offered Himself to God, coming to do His will) was on earth. The moment He presented Himself in public service, heaven opened, the Holy Ghost descended to dwell in this His one resting-place here, and the Father's voice, impossible now to be withheld, declares from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Was this object (too great, too excellent, for the silence of heaven and the Father's love) to lose its excellence and its savor in the midst of a world of sin? Far otherwise. It was there its excellency was proved.

If He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, the movement of every spring of His heart was consecrated to God. He walked in communion, honoring His Father in all — in His life and in His death. Jehovah found continual delight in Him; and above all, in Him in His death: the food of the offering was there. Such was the great principle, but the communion of our souls with this is further given to us. The fat being burnt as a burnt-offering, the consecration to God is pursued to its full point of acceptance and grace.

If we turn to the law of the offerings, we shall find that the rest was eaten. The breast was for Aaron and his sons, type of the whole church; the right shoulder for the priest that sprinkled the blood, more especially type of Christ, as the offering priest; the rest of the animal was eaten by him who presented it, and those invited by him. Thus there was identity and communion with the glory and good pleasure — with the delight — of Him to whom it was offered, with the priesthood and the altar, which were the instruments and means of the offering, with all God's priests, and among those immediately taking part.

The same practice existed among the heathen; hence the reasoning of the apostle as to eating things offered to idols. So, alluding to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the purport of which is strongly associated with this type, "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" And this was so much the case, that in the desert, when it was practicable (and the analogous order needful to maintain the principle was established in the land), no one could eat of the flesh of any animal unless he first brought it to the tabernacle as an offering. * We

indeed should eat in the name of the Lord Jesus, offering our sacrifices of thanksgivings, the calves of our lips, and so consecrate all we partake of, and ourselves in it, in communion with the Giver, and Him who secures us in it; but here it was a proper sacrifice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

But there were other circumstances we must remark. First, none but those that were clean could partake among the guests. We know that moral cleansing has taken the place of the ceremonial. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." God has put no difference between us and them, having purified their hearts by faith. Israelites then partook of the peace-offerings; and if an Israelite was unclean, through anything that defiled according to the law of God, he could not eat while his defilement continued.

Christians then, whose hearts are purified by faith, having received the word with joy, alone can worship really before God, having part in the communion of saints; and if the heart is defiled, that communion is interrupted. No person apparently defiled has title to share in the worship and communion of the church of God. It was a different thing, remark, to be not an Israelite, and not clean. He who was not an Israelite had never any part in the peace-offerings; he could not come nigh the tabernacle. Uncleanness did not prove he was no Israelite (on the contrary, this discipline was exercised on Israelites only); but the uncleanness incapacitated him from partaking, with those that were clean, in the privileges of this communion; for these peace-offerings, though enjoyed by the worshippers, belonged to the Lord (chap. 7:20, 21). The unclean had no title there. True worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. If worship and

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

Yet there was another part of this type which seemed to contradict this, but which indeed throws additional light on it. With the offerings which accompanied this sacrifice, it was ordered (chap. <3073>7:13) that leavened cakes should be offered. For though that which is unclean is to be excluded (that which can be recognized as unclean), there is always a mixture of evil in us, and so far in our worship itself. The leaven is there (man cannot be without it); it may be a very small part of the matter, not come in to the mind, as it will be when the Spirit is not grieved, but it is there where man is. Unleavened bread was there also, for Christ is there, and the Spirit of Christ in us who are leavened, for man is there.

There was another very important direction in this worship. * In the case of a vow, it might be eaten the second day after the burning of the fat — Jehovah's food of the offering; in the case of thanksgiving-offering, it was to be eaten the same day This identified the purity of the service of the worshippers with the offering of the fat to God. So is it impossible to separate true spiritual worship and communion from the perfect offering of Christ to God. The moment our worship separates itself from this, from its efficacy and the consciousness of that infinite acceptability of the offering of Christ to God — not the putting away of sins, without that we could not approach at all, but its intrinsic excellency as a burnt-offering, all burnt to God as a sweet savor ** it becomes carnal, and either a form, or the delight of the flesh. If the peace-offering was eaten separately from this offering of the fat, it was a mere carnal festivity, or a form of worship, which had no real communion with the delight and good pleasure of God, and was worse than unacceptable — it was really iniquity.

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

[** We may add of Jesus with the Father, and that in connection even with His laying down His life, but this is not our direct subject here (see <4810>John 10:17). But there, note, it is not done as for sinners, but for God.]

When the Holy Spirit leads us into real spiritual worship, it leads us into communion with God, into the presence of God; and then, necessarily, all the infinite acceptability to Him of the offering of Christ is present to our spirit. We are associated with it: it forms an integral and necessary part of our communion and worship. We cannot be in the presence of God in

communion without finding it there. It is indeed the ground of our acceptance, as of our communion.

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

There was a difference in the value of the various kinds of this offering: in the case of a vow it might be eaten the second day; in the case of thanksgiving only the first. This typified a different degree of spiritual energy. When our worship is the fruit of unfeigned and single-eyed devotedness, it can sustain itself longer, through our being filled with the Spirit, in the reality of communion, and our worship be acceptable — the savor of that sacrifice being thus longer maintained before God, who has fellowship with the joy of His people. For the energy of the Spirit maintains His joy in His people in communion acceptable to God. When, on the other hand, it is the natural consequence of blessing already conferred, it is surely acceptable as due to God, but there is not the same energy of communion. The thanks are rendered thus in communion with the Lord, but the communion passes away with the thanksgiving really offered.

Note we also, that we may begin in the Spirit and pass into the flesh in worship. Thus, for example, if I continue to sing beyond the real operation of the Spirit, which happens too often, my singing, which at the beginning was real melody in the heart to the Lord, will terminate in pleasant ideas and music, and so end in the flesh. The spiritual mind, the spiritual worshipper, will discover this at once when it happens. When it does happen, it always weakens the soul, and soon accustoms to formal worship and spiritual weakness; and then evil, through the power of the adversary, soon makes its appearance among the worshippers. The Lord keep us nigh to Himself to judge all things in His presence, for out of it we can judge nothing!

It is good to bear strongly in mind this expression, “which pertain to Jehovah” (chap. 7:20); the worship, what passes in our hearts in it, is not ours — it is God’s. God has put it there for our joy, that we may participate in the offering of Christ, His joy in Christ; but the moment we make it ours, we desecrate it. Hence what remained was burnt in the fire; hence what was unclean must have nothing to do with it; hence the necessity of associating it

with the fat burnt to Jehovah, that it may be really Christ in us, and so true communion, the giving forth of Christ, on whom our souls feed, towards God.

Let us remember that all our worship pertains to God, that it is the expression of the excellency of Christ in us, and so our joy, as by one Spirit, with God. He in the Father, we in Him, and He in us, is the marvelous chain of union which exists in grace as well as in glory: our worship is the outgoings and joy of heart founded on this, towards God, by Christ. So, as Himself ministering in this, the Lord says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." He surely is in joy and knows redemption is accomplished. May we be in tune with our heavenly Guide! He shall well conduct our praises, and agreeably to the Father. His ear shall be attentive when He hears this voice lead us. What perfect and deep experience of what is acceptable before God must He have, who, in redemption, has presented all according to God's mind! His mind is the expression of all that is agreeable to the Father, and He leads us, taught by Himself, though imperfect and feeble in it, in the same acceptableness. We have the mind of Christ.

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

There is added to the directions of this sacrifice a commandment to eat neither fat nor blood. This evidently finds its place here, inasmuch as the peace-offerings were the sacrifices where the worshippers ate a great part. But from what we have said, the signification is evident; the life and inward energies of the heart belonged wholly to God. Life belonged to God and was to be consecrated to God; to Him alone it belonged or could belong. Life spent or taken by another was high treason against the title of God. So as to fat — that which characterized no ordinary functions, as the movements of a limb, or the like, but the energy of the nature itself expressing itself — belonged exclusively to God. Christ alone rendered it to God, because He alone offered to God what was due; and hence the burning of the fat in these and other offerings represented His offering Himself a sweet savor to God. But it was not less true that all belonged to God and belongs to God: man could not appropriate it to his use. Use might be made of it in the case of a beast dying or torn; but whenever man of his will took the life of a beast, he must recognize the title of God, and submit his will, and own the will of God as alone having claim.

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

In the case of the sin-offering, there was the same principle of identity with the victim by laying on of hands; but he who came, came not as a worshipper, but as a sinner; not as clean for communion with the Lord, but as having guilt upon him; and instead of his being identified with the acceptability of the victim, though that became subsequently true, the victim became identified with his guilt and unacceptableness, bore his sins and was treated accordingly. This was completely the case where the sin-offering was purely such. I have added, “though that became subsequently true,” because in many of the sin-offerings a certain part identified them with the acceptableness of Christ, which, in Him who united in His Person the virtue of all the sacrifices, could never be lost sight of. The distinction between the identity of the victim with the sin of the guilty, and the identity of the worshipper with the acceptance of the victim, marks the difference of these sacrifices and of the double aspect of the work of Christ very clearly.

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

The two other remarkable examples of sin-offering were the day of expiation, and the red heifer, which demand an examination apart. The circumstances of the offering were simple. In the case of the high priest and the body of the people sinning, it is evident that all communion was interrupted. It was not merely the restoration of the individual to communion which was needed, but the restoration of communion between

God and the whole people; not the forming a relation (the day of atonement effected that), but the re-establishment of interrupted communion. Hence the blood was sprinkled before the veil seven times for the perfect restoration of this communion, and the blood also put on the horns of the altar of incense.

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

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

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

God judges sins according to the responsibility of those who are judged. But in the sovereign work of grace God judges of sin in those who approach Him, not according to what becomes man, but what becomes Himself. He dwelt in the midst of Israel, and Israel must be judged according to what becomes God's presence: our privileges are the measure of our responsibility. Men admit to their society what becomes themselves, and do not admit the base and corrupt, allowing their evil, because it is suited to their estate so to act. And is God alone to profane His presence by acting otherwise? Is all the evil which man's corruption leads him into to find its sanction only in the presence of God? No; God must (in order to make us happy by His presence) judge evil, all evil, according to His presence, so as to exclude it from it. Has the moral stupidity, which is the effect of sin, made us ignorant of it in ourselves? Is God to become blind because sin has made us so — to dishonor Himself and make others miserable, and all holy joy impossible everywhere, even in His presence; to let pass the evil? Impossible. No; all is judged, and judged in the believer according to the place grace has brought him into.

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

I have now to remark certain differences in these sin-offerings full of interest to us in the detail.

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

One of the sacrifices, of which I do not enter into the details here, was abstractly and altogether viewed in this light of sin, and was slain and burnt, fat and blood (part of the blood having been first sprinkled at the door of the tabernacle), and every part of it, without the camp. This was the red heifer.

In the three other sacrifices, which concerned the whole people, the bodies were burnt indeed without the camp, but the connection with the perfect acceptance of Christ in His work, as offering Himself, was preserved, in the burning of the fat on the altar of burnt-offering, and thus gave us the full sense of how He had been made sin indeed, but that it was He who knew no sin, and whose offering in His most inmost thoughts and nature was in the trial of God's judgment perfectly agreeable. But though the fat was burnt on the altar to maintain this association and the unity of the sacrifice of Christ, yet, maintaining the general character and purpose of the diversity, it is not habitually called * a sweet savor to Jehovah.

[* There is one case only where it is, Leviticus 4:31.]

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

Such also is the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. It is for ever on the mercy-seat, efficacious as the ground of the relationship between us and God. The other sin-offerings referred to were to restore the communion of those who were in this relationship. Hence, in Leviticus 4:1-21, the blood was sprinkled on the altar of incense, which was the symbol of the exercise of this communion; the residue poured out, as habitually in the sacrifices, at the altar of burnt-offering — the place of accepted sacrifice; the body, as we have seen, was burnt. In the case of the offerings for the sin and trespass of an individual the communion of the body was not directly in question or interrupted, but the individual was deprived of the enjoyment of it. Hence the altar of incense was not defiled or incapacitated, as it were, in its use; on the contrary it was continually used. The blood of these sacrifices, therefore, was put on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, which was always the

place of individual approach. Here, by Christ and the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ once offered, every individual soul approaches; and, being thus accepted, enjoys all the blessing and the privileges of which the church at large is continually in possession. But for us the veil is rent, and as to conscience of guilt we are perfected for ever. If our walk be defiled, water by the word restores the communion of our souls, and that with the Father and with His Son.

To speak of resprinkling of blood consequently upsets the real position of the Christian, and throws him back on his own imperfect state as to acceptance and righteousness. There may be a repeated remedy, but one who is on that ground drops the question of holiness, and makes continuous righteousness in Christ uncertain. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,” is unknown in such cases; as is also that the worshipper once purged should have no more conscience of sins. Were it so, as the apostle urges, Christ must have suffered often. Without shedding of blood is no remission.

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

The priest had not committed the sin; on the contrary, he had made atonement for it by the blood which he had sprinkled, but he identified himself completely with it. Thus Christ, giving us the most complete consolation — Himself spotless, and who has made the atonement, yet identified Himself with all our faults and sins, as the worshipper in the peace-offering was identified with the acceptance of the sacrifice. Only that now, the one offering having been made once for all, if sin is in question, it is in advocacy on high that He now takes it up, and in connection with communion, not with imputation. There is nothing more to do with sacrifice or blood sprinkling. His service is founded on it.

The fat was burnt on the altar, where the priest was identified with the sin which was on the offerer of the victim, but transferred to it. It was lost, so to speak, and gone in the sacrifice. He who drew nigh came with confession and humiliation, but, as regarded guilt and judgment, it was taken up by the priest through the victim; and, atonement having been made, reached not the

judgment-seat of God, so as further to affect the relation between God and the offender. Yet here it was perpetual repetition. Communion was restored in the acceptance of the sacrifice, as the sin which hindered the communion was entirely taken away, or served only to renew (in a heart humbled into the dust, and annihilated before the goodness of God) the communion founded on goodness become infinitely more precious, and established on the renewed sense of the riches and security of that mediation there typically exhibited, but which Christ has accomplished once for all, eternally for us, as sacrifice, and makes good as to the blessings flowing from it continually on high; not to change the mind of God to us, but to secure our present communion and enjoyment, in spite of our miseries and faults, in the presence, the glory, and the love of Him who changes not. *

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

Some interesting circumstances remain to be observed. It is remarkable that nothing was so stamped with the character of holiness, of entire, real separation to God, as the sin-offering. In the other cases, perfect acceptance, a sweet savor, and in some cases our leavened cakes, are found therewith in the use of them; but all passed in the natural delight, so to speak, which God took in what was perfect and infinitely excellent, though it supposed sin and judgment to be there; but here the most remarkable and exact sanctions of its holiness were enjoined (Leviticus 6:26-28). There was nothing in the whole work of Jesus which so marked His entire and perfect separation to God His positive holiness, as His bearing sin. He who knew no sin alone could be made sin, and the act itself was the most utter separation to God conceivable, yea, an act which no thought of ours can fathom, to bear all, and to His glory. It was a total consecration of Himself, at all cost, to God’s glory; as God, indeed, could accept nothing else. And the victim must have been as perfect as the self-offering was.

As a sacrifice then for sins, and as made sin, Christ is specially holy; as indeed, now in the power of this sacrifice, a Priest present before God,

making intercession, He is “holy, harmless, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens.” Yet, so truly was it a bearing of sins, and viewed as made sin, that he who carried the goat before his letting loose, and he that gathered the ashes of the red heifer, and sprinkled the water of separation, were unclean until even, and must wash to come into the camp. Thus are these two great truths in the sin-offering of Christ distinctly presented to us in these sacrifices. For, indeed, how can we conceive a greater separation to God, in Christ, than His offering Himself as a victim for sin? And, on the other hand, had He not really born our sins in all their evil, He could not have put them away really in the judgment.

Blessed for ever be His name who has done it, and may we ever learn more His perfectness in doing it!

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

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

Of the other sacrifices, the meat-offering and the sin-offering, the priest ate. The first pictures the saint in his priestly character feeding on the perfectness of Christ; the last, Christ, and even those who are His, as priests, in devoted love and in sympathy with others, identifying themselves with their sin and with the work of Christ for that sin. To Him alone it was, of course, to bear that sin; but founded on His work our hearts can take it up in a priestly way before God. They are connected in grace with it according to the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ; they enjoy the grace of Christ therein. Christ entered into it directly for us, we in grace into what He did. This is, however, a solemn thing. It is only as priests that we can participate in it, and in the consciousness of what it means. The people ate of the peace-offerings,

which, though they were holy, did not require that nearness to God. It was the joy of the communion of believers, based on the redemption and the acceptance of Christ. Therefore the directions for these of offerings follow those given for the sacrifices for sin and trespass, although the peace-offering comes before the sin-offering in the order of the sacrifices, because, in the former, it required to be a priest to partake of them. There are things which we do as priests; there are others which we do as simple believers.

# NUMBERS

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

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

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

The first thing to be noticed is, that God numbers His people exactly, and arranges them, once thus recognized, around His tabernacle: sweet thought, to be thus recognized and placed around God Himself! But here it had no reference to calling by faith, but to families, and households, and tribes. That order was carefully maintained when encamped at rest, or on their march; but it was the order of a nation and its tribes. God dwelt there, but the unity of the body, or of the Spirit — union in any sense had no place.

Three tribes on each side of the court kept the tabernacle of Jehovah. Levi alone was excepted, in order to be consecrated to the service of God: therefore the tribe of Levi encamped according to their families immediately around the court. Moses, Aaron, and the priests were placed opposite the entrance whereby God was approached. The least things in the word

deserve to be noticed. Psalm 80 is entirely opened by the position of the tribes. The spirit of the psalmist asks, in the last days of the desolation of Israel, for God to lead them and to manifest His power as He did when He led them through the wilderness; he asks for the power of His presence on the ark of testimony, as God manifested it when it was said, at the moment when Israel set forward, “Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered.” Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were the three tribes nearest the ark in the camp of Israel; that is why it is said, in verse 2 of the Psalm, “before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.”

In the setting forward of the camp, the order given was that the tabernacle, surrounded by the Levites, should be in the midst of the tribes, as it was when the camp was at rest (chap. 2:17). It was in the midst of them as of an army that was its guard, as the rallying-point of worship and approach when the camp was at rest. They kept the charge of the Lord.

In **CHAPTER** 10 we shall find that another arrangement took place as a matter of fact: of this, in its place.

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

The Levites were firstfruits offered to God, for they were instead of the firstborn in whom God had taken Israel to Himself, when He smote the firstborn of the Egyptians.

Thus it is that the church * is, as the firstfruits of the creatures of God, holy to the Lord. The number of the firstborn being greater than that of the Levites, those that were over were redeemed, as a sign that they belonged to God, and the Levites became God’s possession for His service (vers. 12, 13). It is the same with regard to the church: it belongs wholly to God to serve Him down here.

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

But, besides, the Levites were entirely given to Aaron the high priest; for the service of the church, or of its members, is wholly dependent on Christ in the presence of God, and has no other object but that which concerns Him, and that which is connected with, and flows from the place and service which He Himself renders to God in the true tabernacle, carrying out in service here the ends for which He is in the holy place up there; but directly connected with the sanctuary — that is for us heaven, for we belong to

heaven, and our walk and all our service is referred to, and characterized by our connection with it. Our conversation (living association) is in heaven; we purify ourselves as He is pure, and are called to walk worthy of God, who has called to His own kingdom and glory, worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Only, the veil being rent, we are much more fully connected with that than the Levites were even in figure. The service of the saints has no value (on the contrary, it is sin), except as it is united to the priesthood (that is to Christ on high, in the presence of God for us, with whom we, indeed, are also associated in this nearness, priests by grace); and hence all is accomplished in direct reference to Him in that heavenly character.

In all its details, consequently, our service is absolutely good for nothing, if it be not linked with our communion with the Lord and with the priesthood of Christ. Christ is "a Son over his own house." "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." The Holy Ghost gives the capacity and the gift for service; but in the exercise of this capacity and of this gift, we are the servants of Christ.

Thus, as regards our service, we have these three principles:

**1,** we are redeemed, delivered from the judgments, under which are the enemies of God, being taken from the midst of those enemies;

**2,** as a consequence of this first fact, we belong absolutely to God; bought with a price, we are no longer our own, but God's, to glorify Him in our bodies which are His;

**3,** we are entirely given to Christ, who is the Head of the house of God, the Priest, for the service of His tabernacle.

Blessed bondage, happy self-renunciation, true deliverance from a world of sin! Service is rendered in dependence on Christ, and in the communion of the Lord: it is linked to the priesthood and flows from and is connected with Himself, and the place where He is, and with which He has connected our hopes, our lives, and the affections of our hearts. We serve from, and in view of that: "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

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

We may remark here, that with regard to that which is most elevated in the calling of the church, all her members are one. The priests, the high priest excepted, accomplished, all equally or together, the service of the offerings to God. And so it is with the church; all its members equally draw near unto God, and are in the same relationship with Him. (A priest acting for another Israelite who brought an offering, or who had sinned, represented rather Christ Himself).

The order of the service of the Levites, on the other hand, was according to the sovereignty of God, who put each one in his place. Thus, in the service of the church, the greatest differences are found, and each one has his own place assigned him.

The same thing will likewise, I believe, take place in the glory (compare <490401>Ephesians 4; <461201>1 Corinthians 12). All are conformed to the likeness of the Son; but as each has been filled with the Holy Ghost for service, and thus according to the counsels of God, they — to whom it is given of the Father to sit on the right hand or on the left — are over ten cities or five. All enter together into the joy of their Lord. We are all brethren, having only one Master. But the Master gives grace to each according to His own will, according to the counsels of God the Father. He who denies brotherly unity denies the sole authority of the Master. He who denies the diversity of services equally denies the authority of the Master who disposes of His servants as He pleases, and chooses them according to His wisdom and His divine rights.

Next in order come the arrangements prescribed for the carrying of the things which the tabernacle contained, as well as their coverings, when the camp journeyed in the wilderness. I shall point out what appears to be the typical meaning of these prescribed ordinances. This is full of interest and of practical importance.

After the instructions intended to teach us how it is given to us to draw near God, the connection between the manifestations of God in Christ, and our walk here below, are for us what is most essential.

Now, this last subject is the one treated of in type, in the arrangements made for the carriage of the chief utensils destined for the service of God. When they were in their place, while the camp rested, they were uncovered. Those which were shut up within the tabernacle had reference to heaven; the altar and the laver were outside, before coming to it.

In the wilderness, these utensils put on certain characters, one of them especially; but others also, in certain cases. I consider them, therefore, as the

manifestation of certain relationships existing between the walk of the Christian, and various manifestations of God in Christ. *

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

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

We have seen, in these skins, that practical and watchful holiness down here which keeps itself from the evil to which we are liable in passing through the wilderness. However, when there is an immediate connection with what God is in heaven itself (and it is thus that He Himself was manifested in Christ), the entirely heavenly character, which results therefrom, manifests itself outside.

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

After the ark comes the table of shewbread; it was a figure of Christ in the divine perfection of justice and holiness, according to the power of the eternal Spirit, in connection with the perfection of human administration, which manifests itself in the number twelve and in the loaves, of which the twelve tribes, and the twelve apostles, were the expression. Here the heavenly covering was placed immediately upon the golden table; the part properly divine put on the heavenly character. Upon this covering were put the utensils and the loaves, which were covered over with a second covering of scarlet (that is, as it appears to me, human glory and splendor). * This glory and this splendor were of God, but they were human. Over all were

the badgers' skins to preserve the whole from evil. This external protection is always needful for any one, save the Person of Christ. Christ was assuredly sheltered from evil; but it was in an internal and deeper manner. That which was heavenly was seen in Him at the first glance by those who had eyes to see: "the second man is the Lord from heaven."

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

As regards us, we have within ourselves that which is heavenly; but we must keep it carefully, with a vigilance most decided, and commensurate with the evil we are passing through, and from which it is of consequence we should keep ourselves. Therefore Christ, in His relationship with the government of the world in Israel in the age to come, will put on, in principle, that which is here represented by the badgers' skins, which, in the case of the ark, were inside. There will be in Him the divine character, then the heavenly, then the perfection of human government covered over with the brightness of the glory. In His passage in the wilderness, all this was guarded by a power which, in the wisdom of God, repelled all evil. In the manifestation of the kingdom it will be in the judicial exercise of power. But here we treat of the wilderness. The principle is the same, the repelling of evil, of all injury to the holy thing entrusted to be guarded; only one is moral and spiritual power, the other judicial (see <19A101>Psalm 101).

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

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

With regard to the brazen altar it was different. Its covering was a purple cloth, the royal color. If we suffer, we shall reign. There is a connection between the cross and the crown upon the earth and in heaven. Thus was it with Christ, the King of the Jews, according to the superscription written on the cross; and the very throne of God was the answer to His sufferings,

inasmuch as He was the burnt-offering, offered according to the power of the eternal Spirit acting in man, according to the exigency of the divine majesty. * But what was thus crowned was perfection itself; that which was being accomplished in man, according to the energy of the eternal Spirit, was also divine; so that the Lord could say, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.”

[* The comparison of <1900>Psalms 19, <1900>20, <1900>21, <1900>22 is, under this point of view, most interesting. Psalm 19 contains testimonies of the creation and the law; Psalm 20 presents Messiah suffering, but externally, so that man can take an interest in Him; Psalm 21 Messiah exalted, and, as a consequence, vengeance striking His enemies who had rejected Him; Psalm 22 His sufferings as forsaken by God Himself. This is the expression of Christ alone, whilst in Psalms 20, 21 the Jewish remnant were speaking of His outward sufferings. There is no vengeance in connection with those sufferings consequent on His being forsaken of God, for it was expiation; there is nothing but blessing, which the mouth of the Savior announces, and to which He Himself responded by praising in the midst of His saints. This blessing will extend to the ends of the earth during the millennium.]

However, that which was divine in the act, was divine in the sense of the eternal Spirit acting in man, while the Godhead Itself was the source of it, and on that title it would claim the glory of the Godhead. The circumstances of the death of Jesus were consequent upon His humanity — a truth most precious to us. He was crucified through weakness; He was delivered into the hands of the Gentiles; His throat was dried up, whilst He waited on His God. He was perfect in all these things. They were manifested outwardly, seen of men: it was man. He who could look within saw Him who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God.

Thus all that related to the service was placed on purple; the altar was under this covering. The badgers’ skins here, as always, were spread over all. *

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

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

Every defilement was to be purged out.

God took knowledge of the wrong done there against a brother. If this be always true, it is the more so when applied to the wrong done to Him, who has not been ashamed to call us His brethren. When the trespass could not be recompensed to the person who had suffered the wrong, or to his kinsman, it was due to God in the person of the priest, beside the sin-offering. In God's camp no wrong could be committed without amends being made for it.

Then comes the question of jealousy. If the faithfulness of Israel, the church, or an individual, to God or to Christ, be questioned, there must be the trial of it. It seems to me that the dust of the tabernacle was the power of death in God's presence, fatal to the natural man, but precious, as the death of sin, for him who has life. The water is the power of the Holy Ghost acting by the word on the conscience.

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

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

The church would do well to consider how far she has given herself to another. There are some, assuredly, amongst its members who have not done it in heart. If Christ did not discover the iniquity, and cause it to be judged, He would be, so to speak, identified with the iniquity of the bride, and thus defiled thereby (ver. 31); He will therefore surely do so What is here said of the church may be equally said of each one of its members: remembering here also, that the question is one, not of salvation, but of the walk down here, the walk in the wilderness being ever the subject of this book. * Let us also observe that the soul, or the church, can, in other respects, show a zeal, an extraordinary devotedness, which are indeed sincere, whilst it falls into a fault which it conceals from itself up to a certain point. But nothing can counterbalance unfaithfulness to one's husband.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> [* <6110>1 Corinthians 11:10.]

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

should have followed Him; but alas! she has taken strong-drink; she has eaten and drunk with the drunken, and has begun to smite the servants of the house.

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

If we have devoted ourselves to the Lord in a way which is pleasing in His sight, enjoyment follows this devotedness in the measure of the testimony which is rendered to Him. God is with His servant according to His call; but it is a secret between His servant and Himself, though the external effects are seen by others. If we have failed in this separateness, we must begin all afresh: divine influence and power in the work are lost. There may be nothing amiss in other respects; we may arise to shake ourselves, like Samson, but we have lost our strength without being aware of it. God is no longer with us. The case of Samson is an extreme but a solemn one; for it may be that our strength has placed us in the presence of evil, and then, if God be with us, His magnificent glory manifests itself; but if not with us, the enemy has the sad opportunity of glorying over one long known as a champion for God, and apparently over God Himself. In this second alternative the inward secret, the true strength of separation unto God, was lost.

Let us beware, in ordinary things, of the first step that would separate us from inward holiness, and that separation of heart to Him which gives us His secret, light from above on all that is around; for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. If grace has called us to separation for an extraordinary service in anything whatever, let us keep ourselves from any lack of obedience to the word of the cross, whereby we are crucified to the world, sin, and the law. *

> [* These are the three things to which the cross is applied in the Epistle to the Galatians.]

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

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

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

This separateness and this self-denial are not for ever. Even Christ will not always be a Nazarite. He will know fulness of joy with God and His own. He will say, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” It is by the alone power of the Spirit that we are separated from that which is evil, and often even from that which is natural, to be vessels of service and enjoyment, a testimony to God in the midst of evil. The time will come when, evil being removed, we shall be able to gratify our nature, but it will be a new one; a time in which the operation of the power of the Holy Spirit will only produce joy, and when everything surrounding us will be in communion with us. Then Christ will take a place which it was impossible for Him to take heretofore, although He was ever the perfect sociable man, perfectly accessible to sinners because He was thoroughly separated from them, and set apart for God inwardly, and had denied Himself, * to live only by the words of God.

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

Such is the life of God here below. That which He has created cannot be bad. God forbid we should think it! Such an assertion is a sure sign of the latter days. Christ could think about His mother with tenderness, when the work of His soul on the cross was done. But the Holy Spirit comes in as a power foreign to this life, and takes up man to make him go through it according to that power; so that, the more man is a stranger to it himself, the more he is able to show, and does indeed show, sympathy to those who are there according to God. Anything else is only monkish. If we are truly free within, we can sympathise with that which is outside; if we are not so, we shall become monks, with the vain hope of obtaining this freedom.

Lastly, when the Nazarite vow was fulfilled, all the sacrifices were offered, and the hair of the head of his separation was burnt in the fire which consumed the sacrifice of the peace-offerings: a type of the full communion

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

Let us now speak of the ways of God when the Nazarite vow is ended. Then the result of the work of Christ will be produced; all the varied efficacy of His sacrifice will be acknowledged; His people will enter into the communion of His joy; wine will be taken with joy. Jesus Himself awaits that time. I believe this specially applies to His people here below, to the Jewish remnant in the latter days. Their partaking of the Holy Ghost will be joy and delight. Something similar, however, awaits us, but in a still better way. So we have this joy by anticipation up to a certain point; for the Holy Spirit produces these two things, the joy of communion, and separation in loneliness for the service of God. It is a little what the apostle means in these words to the Corinthians, “Death worketh in us, but life in you.” However, it can always be said of all Christians, “I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.”

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

Here ends this part of the book. The camp, arranged according to God’s order, is placed under His blessing. * Thereupon the princes of the people offer a free-will-offering to Jehovah, for the service of the sanctuary and the dedication of the altar according to the number of the tribes. This was done with a common understanding, each offering the same, and as to the wagons; jointly not the service of the sanctuary, but the united devotedness and free-will-offerings of the people for the service and consecration of the altar when the people came to God. It was done in tribes; they were Israel’s gifts in the finitely perfect unity of the twelvenone wanting in the orderly unity, and as a whole as that completeness stood before God in that day.

Then we have the form of the communications of Jehovah to Moses to instruct him in the way. We see that it is in the tabernacle from between the cherubim. It is not now a law to the people from Sinai, a covenant, but the regulation of a people in connection with God.

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

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

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

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

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

The children of Levi belonged to Jehovah as His redeemed, having been saved, when He judged sin, and themselves offered as an offering to Jehovah. The laying on of hands identified with the victim the person who did so. If it were an offering for sin, the offering was identified with the sinner in his sin; if it were a burnt-offering, the offerer was identified with the value of the consecration to God's glory of the victim in respect of sin. 4556Romans 15:16 is an allusion to this consecration of the Levites, and considers the church as thus offered to God from among the Gentiles. The Israelites having also laid their hands upon the Levites, the whole people were, so to speak, identified in this consecration with them, as an offering made by them to Jehovah, so that the Levites represented them before Him.

We find here again, what we have already seen, that the Levites were given to Aaron and his sons, as the church is given to Christ, the true Priest and Son over the house of God, to be used in the service of the house. They were first offered by Israel to Jehovah for His service by Aaron the priest (ver. 11); it was a wave-offering (tenupha); that is, they were presented before the Lord as consecrated to Him. Then (ver. 13) they were set before Aaron and his sons, and so under their hand given to the Lord, wholly given to Him instead of the firstborn (vers. 16-19). How solemn and perfect is the offering up of the servant of the Lord to Him, according to the purification of the sanctuary and all the value and true character of Christ's offering of Himself to God, and the divine judgment of sin. * The passover, the memorial of redemption, and in consequence the symbol of the unity ** of the people of God, as an assembly redeemed by Him, is obligatory during the journey through the wilderness. + Only God makes a provision, in grace and forbearance, for those who were not able to keep it according to His will, to whom it had reference.

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

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

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

But these provisions of forbearance and grace kept continually present the idea of a redeemed people and one under the direct fatherly government of God. Besides this we have the precious declaration that God Himself conducted His people by His presence. At His commandment they pitched; at His commandment they journeyed. They kept the charge of Jehovah, according to the commandment of Jehovah. God grant that we, who have His Spirit, may thus be led in all things, to stay or to go entirely under His immediate direction! If we are near God in His communion, we shall be guided by His eye; if not, we shall be guided by His eternal providence, as horses, and mules, with bits and bridles, that we may not stumble.

**CHAPTER** 10 speaks of the silver trumpets which served for calling the assembly of the people, and for the journeying of the camps, but which serve also for other purposes. It was the testimony of God, rendered publicly, with two chief ends in view; to gather the people, and to make them journey. It is so indeed, practically; the testimony of God gathers His people around Him, and makes them go forward. The testimony of God was the sign of His intervention, whilst, at the same time, its result was to produce it. The priests who, in communion with their head, were to be in the intimacy of the thoughts of God, sounded the trumpets when needed.

All was thus done according to communion with God in His sanctuary. After the people were brought into the land, if war arose, they sounded an alarm: they proclaimed the testimony of God, without being afraid, and God remembered His people and interfered. So with us, we need never fear the attack of the enemy; instead of being frightened, let us give a faithful testimony, in answer to which God has pledged Himself to come in in power. Let us not fear: in nothing terrified by our adversaries.

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

At length the people are called to take the first stage of their journey. The order followed in the march differs from that which had been prescribed, in this, that the tabernacle, with its curtains, went after the first three tribes, that it might be set up to receive the ark, which followed the second division.

Still this was merely a detail in the arrangements, to have all ready when the ark arrived. But God appears in a remarkable manner in grace, outside the whole order He had prescribed; for it is the ark itself which precedes the whole camp. Moses had asked a child of the wilderness to be to them instead of eyes; but what man does not care to do, God takes upon Himself. He comes out of the place which He had taken in the midst of the tribes, to be taken care of, so to speak, and honored there, and makes Himself, in some sort, their servant, seeking a place where they might rest in the trackless desert.

It was not in Canaan, but a place in the wilderness, where the Lord went a three days' journey to seek a rest for them. A beautiful picture of the tender and precious grace of Him who, if He makes us pass through the wilderness for our good, does not fail to be there with us, and who takes care, in putting out His sheep, to go before them, and to solace them with His love. Mighty leader of His people by the way, He is their joy and their glory when He comes to rest in their midst!

This closes the divinely instituted order of the camp and the grace that led them through the wilderness. Compare Psalm 132:8, where God at the close of Israel's history (anticipating David) arises into His rest. Psalm 68 is God's intervention to establish the rest.

We are now brought to turn our thoughts in another directionto see the conduct of the people in the wilderness, and alas! what is it except a history of unfaithfulness and rebellion? Let us add, however, that it is also that of the forbearance and the grace of God. It is an extremely humbling and instructive picture. We shall briefly review the different forms of unbelief which are here presented to us.

The first thing we find, after the sweet manifestation of the love of God, is the murmuring of the people. They complain of fatigue, where God is seeking a resting-place for them. God chastens them. Humbled, they cry unto Moses, and upon his intercession the chastening is removed; but their heart remains alienated from the Lord, and, seduced by the mixed multitude who accompanied them, and to whom Canaan was not a land of promise, they get wearied with the manna. How often does Christ, the bread of life, not suffice a heart not in communion with God! The heart seeks elsewhere for its nourishment; it wants something else; it remembers what the flesh used to enjoy in the world, whilst it forgets the bondage in which it was held. It knows no more the power of the word"he that cometh to me shall never hunger."

God grants the people the object of their desires: instead of being ashamed when they see that God is equally able to satisfy them in the wilderness,

they greedily gather the quails, and the wrath of God falls upon this wicked people.

Moses, wearied of them as of a heavy burden, complains, in his turn, of his glorious position. God relieves him of the weight of his charge, but not without upbraiding him; and He adjoins seventy persons to him to help him in bearing it. The Spirit of God acts in two of them, though they do not present themselves to receive it where Moses was: they prophesy in the camp. Joshua, jealous of the glory of his master, wishes them to be silenced. But if Moses, * unable to bear the weight of his glory, has been obliged to share it with others, and, up to a certain point, lose part of it, he shows at least, in this circumstance, the depth of the grace that was in him. He does not envy those who prophesy in the camp. “Would God,” he says, “that all were prophets!”

> [* Remark here the difference even in the blessed apostle’s faith, comparing chapter 11:12 here and <4019>Galatians 4:19: see also <4712>2 Corinthians 11:28. It is possible that this failure of Moses under the pressure of the weight of the people, giving occasion to the prophesying in the camp, was the occasion also of the rising up of Miriam and Aaron against him. At any rate God maintained the authority of His servant, who, as to himself, held his ground by unfeigned meekness, and leaving all that concerned himself to God.]

There is something very beautiful in the spirit which animated this servant of God. Finally, whatever may be God’s arrangements, He is sovereign in the dispensations of His Spirit.

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

Aaron resumes his place of intercessor, and speaks humbly to Moses (a figure, I think, of the humiliation of Israel, grounded on the value of the intercession of Christ, identifying Himself with the position of the people). God’s answer is, that Miriam should be humbled and chastened, shut out,

for a time, from intercourse with Him, then restored to favor again. The people wait for her restoration. Let us remember that the Lord here recalls this fact, that the most glorious position for Moses was that when he was separated from the peoplewhen he pitched his tent without the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation or meeting. The people had but too much forgotten this. When the members of the church also, in the thought of making themselves spiritual, take advantage of their glory and position as prophets and priests (characters which do indeed belong to them), to disown the rights of Christ, as king in Jeshurun, having authority over the house of God, there is room for considering whether they are not guilty of the rebellion here spoken of. For my part, I believe they are.

Next, the pleasant land is despised. I shall here call the attention of the reader to some points mentioned on this subject in other parts of the Bible. *

[* See Deuteronomy 1:20-23.]

Jehovah has brought the people to the borders of the land; Moses tells them to go up. The people propose sending spies; Moses consents. It seems that they had God’s sanction, for they went according to the word of the Lord. But this request was prompted by the weakness and unbelief of the people. There are many things commanded of God, and which we are bound to do as soon as they are the object of a command from Him, in the result of which His ways are displayed, which, however, are only owing to our lack of faith. The consequence of it is, that the result abundantly confirms the faith of the faithful, of the remnant; but unbelief reaps what it has sown. So it is in this case. First, the report brought to Moses is in a right spirit; but the difficulties immediately present themselves, and unbelief measures them with man, instead of with God. Then the witnesses draw their words from the people’s feelings, and express a judgment founded on their unbelief.

Having thus entirely departed in heart from the Lord, and fallen into the current of the unbelief of the people, through their own, they belie the convictions they had formed when enjoying the sight of the goodness of Jehovah, and come to declare that the land even is bad, and end with justifying themselves by complaining of God. For now it is no longer Moses who has brought them here, it is God Himself; they accuse Him of it. Moreover, they cannot contain their rage against those whose faithful testimony condemns their unbelief.

How often is this the case, that the difficulties which draw out the unbelief of the heart lead to speak evil of the position to which we have been divinely called, and of which once we had tasted the blessedness! All flowed from forgetfulness of God: Was He a grasshopper, in comparison with the sons

of Anak? What matter if walls were high, if they fell down at the blowing of a ram's horn? But now God Himself interferes. They will be dealt with according to their faith; they shall perish in the wilderness, according to their wish. The faithful ones and the children will alone be brought into the land; but not without undergoing, in their march, the consequences of the unbelief of the mass. However, other hopes and other consolations will be their portion.

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

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

After all this unbelief of the people, when God had declared that the earth should be filled with His glory, by the cutting off of the rebellious congregation, and when one might have supposed they had forfeited the land for ever, it is perfectly beautiful, in chapter 15, to see the Lord returning into the perfect rest of His fore-ordained counsels, and of His immutable being, and giving instructions relative to the time when the people shall have entered the land He has given them. It speaks of the offerings of righteousness they are invited to bring to Him of their free-will, and of the wine of joy which was to accompany these offerings; and as this is grace, the love of God reaches out beyond Israel, and, bringing the stranger near to His people, He makes one law for both. The firstfruits belong to Him. The sins of ignorance are forgiven by means of the sacrifice required by the perfectness of the ways of God. The sin committed presumptuously alone brings destruction. God orders them to put upon the fringe of the borders of their garments a riband of blue, that they may remember His commandments, and be kept from that which would render them profane. The heavenly principle must enter into the minutest details of life, even into those that are nearest to the earth, if we wish to escape the serious evils

which bring down the judgment of God. The introduction of the stranger in this chapter is of the highest interest, as a testimony to grace. But we have not, as yet, seen the final apostasy which brings down the judgment at the very moment when it is accomplished.

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

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

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

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

In a word, it was open rebellion and audacity presenting itself before God Himself. God soon put an end to their pretensions, for "Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?" Moses appeals to Him. Dathan and Abiram take advantage of the effect of the unbelief of the assembly, who might have been in Canaan already, to throw the blame of it upon Moses. As to Core, Moses announces that God will show who is holy and

whom He has chosen. Core and the two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly are consumed; Dathan, Abiram, and theirs swallowed up. But the spirit of rebellion had laid hold of the whole assembly. On the morrow they murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying: “Ye have killed the people of the Lord”a convenient name to aggrandise themselves. Now, the priesthood and the intercession of Aaron are made evident. Aaron, with a censer, stands between the dead and the living, and the plague is stayed.

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

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

Moses, then, in that character of authority which strikes in righteousness, is powerless as regards bringing the people into Canaan. It is priesthood, which the rebellion had so despised, which is invested with authority over His rebellious people. It is Christ the priest, in His grace and goodness, who leads us through the wilderness. This is the conclusion we come to at the end of the narrative we have of the journeying of the people of God.

From chapter 17 to 20 this subject is set forth with the circumstances relative to it. First, the authority of Aaron is established by signs shown by the power of God, in his rod, put with the others near Godthe source of all authority. The power of life and blessing displays itself with a rapidity which makes manifest the presence of God. The buds, the flowers, and the fruit grow on dry wood. Priesthood, living and victorious over death,

through divine efficacy, * must lead the people; God’s authority is entrusted to it.

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

The carnal people, always astray, bold just before in the presence of the majesty of God, are afraid of His presence now that His grace manifests itself, and say that they cannot draw near Him. This opens the way for still deeper views on the place that priesthood holds in general.

In **CHAPTER** 18 the place of priesthood is clearly defined, as well as that of the Levites. The priests alone draw near to the holy place; they alone are allowed this intimacy with God. But, in consequence of their position, there are sins, iniquities which they are called to bear, as an effect of this proximity, which would not be remarked among those who are outside. That which is unbecoming the presence and the sanctuary of God does not become His priests. They bear the iniquity of the holy place. If the people disobeyed the law, doubtless they were punished; but that which defiled the sanctuary fell upon Aaron and his sons. What, then, is the measure of holiness given to the children of Godalone true priests? It is the purification of the sanctuary itself, not what is fit for man, but what is fit for God. The service of the Levites, and the Levites themselves were given as a gift to the priests. Priesthood also was a pure gift to Aaron and his sons. Because of the anointing, the most holy things were given them to eat, which was a special privilege of the priests. The same thing is true with regard to us.

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

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

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

All that the Spirit of Christ works to the glory of God, even in His members, and still more what He has done in Christ Himself, is the food of the soul of the household of God, and strengthens them. Do not our souls enjoy those firstfruits, the best of the new wine and the wheatthe firstfruits of that noble harvest of God, the produce of His seed on the soil of His election? Yes, we enjoy them in thinking of them. But the sin-offering, the trespass-offerings, the meat-offerings, all that in which we share in spirit in the deep work of Christ, is only eaten in the character and the spirit of a priest.

We must, according to the efficacy of this work of Christ, enter into the spirit in which He presents Himself after His sacrifice, moved by His perfect love, in the presence of the Most Highenter into the sentiments of love, of devotedness in the consciousness of the holiness of God; in a word, into the feelings with which He presents Himself as a priest before Him, in order to connect, by love and the efficacy of His offering, the holiness of God, with the blessing of him who has sinnedto realise that which is precious in Christ in that work, to share in it (for so it is) in grace. And, effectively, that only takes place in the most holy place, in the presence of God, where He appears for us.

In fine, whether the joys of the family of God’s house, or this holy participation in spirit in the work of Christ, all we have just been speaking about belongs to the priesthood. Even the Levites were to recognise in all that God gave them as strangers in the land of promise, the rights and the authority of the priests.

Now, if we make the distinction between the two, all believers are priests; ministers, in their capacity of ministers, are only Levites. Their service (besides that which is towards the world, a character which the dispensation did not bear, and which, therefore, is not the subject here) is to minister to the priestly joy and service of the saints with God. Our service will meet with reward in heaven, our priestly place will be nearness to God and joy in Him.

It is evident that partaking in spirit (to partake in it in reality is of course impossible) in the sacrifice of Christ for sin, in eating of it as a priest, is a

very holy thing, a privilege enjoyed in a very holy place; everything is specially holiness here.

But if, on the one hand, priesthood must lead the people through the wilderness, and if Moses's rod of authority cannot do this, if it can only smite; on the other, there must be a provision connected with it for removing the defilements taking place during the journey, that the communion of the people with God may not be interrupted. That is the reason why the sacrifice of the heifer is placed here, apart from all the others, because it was prescribed in order to meet the defilements of the wilderness.

But if the consideration of Christ (even though it be Christ offered for sin, and the participation in His priestly work, in connection with that sacrifice) was a most holy thing realised in the communion of the most holy place; being occupied with that sin, even in a brother, and that to purify him, defiled even those who were not guilty of it.

These are the subjects of chapter 19. What follows is the ordinance given on this occasion. To touch a dead body was indeed being defiled with sin; for sin is here considered under the point of view of defilement which precluded the entrance into the court of the tabernacle. Christ is presented in the red heifer as unspotted by sin, and as never having born the yoke of it either; but He is led forth without the camp, as being wholly a sacrifice for sin. The priest who brought the heifer did not kill it; but it was killed in his presence. He was there to take knowledge of the deed.

The death of Christ is never the act of priesthood. The heifer was completely burned without the camp, even its blood, except that which was sprinkled directly before the tabernacle of the congregation, that is, where the people were to meet God. There the blood was sprinkled seven times (because it was there that God met with His people), a perfect testimony in the eyes of God to the atonement made for sin. They had access there according to the value of this blood.

The priest threw into the fire cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet (that is, all that was of man, and his human glory in the world). "From the cedar down to the hyssop," is the expression of nature from her highest elevation to her lowest depth. Scarlet is external glory (the world, if you please). The whole was burned in the fire which consumed Christ, the sacrifice for sin.

Then, if anybody contracted defilement, though it were merely through neglect, in whatever way it might be, God took account of the defilement. And this is a solemn and important fact: God provides for cleansing, but in no case can tolerate anything in His presence unsuited to it. It might seem

hard in an inevitable case, as one dying suddenly in the tent. But it was to show that for His presence God judges of what is suited to His presence. The man was defiled and he could not go into God’s tabernacle.

To cleanse the defiled person, they took some running water, into which they put the ashes of the heifer, and the man was sprinkled on the third and on the seventh days; then he was clean: signifying that the Spirit of God, without applying anew the blood to the soul.(that in the type had been sprinkled once for all when the people met God), takes the sufferings of Christ (the proof that sin and all that is of the natural man and of the world have been consumed for us in His expiatory death), and applies them to it.

It is the proof, the intimate conviction, that nothing is nor can be imputed. It was in this respect wholly done away in the sacrifice, whose ashes (the witness that it was consumed) are now applied. But it produces upon the heart the deeply painful conviction that it has got defiled, notwithstanding redemption, and by the sins for which Christ has suffered in accomplishing it. We have found our will and pleasure, if only for a moment, in what was the cause of His pain; and this in the face of His sufferings for sin, but, alas! in forgetfulness of themeven for that sin the motions of which we yield to so lightly now: a feeling much deeper than that of having sins imputed. For it is in reality the new man, in his best feelings, who judges by the Spirit and according to God, and who takes knowledge of the sufferings of Christ and of sin, as seen in Him on the cross.

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

We may remark that, as it is merely the needed purifying for the way, nothing else is noticed; no sacrifices, as in the case of the leper. There it was drawing nigh to God, according to the value of Christ’s work, when cleansed from sin. Here it is the practical restoration of the soul inwardly. There is no sprinkling with blood: the purifying is by water, Christ’s death being fully brought in in its power by the Holy Ghost. The details show the exactness of God, as to these defilements though He cleanses us from them. They show also that any one who has to do with the sin of another, though it be in the way of duty to cleanse it, is defiled; not as the guilty

person, it is true, but we cannot touch sin without being defiled. The value of grace and of priesthood is also made evident.

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

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

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

Now under the priesthood we have only to speak according to the living power of this priesthood, which God has established, and there is an answer in grace to all our wants. The fruit and the blossom would be spoiled, if I may so speak, by smiting with it. It is not the thought presented in it. Moses did not sanctify God; he did not sufficiently value the character which God had assumed; he did not respect God in the position He had deigned to take; but God sanctified Himself the more, by acting in grace and quenching the thirst of the people in spite of this. Moses glorified himself, and before God he was abased. He did not know how to abandon the position he had been placed in, to have sympathy with the thoughts of the abounding, sovereign,

and good grace of his God, which surpassed in compassion the justice and authority under which He had placed His people. God, however, does not forsake His poor servant. How insignificant we are in comparison with His grace! The grace of priesthood can alone bring such a people as we are through the wilderness. *

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

But the wandering of Israel is drawing towards its close; and we now come to the enemies who oppose its ending, and the entering of the people into the desired land, that land of promise, so long sought after. Edom, full of jealousy, will not let the way be shortened; Israel turns away from him. There are people who oppose us, and from whom it is right to turn away, on account of some external relation existing between them and ourselves, though they are animated with an implacable hatred: we must know how to discern them. God will judge them in His own time; our hand must not be upon them. As to the enemies of God, they must be our enemies; where the power of the enemy is evident, it is God's war. But we meet in the way with those who are descended from the sources of promise, although after the flesh, and who are characterised by the flesh; we leave them to God: it is His prerogative to judge of them. The occasion for war is not apparent; it would not be legitimate for the people. Now Aaron also departs. Service in the end takes another character. *

[* With his death the wilderness history closes. Provision for defilement on the way had been given. Moses clings to law, and does not avail himself of Aaron's rod (priesthood grace), and on this footing cannot take the people into the land. We have this order in this transition period: provision for defilement on the way (chap. 19); the priesthood given up, and so no entrance into the land; then the perpetual hatred of the elder brother, the outward fleshly descendant of the risen man in relentless opposition to the called people. Aaron dies, and wilderness grace closes; the power of Satan overcome, and through weariness (their own fault and want of faith) the deadliness of sin comes in, and the great remedy; Arad's power being resisted is destroyed. But from chapter 20:1 to 21:4, it is the state of the soul, the heart gone back to Egypt; Christ (the manna) is despised. The power of the enemy when they were faithful was nothing. Unfaithfulness, murmuring against God, brings them into the sting of death. If they despise the bread of life, they get the fatal sting of death in judgment. There was healing by the look of faith on Christ lifted up for us. This is not priesthood for the journey, but an absolute remedy for death by sin. It is in general what God is for the people outside wilderness care. Then the refreshings of the Spirit and wordthe digged well. We have, further, victorious power over all their enemies, though outside Jordan and uncircumcised. It is God for His people

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

The question is not here to conduct the people with patience through the wilderness, where the flesh manifested itself; but there are enemies and difficulties to be met; for there are difficulties distinct from the conduct and the patience of life. The Israelites fight with the Canaanites in the south, though they have not got into the land. But the king of the Canaanites has been informed of their coming by the presence of the spies. This was another fruit of the want of boldness of faith which had caused them to be sent. How little we gain by the prudence of unbelief! It gives occasion to the power and attacks of the enemy.

However, though these enemies seem to prevail at first when Israel allow themselves to be attacked, when the Israelites are ready utterly to destroy them God delivers them up to them. Take notice of this. But the people, wearied, murmur again, for the way was long. They were fighting with the Canaanites without yet possessing the land; the question was only about destroying their power and yet possessing nothing. It was the power of evil and that only, and resisted and put down as such. It was for God's sake and His glory only. On their murmurs God interferes and makes them feel all the power of the enemy, the old serpent. Christ made sin for us is the only perfectly efficacious remedy. The mere sight of that wonder procures healing, for the efficacy is in the thing itself before God. Faith sees Christ made sin for us.

The question is not here about leading the people, but of answering the judgment of God, either final or in the way of chastening, and the power of the enemy against us in the face of that judgment, and even as the effect of that judgment. In such a case the question is between our souls and God; it is a question of death, or simply of the death of Jesus. We must submit to that, as being in an irremediable condition, and, submitting to God's righteousness, look to His ordinancethat is, to Christ lifted up for us.

Next, Israel goes forward, but they are not yet in the land. God relieves and refreshes them of His own free grace, without their murmuring. He gathers the people. Israel celebrates anew, close by the land, the wells which are found in the wilderness. They can now say themselves, "Spring up, O well"; no more rock to smite, no more murmurings near the land. Life at the end of their course is no longer the question: it is salvation from the deadly wound of the serpent. They are healed; they walk and drink with joy and songs of praise. They dugfor their activity displayed itself in the presence of the grace of Godand the water sprang up in the wilderness.

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

Moab also opposes in vain. Now they are in the plains of Moab, having only Jordan between them and the land of their rest. But had they a right to enter there? If the enemy cannot oppose by force, he will try another way, by putting under the curse the people who well deserved it.

Balak sends for Balaam. The grand question in this touching scene is this, “Can Satan succeed in cursing the people of God, so as to prevent their entrance into the land of promise?” * It is not merely a question of redemption and of the joy of redemption at the beginning of their course, but in the end, when all their unfaithfulness has been manifestedtheir unfaithfulness even after the Lord has brought them to Himself. Can Satan succeed then? No.

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

When Moses, in those same plains, has to say, with regard to their conduct towards God, “Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you,” (and indeed, they had been excessively froward, a most stiff-necked people; do we not know this well?), God says by the mouth of Balaam, the involuntary witness of the truth, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.” What a testimony! What wonderful grace! What perfection in the ways of God! God sees aright; He makes no mistakes. He speaks the truth according to the perfectness of His

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

In His own dealings with the people He will see everything, take knowledge of everything; but with the accuser it is a question of righteousness. God only sees this, that, according to the counsels of His grace, He has given a ransom; the sins of His people have been atoned for. He could not in justice see those sins. The mouth of the accuser is therefore obliged to confess that there are none, and that there is no power of the enemy against Jacob. And the ground is clearly taught: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, what hath God wrought? Not said of God, but of Israel; and not what hath Israel wrought, but what hath God wrought? Israel had the place, but the work was God's work. This is very perfect.

What is peculiarly blessed and comforting in this is, that God acts and judges from His own thoughts. From beginning to end He has had thoughts about us; He has done what was needed to reconcile all His ways, in the accomplishment of them, with eternal righteousness; but He has these thoughts, and acts towards us according to them. It is these faith apprehends, accepts, and builds on. Hence joy and peace; while the presence of God in the midst of an accepted people to whom a new nature has been given, and His judging all there secures practically the holiness which He cannot dispense with, or judges departure from it, so as to vindicate His name. But here it is God acting, judging, in spite of all, according to His own thoughts.

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

We shall say a few words as to his typical character. Let us pursue the history. Balak seeks him. Balaam wishes to inquire of Jehovah either from instinctive fear, or to attach, in the sight of others, the importance of the name of Jehovah to what he does. Effectively God does interfere, and even goes first to Balaam. He takes the matter in hand, and has power over the unjust mind of Balaam against his will; for Balaam has no understanding of the mind of God. God said, "Thou shalt not go: they are blessed." What is his answer? "Jehovah refuseth to give me leave to go." He would gladly have gone; his heart was set upon the reward of Balak; but he fears before God. The blessing of the people does not come into his mind; he is a

complete stranger to the generosity of graceinsensible to the thought of their being blessed of God, of delight in His blessing on His people.

Consequently, when there is a renewal of the temptation, he says that he cannot transgress the commandment of Jehovah his God: he puts on piety, and, in reality, he was not entirely without sincerity, for God held him close, and, indeed, allowed all this. But, at the same time, Balaam induces the messengers of Balak to tarry and see what God would say further. What did he want to know more about an invitation to curse that people, who, God had told him, were blessed? He had no sympathy whatever with the thoughts of the heart of God, none with Himself; he was governed by the fear of consequences. Otherwise, he would have been so happy in the blessing of the people, that he would have shuddered at the idea of cursing what God had blessed. God, however, will use him, to give a glorious testimony on behalf of His people, whilst, at the same time, condemning the crooked ways of the prophet, for they were indeed crooked. He shows him his perverseness, his folly, to be more stupid than the ass he was riding; but, at the same time, He makes him go on his way.

This meeting in the way does serve to force him, through fear, to utter faithfully what God should put into his mouth. Balaam goes to meethe does not say what. It is plain (chap. 24:1) that he had mixed enchantments with the profession of the name of Jehovah, and that he had thus been the enemy's instrument, with the credit of Jehovah's namea deeply solemn case. He was thus going to meet the mysterious power which came there, and Elohim came to meet him. God restrains and hinders on the behalf of His people all power of the enemy, and causes Balaam to say what He wishes to be said. Balaam looks upon Israel from above, and utters his prophecy.

This prophecy is divided into four parts. It has Israel for its object; but, as to the principle of it, it applies also to the assembly.

The first prophecy announces the separation of the people from the world. "The people shall dwell alone," separated unto God, a people not reckoned among the nations.

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

Balaam, seeing at last that God was bent upon blessing, yields to the power of God, goes no longer to the meeting of enchantments, and the Spirit of

God comes upon him. The justification of the people being now declared, the Spirit of God can bear testimony to them, instead of confining His testimony to the thoughts and intentions of God. Balaam sees them from above; seeing the vision of the Almighty, he sees the people according to the thoughts of the Spirit of God, as seen in the mind of God from above. The eyes of the prophet are open. And remark, here, that it is neither the anticipation of Canaan, nor Israel in their permanent habitations: Balaam turns his face towards the wilderness and sees Israel abiding in their tents. There the Spirit sees them, and declares the beauty and the order of the people in the eyes of God. The water of the refreshing of God was also always with them there; they were as trees that Jehovah had planted, therefore will they be great amongst the nations, a source of power and joy. They drink from the sources of God, and pour out from them abundantly for others. God had brought them out of Egypt, they were the work of God? and the power of God was to go with them against their enemies.

We get here, thirdly, then, beauty, a freshness the sources of which do not dry up, and power (what the Spirit does for the assembly).

Then, in the fourth place is the coming of Christ, the Star of Jacob, who crowns the glory of the people. Only, as it comes in the midst of Israel, it is in judgment. With regard to us, it will be to take us hence, in order to make us participate in the joy of His presence, to the marriage of the Lamb.

In a word, we see the separation of the people from the world; their justification; their order, their beauty, as planted by God near the everlasting sources of the river of God; and then the coming of Christ. The prophecy is perfectly beautiful. Remark, too, the prophecies, in the renewed effort to bring a curse on them, are not repetitions. Each such effort brings out something more of what God had in His mind for His people! for blessing. It is not without interest to see how Balak uses all human and superstitious means to bring the curse on them. He had no idea of God, and it was with God he had to do.

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

discouraged or satisfied with evil. This vision of God removes these two thoughts at once.

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

A few words more on the position of Balaam.

At the end of a dispensation based on any knowledge whatever of God, when faith is lost and profession retained, this last obtains a renown of which men glory (as now, of the name of Christianity). Satan uses it: power is sought from him. They go to meet enchantments; because, whilst glorying in the revealed name of God, they seek to satisfy their own lusts; and the importance of the name of God is tacked on to the work of the devil. However, God is acknowledged up to a certain point. They fear Him, and He may interfere; but the system is diabolical, under the name of the Lord, with a partial fear of the Lord, and a dread which recognises Him as an object of fear. The people of God are preserved; but it is a very solemn thought, and it is truly the history of the christian system.

At last, the unhappy Balaam, whose heart was in the bond of iniquity, seeing that he cannot curse by the power of Satan, seeks to frustrate the blessing of God by leading the people into sin and idolatry. As regards the people, he is but too successful. God sends chastisement; and, while the people are humbling themselves, the enormity of the evil excites the indignation of Phinehas, who, acting with an energy suitable to the circumstances, stops the plague and acquires a perpetual priesthood in his family.

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

In the beginning of chapter 27 are details upon the order according to which they were to inherit. Moses is favored with a view of the land, and the people are placed under the conduct of Joshua to enter therein. Moses and Aaron had led them through the wilderness; but here it is a new scene, and Joshua (as to the assembly, Christ in the power of His Spirit) is appointed to conquer the land. But he is dependent on the priesthood in his progress onward; as effectively the presence and the operations of the Holy Spirit are dependent on the presence of Christ in the holy place.

In chapters 28 and 29 we have the worship of the people, the sacrifices which are the meat of God. We shall dwell a little on these chapters. They are not the ways of God, and the gathering together the people to Himself, as in chapter 23 of Leviticus, but the offerings themselves as offered to God and especially those of sweet savor, made by fire, except that which was purely accessory.

First, there are lambs for the regular daily service; that is, for that of the morning and evening, and, for that of the sabbath, two lambs; then, bullocks and goats also for the extraordinary feasts. The lamb has the most simple meaning; it is the constant presentation of the value of Christ and so of believers in Him, the true Lamb of Godthe sweet savor of His sacrifice ascending continually, by day and by night; and when the true sabbath is come, its efficacy will only ascend more abundantly, as a matter of intelligence and application. This can be said as regards God Himself, as to the increased display of the fruit of the travail of the Savior's soul.

The bullocks seem to me to represent rather the energy of the devotedness of persons in their estimate of that sacrifice. It was the largest thing that could be offered: still having regard to the sacrifice of Christ and the price set upon it.

The ram was always a victim of consecration, or of amends for some violation of the rights of consecration.

As to the number of these two last kinds, there were in general two bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs; an additional bullock and ram the first day of the seventh month; one bullock, one ram, seven lambs the tenth of that month; and the decreasing number of the feast of tabernacles.

It appears to me that all this gives the testimony of the worship rendered to God upon the earth.

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

If the worship of the people was in connection with the resurrection of Christ (chap. [illegible]28:17), it was the same thing; so in the case of the work of the Spirit in gathering together (ver. 26). It was the exercise of power on the

part of God which made an opportunity for worship; the answer on the part of the people was the same.

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

In the former case, then, that is at the feast of the first day of the seventh month, there was one bullock added as witness of a special and peculiar (but at the same time partial) work, but the general testimony to the value of Christ's sacrifice on which it depended was maintained.

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

The feast of tabernacles introduced another order of ideas, at least a new development of those ideas; it is the coming dispensation. There is no perfection in that which is offered joyfully of one's own free will to God; but that is nearly realisedthirteen bullocks are offered. The millennium will bring upon earth a joy of worship and thanksgiving, which (Satan being bound, and the blessing of the reign of Christ being spread everywhere) will be, externally at least, almost perfect.

The two rams manifest the testimony of abundant consecration, and perhaps outwardly the introduction of Jews and Gentiles (not consecrated in one body, but) adequate witnesses upon earth in a distinct manner of this consecration to God.

Then the testimony of the perfectness of the work of Christ being full, upon earth, either for Israel or for the blessing of the Gentiles, its complete efficacy was manifested upon earth; and the question here is only about this manifestation upon earth (understood by faith, however). There were fourteen lambs.

There is, however, declension in this devotedness of joy and testimony towards God; it does not cease from being complete, it is true; but its abundance gradually ceases to manifest itself as it did at the beginning. The thing, as established of God, remains in its perfection (ver. 32). This was found in the seventh day, which completed the part purely earthly.

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

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

War is found in the wilderness (though it is not characteristic of it) whenever we fall into the snares the enemy there lays for us. There are always conflicts in the heavenly places in order to the enjoyment of the things promised there. But in the wilderness it is patience which is in exercise.

But if there be failure, if we fall into idolatry, if we commit fornication with the world by yielding to its baits, if in any way whatever we contract friendship with the world in the desert, we make wars for ourselves, without having even the advantage of acquiring, in this kind of warfare, any spiritual ground. God is obliged to make our relations with the world undergo a total change. If we had not formed intimacies with them, we should not have had that trouble; but, since as our friends they deceive us, we must become enemies. Having no relations whatever with them is our proper and peaceful position.

How often we must act the part of enemies with the world, because we have sought to have to do with them as friends, and they were a snare to our

souls! However, God gives a complete victory as soon as we treat them as foes: only, all that seduced must be utterly destroyed. There must be nothing spared, no concession.

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

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

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

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

If God numbers His people name by name, He shows, at the same time, His government and His faithfulness; for, though He had kept them, as a people, yet there were none of the first numbering left, save Caleb and Joshua. He remembers, also, all their long journey through the wilderness; each stage is before His eyes and in His memory; and now He lays down,

in principle, the possession of the land by the people, and the total destruction of the inhabitants, who were to be entirely driven away and not to abide in the midst of Israel: else those who were left would be a torment for the people, and God also would do unto Israel, as He had done to those nations.

It is a dangerous charity, then, that which spares the enemies of God, or rather which spares itself, through unbelief, in its conflicts with them, and which is soon led to form with them connections that bring the judgment which those enemies have inherited, and themselves also deserved.

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

Six of their cities were to be refuges for those who had unintentionally committed murder; a precious type of God's dealings with Israel, who, in their ignorance, killed the Christ. In this sense, God judges them to be innocent. They are guilty of blood which they could not bear, but guilty in their ignorance, like Saul himself, who is a striking figure, as one born out of due time (ektroma, 1 Corinthians 15:8), of this same position. Such a murderer, however, remains out of his possession until the death of the priest living in those days.

And so it will be with regard to Israel. As long as Christ retains His actual priesthood above, Israel will remain out of their possession, but under the safe keeping of God. The servants of God at least, who have no inheritance, serve as a refuge to them, and understand their position, and recognise them as being under the keeping of God. When this priesthood above, such as it now is, ends, Israel will return into their possession. If they did before, it would be to pass over the blood of Christ, as if the shedding of it were no matter, and the land would be defiled thereby. Now, the actual position of Christ is always a testimony to this rejection, and of His death in the midst of the people.

God maintains the inheritance, however, as He has appointed it (chap. 36).

This last part, then, of the book presents, not the passage itself through the desert, but the relationship between that position, and the possession of the promises and of the rest which follows. It is in the plains of Moab that Moses bore testimony, and a true testimony, to the perverseness of the people; but where God justified them, showing His counsels of grace, in taking their side against the enemy, without even their knowledge, and pursued all the designs of His grace and of His determinate purpose for the

complete establishment of His people in the land He had promised them. Blessed be His name! Happy are we in being allowed to study His ways!

# DEUTERONOMY

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

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

> [* After Genesis and the earlier chapters of Exodus, there is very little of which the object is historical in the previous books of Moses. And even in Genesis and the beginning of Exodus principles and types are the most important aspect of what is related. As to the history of Israel the apostle tells us this expressly in 1 Corinthians 10:11. And this appreciation of the character of these books greatly aids us in understanding them. There is no proof that one sacrifice was offered possibly the fixed ones were; but Amos, quoted by Stephen, would say the contrary. Those born in the wilderness were not circumcised, and could not rightly keep the passover.]

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

But this division requires more development, which will much aid our understanding of the book. The first part recounts their history, and this as insisting on the unity of an invisible God, their obligation to Jehovah who has called them, through redemption, to be with Him. This closes with

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

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

That which strikes one in the first chapters is, the pains that Jehovah takes to present all possible motives to that poor people to lead them to obedience, in order that they may be blessed. These things, which ought at least to have touched the heart, served, alas! only to prove its hardness, and to show that, if man is to be blessed, God must give him a new heart, as it is written in the chapter which closes the second part of His exhortations to obedience: "Yet Jehovah hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (chap. 29:4).

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

**CHAPTER** 29, which is the last of the second division, ends, consequently, by saying, "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God: but those

things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

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

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

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

He begins with the narrative of what had occurred since the sojourn of the children of Israel at Sinai; and Moses reminds them of the commandment to leave that place and to go to the mount of the Amorites, * to go up and possess the land. They get there, and, discouraged by the spies, they will not go up; then, trying to do so without God, they are smitten before their enemies. Passing by the borders of Esau and Moab, God gives them the land of Sihon and of Og.

> [* It is interesting to put together the second and third verses. For an eleven days' journey Israel took forty years. Alas! how often is it thus with us, owing to our unfaithfulness.]

We learn too here that, though sanctioned by God, the sending the spies was the effect of unbelief among the peoplean instructive lesson. God may allow, and so far sanction a course, wise humanly, in His waysHis government, which yet bears the fruit of the unbelief which is at the root of it.

In a word, Moses recalls to them, in general, what had taken place in the journey which led to their entrance into the land of which they are to take possessionthe patience and the goodness of God.

In reminding them of Horeb, he insists on the privilege they had enjoyed in nearness to God, who Himself had spoken to them out of the midst of the fire, when they saw no similitude; on the authority of the wordits majestyexcluding thus all thought of idolatry. He shows them that all that were of full age had perished, as a consequence of their unbelief; that he himself could not enter into that good land; that God is a jealous God, a consuming fire; and that, if they made any graven image, they would utterly perish from off the land they were about to enter, and would be scattered amongst the nations andleft to serve the gods they had loved; that, nevertheless, they should find God if they sought Him with all their heart, for He is a merciful God, who would not forsake them; that if Sinai had been the brightness of His majesty, it was also true that such a God of majesty had never vouchsafed to come so near to a people, elect and chosen for their fathers' sakes. Such is the basis of the government of this people.

Moses sets apart three cities of refuge, as a token of possession, on the part of God, of what was on this side Jordan. These four chapters are introductory.

In **CHAPTER** 5 Moses reminds them of the ten commandments given in Horeb; and it is to be remarked, that the deliverance out of Egypt (not the rest of God after the work of creation) is the reason he gives for the sabbath: it became a sign of His covenant with Israel (compare Ezekiel 20). These were the basis of a regular covenant; and God here, as we have seen, governs the people in the land of promise according to their responsibility, as a jealous God. Mercy, beyond law, only comes in in chapter 30. There had been mercy (chap. 10) in giving them back the law, and placing them under sparing mercy Still. These chapters give us the great principles of Gods government in the land; chapters 12-29 the terms of it.

He reminds them of their fear in the presence of the Lord engages them, in chapter 6, to love God with all their heart, and exhorts them to remember His words in every way, and to keep them, when they should enjoy the land, having nothing to do with other gods.

When they should have cast out their enemies, as Jehovah had spoken, and when their children should ask the meaning of the ordinances, they were to tell them of the deliverances and of the signs wrought in Egypt.

They were to destroy every vestige of false gods, being a people holy to Jehovah. Nor did God set His love upon them on account of their own importance, but because of the election and love of God. He assures them that their faithfulness would also be the channel of blessing, for God would recompense them according to their ways. Neither ought they to fear, after all the signs they had seen. Thus they were a people separate to Jehovah. As

to Him all was sovereign grace, but sure faithfulness. As to them the ground they were on was the government of God; hence all then depended on their holding fast to Jehovah, and faithful obedience.

In **CHAPTER** 8, in the most instructive and touching language as to the care God had taken of them, while keeping them in dependence, and His object in doing so, he also brings to mind the dealings of God with them by the way, * as a motive; and how God had humbled and had exercised them, lest, through the enjoyment of the blessings of the good land into which He was bringing them, they should be puffed up (for it was God who gave them the needed strength); that otherwise God would destroy them, as He had destroyed the nations. On the other hand (chap. 9), He reminds them of their continual perverseness, in order to show them that it was not on account of their righteousness, but because of the wickedness of the nations, that God drove them out before them. **

[* See particularly verses 2-4; 15, 16.]

[* It is important to keep this in mind. Israel was the rod in God's hand to get rid of intolerable evil. Therefore also they were not to spare.]

This he applies to them (chap. 10), reminding them that God had renewed the tables of the law, urging them to circumcise their hearts, to care for the stranger, remembering how God had enlarged them since they went down as strangers to Egypt.

Then, in chapter 11, he brings to their remembrance the judgments upon the Egyptians, and those upon Dathan and Abiram; and declares to them the beauty and excellency of the land into which they are about to enter, a land upon which the eyes of Jehovah ever rested; * and, lastly, he puts before them the blessing and the curse which there awaited them, according to their conduct, when brought in; charging them to keep carefully the commandments of the Lord, and to teach them to their children. And it is added, that, by keeping the commandments of God, they would be able to take possession, according to the full extent of the promise.

[* The terms in which this is expressed present a perfectly beautiful contrast between the carefulness of man in seeking for blessing, and the grace from above.]

But here all depends on their obedience to this conditional covenant which made them Jehovah's, whose exclusively they were to be; sovereign restoring grace does not come till chapter 30.

The second division begins with chapter 12, and contains the statutes and ordinances they were bound to observe. It is not a repetition of the old ordinances, but what specially referred to their conduct in the land, that they

might keep it and be blessed in it. It is a covenant, or the conditions of their relationship with God, and of the enjoyment of His promises, added to what had been said before (see chap. [5201]29:1).

The ordinances tended in general to this, that they were a people belonging to Jehovah, and that they were to give up every other relationship in order to be His; and keep themselves from all that could seduce them to form such relationships, or defile them in those which they had with Jehovah. At the same time, directions are given as to the details of the maintenance of those relationships. One thing specially characterises this part: a fixed place where Jehovah would put His name to which they were to go up to worship.

But in all this, and in the whole book, this point is treated as a question of a direct relationship of the people itself with God. The priests are, in general, mentioned, more as being the objects of the care of the people when in the land, according to ordinances already given. The people were to behave in such-and-such a way towards them; but the relationship is immediate between the people and God.

The first principle laid down to confirm these relationships is the choice of a place as the center of their exercise. They were to go thither with all their offerings; they might eat flesh elsewherewithout the blood; but the consecrated things could only be eaten in the place chosen of God. They were not to forget the Levites. They were not even to inquire about the ways of those who had been driven out of the land.

If the signs of a prophet, who would entice them to serve other gods, came to pass, or if a relative, or the beloved of their souls, enticed them, such were to be put to death; if any of a city, the whole city was to be reduced to a heap of stones. No relationship with any but with the true God was to be allowedno forbearance toward that which ensnared them to follow another.

**CHAPTER** 14 forbids that the people, as being the children of the living God, should imitate the profane customs which indicated the devotedness of idolaters to the impure beings they worshipped. God had chosen Israel for Himself. Neither were they to defile themselves by eating abominable things. They were a holy people. The tithes and all the firstfruits were to be offered to God.

Thus consecrated, each one might eat them in the place where God had put His name. The same command had been given (chap. 12) with regard to the place where they were to be eaten, with the addition that the children, menservants, and maidservants, might partake of them, applying it also to the vows, the free-will-offerings and the heave-offering. These ordinances are very remarkable. *

[* It is generally explained that there was a double tithe; that is, that this does not refer to the regular tithe paid to the Levites, as ordered in the other places in the law, and that the Levitical tithes remained as they were according to the previous prescriptions of the law; and it is to be remarked they were to be locally paid to the Levites, not where Jehovah had placed His name. Two years they carried the different offerings to the place chosen of Jehovah, and ate and rejoiced, but the third, invited the Levite and the poor at home. Tobit 1:7 gives us historically all these different tithes and offerings; only it appears that, the ten tribes being in rebellion and apostasy, pious people carried the Levitical tithes to Jerusalem. <3004>Amos 4:4 shows. there was some special habit of tithing every third year, then at Bethel. At any rate what characterises Deuteronomy is their enjoying God's goodness together, and making the poor enjoy it with them, Levites and strangers; while priests, though named, are on these points wholly ignored (see chap. <5126>12:6, 7, 11, 12, 17, 18; <5142>14:22-28). The priests' portion is in chapter <5818>18:3, 4. But firstlings and firstfruits in chapter 12 are not the same word; nor is chapter <5143>14:23. But the whole tone of Deuteronomy is fellowship and enjoyment only before the Lord, not priestly or altar service.]

Another, found at the end of chapter 14, may be added here. The tithe of the third year was to be laid up within their gates, and the Levite, the fatherless, and the stranger, were to come and eat of it; and he who did thus would be blessed of Jehovah in all the work of his hands.

Here everything was sanctified, as having been presented to Jehovah. There was thus the recognition, on the one hand, that the people were His, on the other, that all they had was of Him; but in giving Him back what He had given them, they enjoyed, in fellowship with Him, and their families, the things common to God and the people, given by Him, offered to Him, and enjoyed in His presence in communion one with another, God Himself partaking of them, for the whole was offered to Him.

It was not here the priests opening out a way for the people to draw near to God: God was honored by the offering. God enjoyed the piety of the people, and the people themselves offered with joy. Seated before God Himself, in the joy of communion with Him, as at the same table, it was the people who enjoyed the privilege.

In the case of the tithe of the third year, it is not the family joy of the people with God, but rather the grace that brought enjoyment to those who were strangers or in want, and to the servants of God who had no inheritance. It was within their gates that this took place. They had the privilege of acting in grace from Jehovah, in communicating to His poor what He had given them. They did not go to the house of Jehovah, but they invited the widow, the orphan, and the Levite, to their house to rejoice, and Jehovah blessed them. The immediate relationship of the people with God in family fellowship and in grace here is very remarkable. The priests are out of the

scene; the Levites being the objects of the liberality of the people, as having no inheritance (compare [05]12:19).

**CHAPTER** 15 teaches each one among the people to consider with liberality and grace their poor brethren (this consideration being besides made sure to them by the year of release, which applied to debts and to the Hebrew slaves). The dependence of him, who thus respected Jehovah in His poor, was to be placed in God, who would bless him in thus acting according to His commandment; for the poor were His poor.

**CHAPTER** 16 connects the people with the dwelling-place of Jehovah, by solemnities in which He surrounds Himself with His people, blessed and happy in the deliverance which He has granted them under His reign.

It gives us three solemn feaststhe Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The spirit of each of these feasts suggests a few remarks. The Passover recalled deliverance, deliverance from bondage in Egypt * for us under sin and Satan. The unleavened bread, truth in the inward parts, was here the bread of affliction. The knowledge of Christ, or the application of Christ to the heart, though coupled with deliverance and salvation, when it takes the form of repentance (and this is the case, when the question is of remembering one's deliverance), has always something bitter in it. Joy is not the point here. One has gone out in haste, by the mighty arm of God; and if one is happy, it is only as having escaped, feeling that it is through the power of God alone, and conscious of the state which required it all. They ate it during the night, and every one returned in the morning to his tent. They went home with the sense of the goodness of God, with the sense that it was a deliverance from the evil under which they had been by their own fault and to their own ruin.

[* Egypt signifies properly the flesh, but that involves sin and Satan.]

Holiness is presented in repentance and deliverance from the power of evil, under the form of conscience and judgment of sin; it is an obligation. One dares not remain any longer in evil. They were cut off if leaven was found in the house; whereas this holiness is in itself the joy of the redeemed. They were bound to keep the feast wherever God should put His name. God gathered the people around His dwelling-place, and linked them with His name and with Himself. * Their nationality and all their recollections were connected with the worship of Jehovah. It was another safeguard against idolatry (vers. 5-7).

[* This we have seen was part of Deuteronomic worship.]

Seven weeks having elapsed, the people were again to gather around Jehovah. They numbered seven weeks from the time they began to put the

sickle to the corn, from the day they began to reap the fruit of the land of promise. They waited for the perfect time of the work of God.

That which first of all characterised this feast was, that every one offered a free-will-offering, according to the blessing wherewith Jehovah his God had blessed him. It is the Holy Spirit, and the blessing flowing from Him, which this type presents to us. It is not only redemption, but the power of the things which are the result of itnot in full, however; they were only firstfruits offered to God. The presentation of these firstfruits to God is the effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. They are the remnant of Israel, historically in the beginning of Christianity, on the principle of redemption and of the new covenant; but, in fact, Christians themselves become the firstfruits of the creation of God. But the effect produced by the Holy Spirit, the effect of His presence in general, is that which characterises this feast.

There was no mention of free-will-offerings at the passover; they ate in haste and returned home. But the Holy Spirit has made the renewed heart willing; and according to the enjoyment of the fruits of the promiseaccording to the measure of the blessing of the Spirit of God, it can and will render to God the firstfruits of the heart, and of all that He has given us. Therefore (and it is what always accompanies this free-will-fruit of the Holy Spirit) they were to rejoice in the presence of Jehovah their God.

The fruits of grace and of the Spirit manifest themselves in joy and in grace. * Blessing manifests itself in the spirit of blessing, in the joy and the goodwill of grace. Blessed and precious results! Joy, and the desire for the joy of others, always flow from grace, known according to the power of the Spirit of God.

[* This also characterises Deuteronomic worship.]

Thus the worshipper, his son and his daughter, his manservant and his maidservant, the Levite within his gates, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, were to rejoice together in the place where Jehovah had set His name. God surrounded Himself with joy, the fruit of grace and of His blessing.

The remembrance of having been themselves bondmen was to touch the heart and influence the conduct of Israel; and by comprehending the grace which had delivered them when they were in that condition, they were to be led to act in grace towards those who were bondmen to them. They are admonished, at the same time, to observe the statutes of Jehovah; for the presence of the Holy Spirit, whilst ministering joy, leads to watchfulness

and obedience. We enjoy the earnest and the firstfruits before God; but still it is down here, where watchfulness and restraint are needed.

When the ingathering of the harvest and vintage were ended (that is, God having gathered in His own, hidden them in His garner, and trodden His enemies in the winepress), then came the Feast of Tabernacles; a feast, the antitype of which we have not, it is certain, yet seen.

Although all the effects of the Passover and Pentecost are not yet accomplished, yet they have been fulfilled as to the event marked by them; but there has been as yet no fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles. This will take place when Israel, restored to their land after the end of this dispensation, will fully enjoy the effect of the promise of God. Consequently joy is put in the foreground, whilst in that which prefigured the presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth the free-will-offering came first.

This feast was to be kept during seven consecutive days. It is joy, full and complete joy; not according to the measure of the blessing, as in Pentecost, but because God had blessed them in all the works of their hands: therefore they certainly ought to rejoice. The spirit of that day belongs to us, although the fulfilment of it has not yet taken place. *

> [* But it is to be remarked here, that in the account of tabernacles in this chapter, there is no reference to an eighth day as elsewhere. All refers properly to Israel placed in the land in present responsibility, but with promise of yet better things under the new covenant. To us it is anticipatively the eighth day, that great day of the feast. See John 7 where we get what to us is now in the place of the feast, connected with the glory of a rejected, but exalted, Christthe outflowing fulness of the Holy Ghost.]

There is a joy that manifests itself in us in connection with the measure of the present effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit, a joy with requires watchfulness and to walk in the narrow way, and in which the remembrance of our former condition strengthens in us the spirit of grace towards others, and the presence of the Lord is specially marked.

There is a joy known to the heart, although the things which cause it have not yet had their accomplishment, a joy connected with the time of rest, when labor will be ended, and when there will no longer be any need of vigilance, nor of the remembrance of our misery, to urge us to share our blessings with others. The feast itself will suffice for the joy of all: “Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast.” The Lord recalls the great principle of the three feasts, namely, to appear before Jehovah three times in a year, bringing offerings to Jehovah.

Verse 18 begins a new subject: the pains taken, and the instruments used, to preserve the blessing and execute the judgments necessary to that effect. The thought is still to maintain the people in relationship with God alone. They were to appoint judges and officers in their gates. Whatever led to idolatry was forbidden; he who enticed them to it was to be stoned (chap. 17). If the matter were too hard, they were to come to the priests and the judges, and the people were to abide by their judgment.

The case of the people desiring a king is anticipated; and they are told that he must be of the people, and not act so as to open the way for intercourse with Egypt, nor so as to lead the people to idolatry; but he is to write a copy of the book of the law with his own hand, and read therein all the days of his life, being subject to it, so as not to despise his brethren.

**CHAPTER** 18. The priests and the whole tribe of Levi have their portion assigned to them. The people are forbidden to do after those abominations, on account of which the nations which inhabited the land were driven out before Israel, inquiring of those who used divination. Jehovah would raise up a prophet like unto Moses, unto whom the people should hearken. These ordinances foresee in the people the lack of the faith needful in order to walk simply with the Lord. Christ is the true and only answer. They were not to fear a prophet who gave a sign which did not come to pass, for Jehovah had not spoken by him.

One word here as to the portion of the priests. First, the normal condition of the people was that of being guided by the priests, and, in case of need, by judges raised up in an extraordinary way; and to abide under the keeping of God in the land, enjoying His blessing. It was, properly speaking, theocracy. The laws of God directed the people; they enjoyed the blessing of God; and the priests settled any questions which arose, a judge being raised up in exceptional cases.

The priests are introduced here in connection with that which was necessary to the enjoyment of the land, not as a means of drawing near to God. Consequently, they were there to fulfil their ministry before God, and a certain portion belonged to them.

The king was only thought of in the case when the people would ask one, in order to be like the nations; and in that case he was to remain, as much as possible, simple in the midst of Israel, that the law of God might have its full authority. The people are always accounted to be themselves responsible before God, and enjoying the land under this responsibility, though for that reason subject to the decisions of the priests. They had the land from God. The position spoken of here is not that of drawing near to

Him, but acknowledging His deliverance and His goodness, as in the feasts which we have considered.

Thus he who went up to the place which Jehovah had chosen ate with his family, and sometimes with the Levite, the stranger, etc., the tithes * of each year (in the third year there were some for the Levite and the poor), the firstling of the herd and of the flock, the vows, the free-will-offerings, and the heave-offerings, all before Jehovah. But at the same time that they offered them to Jehovah, the offerer partook of the enjoyment of them (see chap. 14:23, 28, 29; 12:7, 11, 12, 17); whilst, in chapter 18 the priest had a certain portion of the sacrifice, the firstfruit of the corn, of the wine, and the oil, and the first of the fleece of the sheep.

[* See note in chapters referred to; they were second tithes, not Levitical ones. The people never paid tithes to the priests; but to the Levites at home, they to the priests. The tithes of the third year (not Levitical) were eaten at home. We have nothing of Levitical tithes in Deuteronomy.]

The first part of these ordinances is so much the more remarkable that in the book of Numbers (chap. 18), the firstborn, * the heave-offerings, all sorts of offerings for sin, and the meat-offerings, are given to the priests, and the tithes to the Levites. But these are assumed, not reordained here, that the true character of Deuteronomic worship may be maintained, rejoicing before Jehovah in the enjoyment of what He gives, not drawing near to Him in the holiest.

[* Firstborn males. See notes to chapters 12, 14.]

We may remark here the difference between that which was in this case for the priests, and that which in Deuteronomy the people are to eat of before the Lord, and in the other books what is given to the priests. We have already pointed out the difference of position.

In the three preceding books, what is brought before the mind is drawing near to God, and the priests alone are looked upon as able to do this; and thus, in the relationship of priests, they ate in the holy place all that was offered. They alone were near God, and that which was offered to God (according to the force of the word, * that which was brought near to God) was theirs, as being near. They were all as one company in the camp, and the whole was essentially typical.

[* The word translated “an offering” (that is, corban) comes from a word which means “to draw near,” and, in the form Hiphil (causative active form), “to bring near.”]

Thus all the arrangements of the tabernacle were made for a people who found themselves in the wildernessstrangers there; and it is to be observed

that Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, never speaks of anything but the tabernacle, never of the temple. The relationship he speaks of is that of pilgrims with God.

It is no longer thus in Deuteronomy. There the dwelling of the people in the land of promise is considered; and, consequently, the people are accounted, not as needing to learn how to draw near to God, * but as enjoying, from God, the effect of His promise in His presence and before Him, so that the people are directly concerned in the sacrifices. They are in the enjoyment of the promises, in the presence of God, and they realise, in the communion of Jehovah, all the means through which it is enjoyed, and they partake, in communion, of all that is devoted to Him, as a sign of the redemption through which this enjoyment was procured for them.

> [* This very important difference characterises the book. It is no question how near we can get to the holiest, to God Himself, but communion in the enjoyment of all the fruits of His promise in His presence and in the spirit of grace. It is not wilderness connection with God, a yet deeper principle of connection with Him.]

It is otherwise with regard to the firstfruits of the landthat which it yields. Enjoying those fruits of the goodness of God, the people gave Him back the firstfruits, as a testimony that all came from Him, and that all was His, and that His grace had communicated it to them (see chap. 26). Therefore the firstfruits were not for the people to eat: they offered them to God, and ate of all the rest. It was the recognition of God, while sharing His blessings. The firstfruits then were offered to God, and thus fell into the hands of the priests as their portion.

**CHAPTER** 19 opens with ordinances which contemplate the people in possession and enjoyment of the land; they were to observe them, that the land might not be defiled, and that the people might walk in the strength of Jehovah.

Three cities of refuge are ‘appointed, and he who kills his neighbor, without hating him, is distinguished from the murderer: an important principle, as to the fate of the Jewish nation, which makes’ a distinction between those who have taken a voluntary part in the death of the Lord, or who afterwards heartily approve the deed, and those who have done it ignorantly. The regulations of righteousness also against false witnesses are given here.

In **CHAPTER** 20 we have the ordinances relative to war.

In **CHAPTER** 21 we have three interesting cases, because of the principles which apply to the ways of God with Israel: the case of the man found slain; that of the child of the hated wife; and that of the rebellious son. The

land of Jehovah must be kept pure. Israel will have to make this confession in the latter days, and to clear themselves of the blood of Messiah.

If the case of the two wives applies to Israel upon earth, it applies still more closely to Christ (Head of the Gentiles) and the assembly with whom He will inherit all things, although upon earth Israel be the wife beloved.

However, Israel, as a rebellious son under the old covenant, is condemned and cut off; as regards the redeemed, the curse of the law has fallen upon another. Those who read the Bible are too well acquainted with the application of the end of this chapter to make it needful for me to dwell upon it. The point here under consideration is the defiling of the land, which Jehovah had given for an inheritance to the people; the hardness of heart of the priests in applying the precept under the circumstances is appalling, yet natural.

I will now briefly sum up the subjects we have looked at from chapter 16:18. We have the means, in point of authority, employed of God to maintain the people in His ways, and in the knowledge of His will, that they might enjoy the land in peace. Judges and officers were to be appointed, and to judge with uprightness. The priest and the judge, raised up in an extraordinary manner, were to communicate, in case of need, the judgment and will of God, and the people were to obey them. In case the people wished for a king, directions are given respecting his conduct.

Directions are given for those Levites who should devote themselves to the service of Jehovah, in the place chosen by Him as His dwelling-place. The people, seeking to know the will of God, were not to consult diviners. Jehovah would raise up a prophet. Afterwards there is provision made to keep the land from being polluted with blood; the elders of the city were to take knowledge of the deed, whether the slayer had killed without set purpose.

The cities of refuge present a beautiful type of the state of Israel, as to their sin, in having killed the Lord Jesus, whether ignorantly (as the grace of God looks upon it with regard to those who repent), or knowingly (as perseverance in rejecting Him would be the proof of): this is the principle upon which God will judge them. So, in this last point of view, the people were placed under the searching severity of the law.

In **CHAPTER** 20 provision is made to reconcile any war that might arise with the enjoyment of the land and the blessing of God, either individually or in case of conquest; and directions are given to secure the presence of the power of God, and to show how the enemies were to be treated according to the mind of God; all mercy towards the nations of Canaan being

prohibited, in order that Israel might not learn the abominations they were guilty of.

**CHAPTER** 21 gives another provision for preventing the land from defilement by blood, while declaring (as elsewhere) that life belongs to Godthat, when His rights are infringed, He will not wink at it. We cannot fail to see that the blood of Christ is, above all, that of which Israel is here (chap. 21) guilty (see ⁴⁹¹⁰¹Psalm 51), and the blood of Jesus is the only atonement for the sin which shed it. The elders excuse themselves by pleading their ignorance of what had been done. The same thing will take place with regard to Israel. So pleads also Paul. However, there is nothing but the blood of the heifer which never bore the yoke that can wipe away sin. Thus will the guilt of innocent blood be taken from off the people.

The following directions are indeed practical directions for Israel; but they seem to me to contain, at the same time, some of God's principles towards His people. Thus Israel upon earth, and the assembly in heaven, have both been the true firstborn, whom God will not disinherit. And the rebellious son presents also Israel in final disobedience to God.

**CHAPTER** 22 appears to contain ordinances to guard the people from want of benevolence and mercy, and of that which would offend the sensibilities of nature, either with regard to tenderness or purity. So also all mixture was forbidden in ploughing or sowing. We find the same with regard to women: they were protected against the dishonor done to them by a brutish, inconsiderate husband; whilst impurity was punished with death.

Thus (chap. 23) the people are taught what sentiments became them, according to God, with reference to the nations (taking the ways and doings of those nations into consideration) in case of war. They are also instructed in what was proper, as to the purity of the camp in case of war, seeing God was there. So with regard to all sorts of things, such as the slave that was escaped from his master; things morally impure; even the neighbor's vineyard; and (chap. 24) a more serious thing, divorce, and everything relative to it; delicacy towards the poor, the hire of laborers, the gleaning for the poor.

The spirit of all these ordinances is very instructive, and the goodness and the tenderness of God, who deigns to take knowledge of all these things, and to teach His people delicacy, propriety, consideration for others, sensitiveness, and those feelings which, by removing brutality, and softening the hardness of the heart of man, fashion his ways according to that love with which the Spirit of God clothes Himself when He acts in the heart of man. Here, it is true, everything is imperfect. There are things taken for granted here, which form the basis of these ordinances, which the full

operation of the Spirit of Christ would entirely take away; divorce, for instance, and other things endured; owing their existence to the hardness of man's heart. But the limitations and conditions, assigned by the law of God, keep in check the wickedness of that will which hardens itself, while it oppresses others.

**CHAPTER** 25 adds ordinances which are a continuation of what we have already read; taking care that none of their brethren should be dishonored in their eyes, and that no family should perish from among the people (there being, at the same time, the maintenance of purity and uprightness).

As to the inveterate enemies of God and His people, Israel was never to seek peace with them. Human amiability is often enmity with God. This ordinance is so much the more remarkable, because it follows so many others which made provision for kindness, even to a bird.

Jehovah had taken care that an Egyptian should find the entrance into the assembly of God; but those affections were to be in exercise towards the Egyptians for the good of the souls of the Israelites themselves. They were not to harden their hearts against those in whose midst they had sojourned. But to spare the Amalekites (who came to meet Israel to shut up their way and destroy the feeble ones among them) was to forget what was due to God, who brought them back; and, as regarded the people, it would have proved indifference of heart to evil, and not the effusion of a natural affection; neither was it yielding to remembrances, with which charity might mingle for good, by a becoming forgetfulness of wrongs formerly received. * Where there is nobleness of sentiment, men who know (though they have injured) each other, still will own one another when the evil is over.

> [* The Egyptians were merely that in which Israel was held naturally. The Amalekites were positive active enemies against them when the redeemed people of God. One was really man, though fallen man without GodI honor all men; the other, the positive direct power of the enemy.]

But there is a spirit which claims nothing but disgust: to tolerate it is only sparing oneself, and admitting that very spirit into one's heart so as to partake of it. What is in question is not judging, but the state of one's own heart. The distance of an Egyptian from God was recognised; but if he were in relationship with Him during three generations, why should he be kept at a distance? why should he remain a stranger? But Amalek did not fear Goddid not recognise Him. What then could be recognised in such a nation? We must bring God into our affairsour relationships; and charity, firmness, justness in our judgments, will each find its place, and be reproduced in all our ways.

To close this succession of ordinances, we have (chap. 26) a most beautiful picture of the worship consequent on the enjoyment of the land according to the promises of God, a picture full of instruction for us too.

First, we find the main subject of this book appears as everywhere else: Israel is in the land which God had given him for an inheritance.

But, as to worship, it is not looked at here in the light of drawing near to God in the holy place, by means of sacrifices which, supposing sin, opened the way for the people into the presence of Jehovah. This characterises the whole book. Then the question was, could they, or how far could they, or how near could they or the priestsdraw near to Jehovah in the sanctuary of His holiness. What Deuteronomy presents is, while acknowledging their previous state, the festal enjoyment of the effect of all the promises, only as coming from, and they themselves identified with Jehovah. (So in chaps. 12 and 14). * They enjoy the promise, and present themselves as worshippers, giving thanks as enjoying it. In presenting the firstfruits of the land of promise, they were to go up to the place where the Lord had placed His name. What then was the spirit of that worship?

> [* These two characters on worship, the wilderness worshipper's approach to Jehovah, and the enjoyment of promises in the land, are not separated for Christians as they are in these books, because we have entered into, and are in, the holiest, in heavenly places, and the things we enjoy are the things that are there. It is all one, though we shall reign over a subject inheritance, but our undefiled inheritance is there where we are entered. This is a blessed truth. It is with, not from. We have from; but we joy in God.]

First, it was based on the open confession that they were in the full enjoyment of the effect of the promise of God. "I profess this day unto Jehovah that I am come unto the country which Jehovah swear unto our fathers to give us." That is the first feature of that worshipthe full profession of being in the enjoyment of the effect of the promise. It was the acknowledgment of the faithfulness of God in the present communion of His goodness. Thereupon the offering was presented.

Then, in the presence of Jehovah, the worshipper made confession of the redemption and deliverance of the people. A Syrian, ready to perish, was his father; and afterwards, when his children, oppressed by the Egyptians, cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah had heard and delivered them with an outstretched arm, and had, by a display of His power, brought them up into the land they were enjoying.

The second feature, then, is the confession of what their misery had been, of their impotency in time past, and that their redemption has been accomplished by Jehovah alone, to whom they were indebted for all these

blessings. Thereupon the worshipper directly addresses Jehovah, presenting Him with the firstfruits of those blessings. It was the recognition of God in the blessings (the infallible effect of a work of God in the heart), and the only means of truly enjoying them; for God's blessings turn the heart away from Him, if their first effect is not to turn it to Him. That is the history of Israel, and a thousand times alas! in the details of life, that of our own hearts. A pious heart acknowledges God Himself in the blessing, before enjoying it. See a beautiful example in the conduct of Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, sent to fetch a wife for Isaac.

Then it is added, "And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which Jehovah thy God hath given unto thee." They were to enjoy them with God; and, consequently, observe here, that in this the spirit of grace manifests itself at once: "Thou, the Levite, and the stranger that is within thy gate." It is impossible truly to rejoice in the blessing of God before Him, without the spirit of grace being presentwithout returning blessing for cursing, knowing that we are called to inherit His blessing. The same truth is found again in the tithes of the third year, given to the poor, the Levite, etc., according to the spirit which we have just spoken of.

Another feature of the state of heart of the true worshipper was holiness in consecrating to Jehovah, with uprightness of heart, that which was due to Him according to grace. He was not to be robbed in anything for appropriation to oneself: nothing was to be profaned by applying it to selfto defiled or interested uses.

In a word, the conscience was good as regarded consecration to Jehovah, in the things by which the worshipper acknowledged Him as the true and sole Author of all the blessings. And if Jehovah was the Author of them, communion with Him, in acknowledging Him, was enjoyed in the spirit of holiness, of consecration to Him, and in the spirit of goodness and grace that was in Him towards His poor and forsaken ones. The character of God is introduced again and again, and His name brought in, in that which is recognised in the communion of His people; if overlooked, the people were guilty and defiled, in that they had profaned the name of the Lord. This consecration in purity to God, and this expression of His goodness, are singularly beautiful. Then the blessing of God was implored not only upon oneself, from God who cared for all His people, but upon all Israel, upon the land which was the proof of the faithfulness of God and of the riches of His goodness.

This chapter is of great importance, and a kind of summing up of the spirit proposed of God in the whole book: it is the last chapter of the body of its contents. It refers to no promises to Abraham, Isaac, etc., but takes the

history of Israel from Jacob's going down into Egypt, a Syrian ready to perish; oppressed in Egypt they cried to the God of their fathers, historically so known (not the promises), and they were delivered with great signs, and Jehovah had brought them into that good land where they were, and they brought the firstfruits of the land Jehovah had given them. It was the acknowledgment of the possession of blessing in the land given by Jehovah through grace. This was their worship; and they, and Levites, and strangers rejoiced together there in all the good Jehovah had given. They did so also, when they had given to fatherless, widows, Levites, strangers, the tithes of the third year, which were eaten within their gates, they declare their cleanness and uprightness; there had been no profanation, but obedience in all things as to their ordinances; and thereupon an appeal to God for blessing on the people and the land. The land possessed, its firstfruits offered to Jehovah; then comes rejoicing in all the good Jehovah gave; then fellowship in grace with all in need every third year, and with this, avowal of purity of ways, thoroughness in doing it, and obedience, and so a blessing looked for. It is a picture of the true state of the people with Jehovah, and in the land, and walking uprightly, considering the needy, that the blessing might rest upon them; and on this ground they now entered into covenant with Jehovah to possess and enjoy the land in obedience, and be fully blessed and exalted.

This worship was, then, a bond between the people and God, in the communion of what He was; that is, a bond in worship by acknowledging what He was; and by bearing witness to it. Thus, according to the commandments of Jehovah, looked at as the conditions of this bond, God had that day acknowledged the people, and the people had acknowledged Jehovah for their God. This closes the teaching of the book.

Now comes the sanctionthat is to say, that which gives vigor to His lawin the consequences (blessings and curses) which were to correspond with obedience or disobedience. This is brought out in chapter 27 and two following chapters.

**CHAPTER** 27 is by itself, however, and is of rather wide scope in the understanding of the word of God. If individual piety expressed itself in the manner we have seen in the preceding chapter, the public relations of the people with God were based on the threats of the law. When the people should have gone over Jordan to take possession of the land of promise (an idea which constantly presents itself), having set up great stones and plastered them with plaster, they were to write the law upon them. This law contained the conditions on which the land was to be enjoyed.

The people were to divide themselves into two companies of tribes, part being placed upon Mount Gerizim to bless, the other upon Ebal to curse. Upon the latter was an altar to be erected to Jehovah, not for sin-offerings, but for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings: a worship pre-supposing a righteous people in communion with Jehovah, but placed under the curse if they should break the law. The announcement of the curses follows, ending with that curse which would rest on every one, not continuing in all the things which were written in the book of the law to do them. But the blessings of Gerizim are entirely omitted.

It is needless to insist upon the importance of this blank. The apostle seizes on it as the place of all under the law. “As many as are of the works of the law * are under the curse,” says the apostle: “for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law.” There is no possibility of escape. No one, except the Lord Jesus, has accomplished it; and He, if one may so speak, did not raise an altar for burnt-offering, an altar of worship for a righteous man who had fulfilled the lawfor Himself alone; but He offered Himself for us on that mountain of cursing as an offering for sin, and has thus silenced for ever all those threats and curses. The blessing of Gerizim, consequently, is not sufficient either. Heaven, and, moreover, for Him, the Father’s throne, are the only worthy answer and reward for what He has accomplished by suffering for our sins. But this is the righteousness of God, giving to Christ, and so consequently to us, what He was fully entitled to in having glorified God, and to us what He has obtained for us.

> [* This expression does not contemplate the conduct, but the principle on which we stand before God. Those who are of faith are linked with faithful Abraham; those that are of the works of the law are under the curse, for the law saith, “Cursed,” etc.]

The connection between the principles of chapter 26 and those of chapter 27 is deeply interesting: the fulfilment of the promise in the enjoyment of the land, the basis of thanksgivings and of the worship which has its source in redemption; afterwards the altar, the service to be rendered to God, a service linked to His law, the violation of which, in a single point, brought the curse. This was the condition of their enjoyment of it.

It is in that point of view, the only one which went to the root of the question, that the apostle looks at it. It is on the ground of this covenant of Deuteronomy that the people became the people of Jehovah on their entering the land (compare vers. 2, 10, and chap. 29:1).

In **CHAPTER** 28 we have the principles of God’s government in the midst of that people, and the immediate consequences of obedience or

disobedienceconsequences so solemnly fulfilled in the fate of that unhappy people, still beloved for the fathers sakes. The consequences of the violation of the law as a principle of relationship with God, as to the point of a righteousness which was adequate ground of God's acceptance, must not be confounded with the temporary consequences of disobedience under the government of God. It is to these latter that chapter 28 has reference. We may notice for ourselves the deep instruction of verses 47, 48. As to Israel, universal history presents to us the accomplishment of the threats of the chapter.

**CHAPTER** 29 is the personal application to the conscience of the people, both collectively and individually, of all that precedes, that there may be no bitter root of sin (compare Hebrews 12:15, the application of this exhortation to the discipline and the loving care of saints now).

Verse 29 requires to be noticed. We find in it the contrast between the consequences thus revealed of obedience and disobedience, and the purposes of God in behalf of the people, notwithstanding their disobediencepurposes which evidently could not be a rule for their conduct. The rule was found in the ordinance of the law. The meaning of this verse has been so twisted, that it is worth while thus to point out its force. The secret things are the purposes of God with regard to the people, though they should have been disobedient and driven out of the land; but, although they are not the rule of conduct, they are revealed and are of deep interest. In what follows, God begins already to present them to our attention, and surely it becomes us to consider them.

Thus we have, in these chapters, the relationship of the pious Jew with God, grounded upon the accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers, in the present enjoyment of the land; the relationship of the people with God, in view of the curse pronounced upon the violation of the law; the relationship of the people with God, according to the principles of His government, the consequences brought in, either by their obedience or disobedience: and, finally, after the disobedience, and when this has produced its fruit, the designs of God according to His purpose, which nothing could alter.

We must now dwell a little on this last point. Chapter 30 furnishes us with an important principle. It supposes that the people have already incurred the consequences of disobedience, and they are seen as driven out of the land, and strangers among distant nations. The law could not be followed out in such a case; and, indeed, the violation of the law had even then produced its fruits.

But then quite a new principle is introduced: the return of the hearts of the people to Jehovah, and obedience, one must add, in spirit. Thereupon Jehovah brings them back into their land, and blesses them in it. The curse is put on their enemies; and they are to observe in the land the ordinances of Jehovah, enjoying anew His full blessing; for the commandment was neither in heaven, nor beyond the seas, but in the mouth and in the heart. This was not the new covenant, but faith laying hold of the spirit of the law in principle, and turning the heart towards Jehovah, when the law was externally impracticable.

The establishment of the new covenant, based on this return of the heart, at a time appointed of God, will be something well defined. Here we have the principle of their return when under the curse of the law they had broken. Hence, the apostle quotes this passage for the basis of the principle, as a testimony given to what righteousness by faith was, applying it to Christ Himselfthe return of the heart to the object and end of the law, when judgment was on them for its violation, and hope of righteousness by its accomplishment impossiblehow Christ was the end of the law for righteousness. The principle is found here. The apostle brings in Christ as the true accomplishment of it. At the end of the chapter, Moses declares that he has now set before them the good and the evil, and that they would have to bear the consequence of their choice.

In **CHAPTER** 31 he introduces Joshua, as the leader under whom the people were to take possession of the promised land. He orders that the law should be read before all every seventh year, in order that every one might take notice of it, in that solemn moment when, enjoying afresh, as it were, the blessing which it secured to them, they submitted to it as a testimony that the land, as well as everything, belonged to Jehovah. Afterwards, when Joshua is established in his charge, Moses is ordered to communicate to the people a song inspired of God, which, based upon the certainty of the iniquity of the people, announces the ways of the Lord towards them; commanding the Levites, at the same time, to put the written law by the side of the ark, as a witness against the people.

**CHAPTER** 32. We have the prophetic song, which is based on the foreknown fall of the people. First, it declares the perfectness of Jehovah, whatever may take place; it is Israel who have corrupted themselves (compare <19223>Psalm 22:3. Christ can say, “Why?”) At the same time (ver. 8) we have an all-important declaration; namely, that God, in His government of the world, had made Israel the center, and had arranged the nations of the earth, in their various localities, as having respect to the bounds of Israel as being the first object of those ways. For His earthly people are Jehovah’s portion, His inheritance upon earth. But Jeshurun

(Israel) waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook the Rock of his strength. Consequently God moves them to jealousy with those that are not a people. It is the call of the Gentiles, according to Romans 10:19.

The judgment, nevertheless, falls upon Israel, so that God would have destroyed them, had not the glory of His name hindered Him, for the Gentiles proved themselves perfectly wicked. Then, the people being distressed, without strength and without hope, He remembers them, and finally takes vengeance on their enemies, those idolatrous Gentiles. But, though avenging Himself, it is then that, having restored His people Israel, He will cause the Gentiles to rejoice in Him.

This principle is true already; but the testimony it furnishes will be fully accomplished when Israel is again restored to the enjoyment of the promises; when God will manifest His mercy towards His land, as well as towards His people. The whole course of His dealings, in respect of the people who form the center of His ways upon earth, is thus fully brought out. Afterwards, Moses puts obedience (the great end of this book, Israel being placed under the condition of obedience for continuance in the enjoyment of the promises) before them again, and reminds them that thereby they would prolong their days in the land which they were going up to possess.

At last poor Moses has to go up Mount Nebo, to see the land into which he cannot enter, not having answered the requirement of the glory of God in the wilderness, nor sanctified His name by faith. It is the unavoidable consequence of the just government of God towards a servantI mean under the law. He does not get into the enjoyment of the promise. A single fault deprives him of it.

We have also the blessings of this man of God, pronounced over the people before his death (chap. 33). The blessings of Jacob were more historical regarding the future. Here they are rather relationship with God according to His government. Twelve is still the number of the tribes (Simeon being omitted to make room for two tribes of the posterity of Joseph, the firstborn as to the inheritance, instead of Reuben). Here it is according to the blessing of God, and not according to the rights of nature. Upon this latter principle, Israel, represented by Reuben, will be diminished, but will not die.

Jehovah is there in majesty, with the terror of the law in His right hand; but He loves the people, that is to say, His saints there surrounding Him to receive His words. The people receive a law, through the mediation of Moses, which is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. This Moses is there as king. These, then, are the relationships on which these blessings are based.

The blessings are not here presented historically as those of the children of the fathers, and, consequently, in connection with Shiloh, the Rock of Israel, nor as a complete view of God's ways in Israel, as in Genesis; but the subject is the relationship of Jehovah with the people, as in possession of the land (as in the rest of the book), and placed under the government of God: Jehovah blessing, but blessing according to the majesty of Sinai, and of His revelation of Himself in the bush; Moses, the king, being the channel of these blessings, which had thus reference to the nation, and were based upon this relationship with God.

Thus Levi is blessed, having been faithful to Jehovah; Joseph has the blessing and the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush, having been separated from his brethren, fearing God, and being the vessel of His purposes. This was accordingly the position of the two tribes in the land, as Simeon, not mentioned here, was, so to speak, lost in the land; his portion was where the Philistines dwelt.

We must also remark here, that the chief blessings rest upon him who, for the sake of God, neither knew his father, nor his mother, that is, Levi; and upon Joseph, who, for the glory of God, was separated from his own. Both were His. Levi has the most excellent place; his separation, which should actually take place, was a fruit of faithfulness. Joseph has, perhaps, more sensible enjoyment; he was faithful to God in his involuntary separation. Both these are completely realised in Christ.

If the blessing of God preserves life to Reuben, with but few men, Judah is presented to Jehovah, that he may be heard, and that the help of Jehovah may be with him. The expression, "Bring him unto his people," deserves careful notice, in the relations which have existed between that people and God, seeing the position of Judah in their history, under the government of God, and its present dispersion, and in that which is yet to take place, when the union of the whole people will be restored in their own place.

Levi occupies the third place, Simeon being left out. The request of the prophet-king for him (Levi) is the everlasting priesthood of the people of God (upon earth, of course). "His holy one" is used in the sense of piety towards Godgrace in the heart. He requests that light and perfection (Urim and Thummim) in the intelligence of the relations which would in reality exist at all times between the people and God, and between God and the people in return, might be with the man of grace and piety, officially the priestly tribe.

But the basis of this request is remarkable, as to the government of God. God proved the people at Massah, and strove with them at Meribah. Now, that is precisely what is attributed to Israel historically. They tried (or

tempted) God at Massah, and strove With Him at Meribah. But where the flesh manifested itself in Israel, there did God put His priest to the test, and at the waters of Meribah, where Moses did not sanctify Him, He was in controversy with Moses. * Painful circumstancesthe being deprived of the stream of manifest and sensible blessings in the midst of the people of God, a state which makes room for the manifestation of rebellious flesh, and for murmurs against God in the wilderness, tempting God and saying, “Is He amongst us?”are trials to which God subjects His priests. The church, in her priestly position, and especially those who have the good of the church at heart, are also put to the test, to see whether they know how to reckon upon the blessing of God, however things may be.

> [* No doubt the fall of this man of God was the effect of his previous state, for he was a man. Trial, when we are not going on well, is chastening, but needful chastening, and a blessing in result. Therefore, at the same time that it is a blessing, it is said, “Lead us not into temptation.”]

But, although Levi was put to the test in his priesthood, he had been put to the test in order to obtain it; and Levi had not hesitated one moment in choosing between man and Godeven man in the nearest relationship according to the flesh. That is the sole basis of all-priesthood. One can only stand before God on the behalf of another, in proportion as one has oneself stood truly for God before man. For with what God would one be a mediator? It would not be with the holy God, who has a right to our whole being. There could only, as to sinners, be the sympathy of the flesh, which connects itself with sins.

One must be accepted in the presence of God according to His holiness, in order to be able to intercede for man in his weakness. This is absolutely true of Jesus, and of us all in a practical sense. But to be so, there must be the testimony when the question is raised; and this must needs cost us something before men. One must be for God, not sparing oneself, hating father and mother. This instruction is important. There must also be the distinguishing between the trial of our priesthood and the trial of ourselves before entering upon it. Here the practical trial, where we are so, is spoken of, for we are priests by grace, yet fitted by full exercise of heart, separating us to God.

It would seem that the place of Benjamin, in relation with Jehovah, was in His favor; being kept near Him, as has been the case with that tribe, within whose limits was Jerusalem.

Joseph had his earthly blessing by the title of firstborn; as to the inheritance, his land is blessed, the double portion is assigned to him.

I have no remarks to make on the other blessings, except that those of Zebulun and Issachar seem to be yet future, and those of Gad to establish the relations which existed already.

But, moreover, if the ways of God towards His people were connected with their faithfulness and the manifestation of Himselfif God suited His ways to their conduct to manifest His government and HimselfHe also exalted Himself above all to bless and to keep. He would fall back upon the title of His own glory in order to be to them an infallible source of blessing and security; He would make known His glory in the behalf of Israel; He rode upon the heavens in their help. Where His majesty was, there was the help of the people. He would uphold them also, would destroy their enemies, and then should Israel dwell in safety alone. The nations should dwell in a fruitful land, on which the heavens would drop down blessings as dew. Happy people! objects of the deliverance of God, who was unto them as a shield and a sword. Their enemies would be subdued under them.

Thus, whatever might be the details of the relationship of the people with God, in His government of them, He would bless them in the end, as a people, according to His sovereign glory and majesty.

We have now to consider a little the prohibition to which Moses was subjected, not to enter the land of promise. Moses, the man of God, might pronounce the blessings on Israel as in the land; but he himself, as servant of God, belonged to the wilderness. There are more things than one to be weighed here. As to the position of Moses, it was that of the government of a people, placed under the principles of Sinai; that is, while under the government of God, it was in the flesh that His people were subjected to that government (compare Romans 9:5, where the subject is fully discussed).

Now, man in the flesh, under the government of God, cannot come into the enjoyment of the promise. This is true even of a Christian. Risen with Christ, he is seated in the heavenly places, he enjoys the promise in the presence of God; or, at least, his affections look up there, his life is hid there with Christ; * but, as a man upon earth, he is under the government of God, who acts towards him according to the manifestation of the spiritual life here below; and Christ is between him and God, exercising priesthood and advocacy, which do not establish righteousness (that is done once for all), but which maintain the relationship of weak men with God in the lightto the fellowship of which they are called in Christ who is in itby obtaining mercy and grace to help in time of need so that they should not fall, or to restore them if they do, through the advocacy by the operation of the Spirit upon earth.

[* The former is the teaching of the Ephesians, the second, of the Colossians. In the former, dead in sin, he is raised up and set in Christ in heavenly places. It is a new creation. In the latter, he has died to sin and is risen, with Christ, and his affections are to be set on heavenly things. In this last epistle he is viewed also as dead in sins and quickened together with Christ, but not as sitting in heavenly places.]

Crossing Jordan was our death and resurrection with Christ in a figure. Joshua always represents Christ, Head of His people, according to the power of the Spirit. But the wilderness is this world. Moses directs and governs the people there according to God; consequently he does not enter into Canaan.

The difference (we shall dwell on that more at length when we study the Book of Joshua) between the Red Sea and Jordan is, that the Red Sea was the efficacy of redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ Himself, and we are viewed, withal, in Him; Jordan was the application of it to the soul, as having died with Him in order to the enjoyment of the promises. The passage of the Red Sea was followed by songs of joy; that of Jordan, by conflict and the realisation of the promises.

As to Moses himself, personally, the fault which precluded his entrance into the land is well known. Provoked by the rebellion of Israel, and wearied with caring for the people, instead of exalting God in the eyes of Israel, he exalted himself. He made use of the gift of God for that purpose; he did not sanctify Jehovah in the eyes of the people; he did not give Him His place. God does not become weary in His goodness; and thus acting in discipline, for the good of His people, according to His majesty, He can always fall back upon those ways of direct blessing which flow from His unfailing grace. Man wearied with the evil that vexes him, tries to exalt himself, to put himself above the evil, and to shelter himself from it, because he is not above it. He no longer glorifies God; he exalts himself and he is abased.

If Moses, instead of acting according to the flesh, had remembered that it was not he or his glory which was in question (and how often had he himself told them so!) but God, he would have felt that the people could not touch the glory of God; and this unfailing glory would have sustained him, looking only at that glory which ever maintains itself; so that if we only seek to maintain it, we may rest upon it.

But he lacked faith, and was forbidden to enter into that which only the perfection of glory could open to men; and, indeed, what could lead Israel safely through the desert and into the land of Canaan? Pure grace alone. Moses was not able to apprehend the height of the grace that conquers

everything. It was according to that grace, as we have seen, that God acted at Meribah.

Now, the law could not lead into life; and, therefore, the flesh, the world, and the law, ever correlative in the ways of God, were found in the journey through the wilderness; and Moses remains there. He might, as a man of God and a prophet, tell of grace, as making sure the blessing of Israel (chap. 33:26-29). Faithful in all his house, as a servant, he remains on this side Jordan; a proof, in these touching circumstances, that an absolutely new creation is needed to enjoy the promises of God, according to that grace which can alone, after all, bring one in safety even through the wildernessthe unfailing grace of our God.

Moses dies, and, buried by Jehovah, does not serve as an object of carnal veneration to a people at all times ready to fall into this sin, when his name gave them honor according to the flesh; just as they continually opposed him, when his presence according to God thwarted the flesh. He was a man honored of God, who scarcely had his equal (He of course excepted who had none); but nevertheless he was man, and man is but vanity.

# JOSHUA

We have gone through, by the goodness of God, the five books of Moses. They have set before us, on the one side, the great principles on which the relations of man with God, and of God with man, in their great elements, are founded, such as redemption, sacrifice, and the like; and on the other, the deliverance of a people set apart for Himself, and the different conditions in which they were placed, whether under grace in the form of promise, under law, or under God's government established over them by the special mediation of Moses.

We have had occasion in them to examine the history of this people in the wilderness; and the pattern presented, by the tabernacle, of things to be afterwards revealed; sacrifices and priesthood, means of relationship with God granted to sinners, wherein is indeed wanting the image of our perfect liberty to approach God, the veil not being then rent, but wherein the shadow of heavenly things is placed before our eyes with most interesting detail.

Finally, we have seen that God — having at the end of the journey, in the wilderness, pronounced the definitive justification of His people, and caused His blessing to rest upon them in spite of the efforts of their enemies — declares under what conditions the people should retain possession of the land, and enjoy His blessing in it; in the liberty and grace of God's free gift in immediate relationship with Himself; and what would be the consequences of disobedience; revealing, at the same tune, His purposes with respect to this people, purposes which He would accomplish for His own glory. * This brings us to the taking possession of the land of promise by the people under the guidance of Joshua.

> [* Their typical revelations in these books, which though interwoven with the history are their real subject, are invaluable to us; only the special privileges of Christians and of the assembly of God, in sovereign grace, are not communicated.]

As the Book of Numbers sets forth the spiritual journey through the wilderness in which the flesh was tested and tried, so this book is full of interest and instruction, as setting before us in type the conflicts of the inheritors of heaven with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, when we have entered into them, with a sure title, but having to take possession of them by the energy which overcomes the enemies who would keep us out, which is the other part of the Christian life. Christians are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, as Israel was to enjoy temporal

blessings in earthly places. It is easy to understand that, if we may rightly use (as I do not doubt) the name of Canaan as a figurative expression of the rest of the people of God, that which we have here to do with is not the rest itself, but the spiritual conflict which secures the enjoyment of the promises of God to true believers. The close of the Epistle to the Ephesians presents that which precisely answers, indeed alludes, to the position of Israel in this book. The saints in the assembly having been quickened and raised up with Jesus, have their conflict in the heavenly places, as it is to those who dwell there that the assembly is a testimony — the testimony of the manifold wisdom of God.

It is worthy of notice, if Jordan represent death, and Canaan rest and glory, how short common Christian views must come of some intended Christian position; for the effect of the crossing of Jordan, and what characterized what followed, was war. The angel of Jehovah comes with a drawn sword as captain of Jehovah's host. It leads us to see that the Christian is to learn that he is dead and risen while here, and has his place in the heavenlies in Christ, and that it is in this position that his true conflicts take place.

Joshua, then, represents Christ, not as coming down in person to take possession of the earth, but as leading His people through the power of the Holy Ghost, who acts and dwells in the midst of this people. Yet in Joshua, as in all other typical persons, those errors and sins are found which betray the weakness of the instrument, and the fragility of the vessel in which, for the time, God has condescended to put His glory. Let us apply ourselves now to the study of this book.

The first chapter shows us Joshua placed in service by Jehovah who commands him to go over Jordan into the land which He had given to the children of Israel.

Let us pause a moment over this immediate commission from Jehovah. Moses here holds the place, not of the living mediator, but of the written word. All that he commanded, being from God, was evidently the word of God for Israel. Joshua is the energy which brings them into possession of the promises.

First of all, we have the principle on which possession is taken; not in the simple exercise of divine power, as that which will take place at the end, but in the energy of the Spirit and in connection with the responsibility of man. The boundaries of the promised land are given; but the knowledge of the boundaries assigned by God was not enough: God had defined them very accurately; but a condition was attached to their possession. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you." They must go there, overcome the obstacles with the help and by the power of

God, and take actual possession. Without that they could not possess it; and, in fact, this is what happened. They never took possession of all the land which God had given. Nevertheless, to faith the promise was sure: “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life.” The power of the Spirit of God, of Christ by His Spirit (the true energy of the believer), is all-sufficient. For it is, in fact, the power of Christ Himself, who has almighty power. At the same time, the promise of never being left nor forsaken (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8) is maintained in all its force. This is what may be reckoned upon in the Lord’s service — such a power of His presence that none shall be able to stand before His servant, a power which will never forsake him. With this full encouragement, he who walks by the Spirit is called upon to be strong and of a good courage.

After this comes Jehovah’s exhortation, in verse 7, “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant (the title always given him here), commanded thee.” Spiritual strength and energy, the courage of faith, are necessary, in order that the heart may be bold enough to obey, may be free from the influences, the fears, and the motives which act upon the natural man, and tend to turn believers aside from the path of obedience, and that they may take heed unto the word of God.

There is nothing so unreasonable in the world as the walk set before us in the word — nothing which so exposes us to the hatred of its prince. If, then, God be not with us, there is nothing so foolish, so mad; if He be with us, nothing so wise. If we have not the strength of His presence, we dare not take heed to His word; and, in that case, we must beware of going out to war. But having the courage, which the almighty power of God inspires by His promise, we may lay hold of the good and precious word of our God: its severest precepts are only wisdom to detect the flesh, and instruction how to mortify it, so that it may neither blind nor shackle us.

The most difficult path, that which leads to the sharpest conflict, is but the road to victory and repose, causing us to increase in the knowledge of God. It is the road in which we are in communion with God, with Him who is the source of all joy; it is the earnest and the foretaste of eternal and infinite happiness.

If only this word from God, Jehovah, is heard” — Turn not from it, to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest” — what joy for him who, through grace, comes forward to do the work of God!

The Lord then exhorts him to the diligent study of this book of the law: “For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have

good success.” Here, then, are the two great principles of spiritual life and activity: —

> **1st**, the assured presence of the almighty power of God, so that nothing can stand before His servant;
>
> **2nd**, the reception of His word, submission to His word, diligent study of His word, taking it as an absolute guide; and having courage to do so, because of the promise and exhortation of God.

In short, the Spirit and the word are all in all for spiritual life. Furnished with this power faith goes forward, strengthened by the encouraging word of our God. God has a way in the world where Satan cannot touch us. This is the path where Jesus walked. Satan is the prince of this world; but there is a divine path through it, but no other, and there God’s power is. The word is the revelation of it. So the Lord bound the strong man. He acted by the power of the Spirit, and used the word. The Spirit and the word cannot be separated without falling into fanaticism on the one hand, or into rationalism on the other — without putting oneself outside the place of dependence upon God, and of His guidance. Mere reason would become the master of some; imagination, of others.

Moreover, there is nothing more imaginative than reason, when destitute of guidance! In result, the enemy of souls would take possession of both. We should have man under Satan’s influence, in the place of God. Miserable exchange! for which the unbeliever is consoled by flattering himself that there is nothing beyond his reach, because he reduces everything to the limits of his own mind. Nothing appears to me more pitiful than this unbelief, which pretends that there is nothing in the moral and intellectual sphere beyond the thoughts of man, and which denies man’s capacity to receive light from a more exalted mind — the only thing that raises man above himself, while at the same time rendering him morally excellent, by making him humble through the sense of superiority in another.

Blessed be God, that some are to be found who have profited by the grace which has communicated to man of His perfect wisdom! Even though the imperfect vessel which received it may have a little impaired its features and its perfection, they have nevertheless profited by it so as to take their true place. Happy place, before the presence of Him whom to know is infinite and everlasting joy!

There is yet an important practical rule to be recognized in these words, “Have not I commanded thee?” (chap. Jos 1:9). If we are not conscious that we are doing the will of God — if, before we begin to act, we have not assured ourselves of this in His presence, we shall have no courage in

performing it. Perhaps indeed what we are doing is the will of God; but, not being conscious of this, we act with hesitation, without confidence, without joy; we are repulsed by the smallest opposition, whilst, when we are assured of doing His will, and that He has said, “Have not I commanded thee?” nothing, through grace, can alarm us.

Nevertheless I add one word, or rather I call the reader’s attention to what God says; for although the command of God inspires us with a courage which we could not have had without it, yet no revelation is by itself strength for action. But God adds, “Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

We have in the New Testament a striking exemplification of this principle: Paul was caught up to the third heaven, where he heard things which it is not lawful for man to utter. Was this his strength in conflict? Doubtless it inwardly gave his views a scope which reacted upon his whole work; but this was not his strength for the work. On the contrary, it tended to feed the false confidence of the flesh; at least the flesh would have used it for self-exaltation.

Such revelations rendered humiliation needful, and drew from God, not fresh favors (though all was favor), but, that which humbled the apostle, and rendered him weak and contemptible as to the flesh. * Being then weak, strength is given him in another way: not in the use or in the consciousness of revelations, that would have made him weak, by ministering to the exaltation of the flesh, but, in the grace and strength of Christ, which were made perfect in this infirmity. There lay his only strength; and he gloried in this infirmity, in which the power of Christ was perfected in him, which gave occasion for the manifestation of this power; and which, in proving that Paul was weak, proved that Christ Himself was in the work with Paul. We always need immediate strength from Christ, when acting on the part of Christ — strength which is made perfect in weakness, to do His work — abiding strength, for without Him we can do nothing. Let us remember this truth.

> [* Idle curiosity inquires what this thorn in the flesh could be. It matters little to us what it was. There might be a different thorn for each case in which God saw fit to send one. It would be always something suited to humble him who needed it. It is enough for our spiritual instruction to know by the word, that as to Paul it was an infirmity which tended to make him personally contemptible in his preaching (see <sup>48014</sup>Galatians 4:14; <sup>47010</sup>2 Corinthians 10:10). The object of God, in such a trial, as meeting the danger, is so evident to every spiritual mind, that it were useless to dwell upon it.]

I add but one word on the end of the chapter. There are Christians (I cannot say approved of God) who take their place on thus side of Jordan — that is

to say, on this side of the power of death and resurrection, applied to the soul by the Spirit of God. The place in which they settle is not Egypt; it is beyond the Red Sea, it is within the limits of Israel's possessions outside Egypt and this side the Euphrates, river of Babylon. But it is not Canaan. It is a land they have chosen for their cattle and their possessions; they establish their children and their wives there. It is not Joshua who conquered that land it is not the place of testimony to the power of the Spirit of God — that Canaan which is beyond Jordan.

However, although the children and their families might be placed there, yet the men of war must, whether they will or no, take part in the conflicts of the children of God, who seek no rest except where the power of God is found — that is to say, in Canaan, in the heavenly places, all enemies being driven out. And indeed when the sin of Israel, and their consequent weakness, exposed the people to the successful attacks of their enemies, of the enemies of God, this country was the first that fell into their hands. "Know ye that Ramoth Gilead is ours?" leads to no blessing to the people when sorrowful on account of its loss. For the time all was well; that is, as long as Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh remained under the authority of Joshua, and through him the power of God conducted the people. They too say to Joshua that which God had said, "Be strong and of a good courage.

How often among the children of God some principle or line of conduct is brought in, that is inferior in nature to the excellence of that work which is going on in the purpose of God; but which, as long as the power of God is working according to this purpose, does not disengage itself, so to say, from the work, so as to assume any prominence, and produce uneasiness and sorrow! But when this divine stream becomes shallow in consequence of man's unfaithfulness, then bitter fruits appear; spiritual declensions, weakness, heart-burnings, divisions, and direct subjection to the evil power, flowing from the impossibility of reconciling that which is spiritual with that which is carnal, and of maintaining a spiritual testimony while conforming to the ways of the world.

But this testimony belongs to the other side of Jordan. The two tribes and a half may follow this course if they will, but we cannot come out of Canaan to join them. Alas! these beautiful meadows, well suited to feed their flocks, have found but too many Lots, and tribes of Israel, to settle in them to their loss. The shoals that are met with in our Christian voyage may perhaps be safely crossed at high tide; but at low tide skillful pilotage is needed to avoid them, and to float always in the full current of the grace of God in the channel it has made for itself. But there is a sure and stedfast pilot; and we are safe if we are content to follow Him. God has given us what we need

for this. Perhaps we must be satisfied with a very little boat: the unerring pilot will be in it.

At the first Moses was not pleased with the proposal of the two tribes and a half. The thing was permitted certainly. But in general the first thoughts of faith are the best; they only contemplate the promises, the full effect of the promises and the thoughts of God. After thoughts are not in connection with that.

The second chapter contains the interesting history of Rahab.

How beautiful. it is to see the grace of God setting up its waymarks from the beginning, that the eye of faith may know where to rest, when God was obliged to narrow His dealings with respect to man, and to limit Himself in His relationship to man, until the precious blood of Christ gave that grace its full scope and liberty! Seed of the woman, seed of Abraham, seed of David — it narrows more and more. The promises even, as to the government of God, give place to the law, until a small remnant of Israel, proud in proportion to its poverty, becomes the vessel which contains the yet smaller remnant of faithful ones who were waiting for the redemption of Israel.

And what shallow thoughts, though true ones, were found in the hearts of these precious saints, in comparison with the hopes of an Abraham and the solemn declarations of an Enoch! The Lord, ever perfect, ever precious, might well say (one understands it, although the depths of His heart are infinitely beyond our reach), “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” But there have always been these signals for faith. If God acts, He goes beyond the limits of the existing dispensation, and oversteps His established relationships with man.

It is thus that the divine nature of Jesus, and the divine rights of His Person, manifested themselves. He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was the limit of His formal relationship with men. But if faith lays hold of the goodness of God, can this goodness deny itself, or limit itself to those who, for the time being, were the alone subjects of His dispensation? No, Christ could not say, God is not good, I am not good, to the degree you have imagined. How could God deny Himself? The Syrophenician woman obtains what she asks for. Precious prerogative of faith, which knows and owns God through everything; which honors Him as He is, and ever finds Him what He is!

Wherein was manifested that faith in Rahab which the apostle cites as a pattern? — admirable proof that the way in which God acts in grace is before and above law; that grace overleaps the boundary which law prescribes to man, even while maintaining its authority — an authority

however which can only manifest itself in condemnation! What then was Rahab's faith? It was the faith which recognizes that God is with His people, all weak and few as they may be and not yet possessed of their inheritance, wandering on the earth without a country, but beloved of God.

If Abraham believed God when there was not a people, Rahab identified herself with this people when they had nothing but God. She well knew that the inheritance was theirs, and that, however strong their enemies might be, in spite of their walled cities and their chariots of iron, their heart was melted. This is always the case with the instruments of the enemy, whatever appearances may be, when the people of God are under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the path of obedience which God has marked out for them.

Thus, in the midst of heathens, this poor simple woman, a bad and despised member of an accursed race doomed to destruction, is saved, and her name is a testimony to the glory of God. Her house, recognized by the sure mark, the line of scarlet thread, becomes the refuge and the security of all who take shelter in it, trusting to the promise given.

And now the people are to enter the promised land; but how enter it? For Jordan, with its flood at the highest, lay as a barrier before the people of God, guarding the territory of those that oppose their hopes. Now Jordan represents death, but death looked at rather as the end of human life, and the token of the enemy's power, than as the fruit and testimony of the just judgment of God. The passage of the Red Sea was also death; but the people were there as having part (in type) in the death and resurrection of Jesus accomplishing their redemption, and setting them free for ever from Egypt, their house of bondage — that is, from their place in flesh and thus from all the power of Satan * as the blood on the door posts had from the judgment of God. It was complete redemption, the death and resurrection of Christ in its proper and intrinsic value. But in this aspect it is a complete and finished work, and brings us to God — not a history of what we may go through in actually arriving at this result (see Exodus 15:13, 17; 19:4). Hence, judgment even was executed. In Sinai, but not till then, law took the place of worship, historically. It was then that the people entered upon their pilgrimage in the wilderness. **

[* It is important first to see Jesus alone in life and in death: there we have the thing itself in its perfection. It is equally important then to know that God sees us as having been there, that it expresses our place; that God sees us in Him, and that it is our place before God. But then there is also our taking that place, by the Spirit, in faith and in fact. The former was the Red Sea; as to death, it was Christ's death; Jordan, our entering into death with Him. The Red Sea was deliverance from Egypt; Jordan, entrance into Canaan subjectively; that is, a state suited to it in spirit, not possession of it, as Christ when risen — for us, by faith only of course as yet, as risen with Him.

sitting in heavenly places is an entirely distinct thing, and on distinct ground; an absolute work of God. The Red Sea was the condemning of sin in the flesh, in Christ in death for sin; and so deliverance, when known by faith. But this is Jordan. Only Jordan goes further, for it brings us, as risen with Him, into the state which makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The people followed the ark in going through Jordan, the ark remaining there in its power against death till all were passed.]

[** This supposes being really born again (see <4529>Romans 8:29, 30). The wilderness journey after Sinai supposes this Christian position taken, but individual reality tested. To this all the “if s” of the New Testament apply; that is, to the Christian on the road to the promised land, but with a certain promise of being kept to the end, if faith is there (<4601>1 Corinthians 1:8, 9; <4310>John 10:28). It is dependence, but on the fidelity of God There is no “if” as to redemption, nor as to our present place in Christ, when once we are sealed.]

Redemption, complete salvation, purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, introduces the Christian into this pilgrimage With God he only passes through the world as a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; still, this pilgrimage is but the life down here, although it is the life of the redeemed. *

[* To this the Epistle to the Romans answers.]

But, as we have seen, there is the heavenly life, the warfare in the heavenly places, which goes on at the same time with the wilderness journey. When I say at the same time, I do not mean at the same instant, but during the same period of our natural life on the earth. It is one thing to pass through this world faithfully, or unfaithfully, in our daily circumstances, under the influence of a better hope; it is another thing to be waging a spiritual warfare for the enjoyment of the promises and of heavenly privileges, and to conquer the power of Satan on God’s behalf, as men already dead and risen, as being absolutely not of the world. Both these things are true of the Christian life. Now, it is as dead and risen again in Christ that we are in spiritual conflict: to make war in Canaan we must have crossed the Jordan. *

[* To this Ephesians answers; only Ephesians has nothing to do with our death to sin. It is, as to this question, simply God’s act, taking us when dead in sin and placing us in Christ on high. Colossians is partially both, life here in resurrection, but it does not set us in heavenly places, only in our affections there. By heavenly life I mean living in spirit in heavenly places. Actually Christ was divinely there; we as united to Him by the Holy Ghost.]

The Jordan, then, is death and resurrection with Christ, looked at in their spiritual power, not as to their efficacy for the justification of a sinner, but as to the change of position and state in those who have part in them, in order

to the realization of life in connection with the heavenly places, into which Christ has entered. * A comparison between Philippians 3 and Colossians 2, 3, shows how death and resurrection are bound up with the true character of the circumcision of Christ. In Philippians 3 the return of Christ is introduced as completing the work by the resurrection of the body. We are not looked at as now risen with Him; but as practically running the race, with Christ and resurrection in view — a place which indeed characterizes the epistle. It is not what faith assumes as to position, but the actual present race towards its possession. Hence it is objective, not being in Christ, or even with Him; but that I might win Christ and the resurrection from among the dead. Paul has given up everything for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and is looking for the power of His resurrection, and even justification is looked at as at the end of his course.

> [* This is not mere communication of life, as by the Son of God, but passing as a moral being out of one condition into another, out of Egypt into Canaan; for that is it, the wilderness being dropped as another thing The Red Sea and Jordan in this aspect coalesce.]

In both Philippians and Colossians the heavenly life is spoken of as a present thing; but there is entire separation, even down here, between the pilgrimage and this heavenly life itself, although the latter has a powerful influence on the character of our pilgrim life.

And this introduces a very important subject, which I cannot treat at large here, the connection between life as manifested here, and the objects it pursues. They that are after the Spirit have their minds on the things of the Spirit. The new life flows from what is divine and heavenly, from Christ, and this is specially John's part in teaching; hence it belongs to the risen state in glory, has its full development and place there. Our citizenship is there, and this makes us pilgrims; the heavenly life belongs to heaven; the second Man is "out of heaven." But in its full development there is no pilgrimage; we are at home in our Father's house, like Christ. But here it is developed in pilgrimage; has this character from its being heavenly. It has a growing development in a growing apprehension of what is heavenly (see 2 Corinthians 3:3, 17, 18; 4:17, 18; Ephesians 4:15; 1 John 3:2, 3, and many other passages). This necessarily, our object being on high, makes us strangers and pilgrims here, declaring, in the measure of our fidelity, that we seek a country, the country to which our life belongs; but it forms itself thereby for the display of Christ here, it is adapted to the scene through which we pass, has duties, obedience, service there. The starting-point is sure, that we have died and are risen with Christ, in one aspect; and in another, we are sitting in Him in heavenly places. But this last is not our subject here, it is Ephesian doctrine; this is more Colossian.

Christ Himself, though Himself that life and its manifestation down here in pilgrimage, yet, as a Man down here, had objects — for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down. And this is deeply interesting; His life — God Himself (the last is more John's doctrine)was what was to be expressed, expressed suited to the scene He passed through; but, being a true Man, He walked with objects before Him, which acted on the tenor of His path. The fact that He was this life, and that for His living it had not to die in His death, as we have, to an evil nature, makes it more difficult to realise in His case; but obedience, and He learned what it was, suffering, patience, all referred to His place here; compassion, grace as to His disciples, and all the traits of His life, though divine and such that He could say, "the Son of man who is in heaven," all were the development of the heavenly and divine life here.

Its influence was perfect and entire in His case; but His life in connection with men, although the ever-perfect expression of the effect of His life of heavenly communion and of His divine nature, was evidently distinct from it. The joy of the heavenly life entirely set aside all the motives of the lower life; and, leading to the sufferings of His earthly life in connection with man, produced a life of perfect patience before God. In Him all was sinless; but His joys were elsewhere, save in acting in grace in the midst of sorrow and sina divine joy. Thus also with the Christian; there is nothing in common between these two spheres of life. And, besides, nature has no part whatever in that above; in that below, there are things which belong to nature and to the world (not in the bad sense of the word "world," but considered as creation). Nothing of this enters into the life of Canaan.

Christ alone could pass through death, and exhaust its strength, when in it, as shedding the blood of the everlasting covenant; and He alone could rise again from death, in the reality of the power of the life that was in Him, "for in him was life." But it was proper divine power by which this was done. God raised Christ from the dead, testimony of His full acceptance of His work. Christ, being God, could say: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up": nor was it possible that He could be holden of death. But it is not by any force of spiritual life, as Man, that He raised Himself; though we know, as He laid it down of Himself, so He took it again, and this by commandment received of the Fatherso that in this we cannot separate the deity and humanityI speak of the act, not of His Person. He had power to take it again, but it was still obedience; we feel at every step, no one knows the Son but the Father. He has opened this way; He has converted death into a power that destroys the flesh which shackles us, and a deliverance from that in us which gives advantage to the enemy with whom we are to fight, being thenceforward brought into Canaan. Therefore

the apostle says, “All things are yours, whether life, or death.” Now, every true Christian is dead and risen in Christ; the knowing and realizing it is another thing. But the word of God sets Christian privilege before us according to its real power in Christ.

The ark of Jehovah passed over before the people, who were to leave the space of two thousand cubits between it and them, that they might know the way by which they must go; for they had not passed this way before. Who indeed had passed through death, to rise beyond its power, until Christ, the true Ark of the Covenant, had opened this way? Man, whether innocent or sinful, could do nothing here. This way was alike unknown to both, as was also the heavenly life that follows. This life, in its own sphere, and in the exercises here spoken of, is altogether beyond Jordan:. the scenes of spiritual conflict do not belong to man in his life below; though, as we have seen, the realization of the heavenly things we are brought into act on the character of our faith down here; and our sorrows and trials down here, under God’s grace, tend to clear our vision as regards the glory hoped for. See 2 Corinthians 5:2-5, and how the hope of verse 2 is returned to in verse 5. No wilderness experience, be it ever so faithful, has anything directly to do with this heavenly life although the grapes of Canaan may cheer the pilgrims by the way. But Christ has destroyed all the power of death for His people, so far as it is the power of the enemy, and the token of his dominion. It is now but the witness of the power of Jesus. It is indeed death; but, as we have said, it is the death of that which fetters us.

I will add some brief remarks. “Lord of all the earth” is the title Joshua repeats, as that which God had here taken: for it is in testimony to this great truth that God had planted Israel in Canaan. Hereafter He will establish in power, according to His counsels, that which had been put into the hands of Israel that they might keep it according to their responsibility. This last principle is the key to the whole history of the Bible, as to man, Israel, the law, and all it has to do with. All is first trusted to man, who ever fails, and then God accomplishes it in blessing and power. *

> [* And that in much fuller glory, according to His counsels before the world was, and in the Second Man.]

Thus this chapter supplies us with very clear indications of that which God has promised to accomplish in the last days, when He will indeed show Himself to be “Lord of all the earth,” in Israel brought back in grace by His mighty power. And we must attend to this testimony of the purpose of God in establishing Israel in their land. Harvest time will come, and the strength of the enemy will overflow its banks; but we, as Christians, are already on the other side. The strength of the enemy passed all bounds in the death of

Jesus; and we do not say now, “Lord of all the earth”; but “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Let us remark, also, how God encourages His people. They must combat. The sole of the foot must tread on every part of the promised land to possess it; and it must be in conflict that the power of the enemy and entire dependence upon God are realized. But, while fighting boldly for Him, He would have us know that victory is certain. The spies said to Joshua, “Truly Jehovah hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.” That is what we know and prove by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, so different from that of the flesh as brought by the ten who came back with Caleb and Joshua.

But if we are introduced into a life which is on the other side of death, by the power of the Spirit of God, as being dead and risen in Christ, there must be the remembrance of that death, by which we have been delivered from that which is on this side of it, of the ruin of man as he now is, and of the fallen creation to which he belongs. Twelve men, one out of each tribe, were to bring stones from the midst of Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet stood firm with the ark, while all Israel passed over on dry ground. The Holy Ghost brings with Him, so to speak, the touching memorial of the death of Jesus, by the mighty power of which He has turned all the effect of the enemy’s strength into life, and deliverance from what could not enter into heavenly things, and has laid the basis for our having part in them. Death comes with us from the grave of Jesus: no longer now as death, it is become life unto us, and, subjectively for faith, the absence of that which cannot have part in what is heavenly. This memorial was to be set up at Gilgal. The meaning of this circumstance will be considered in the next chapter. We will only dwell here on the memorial itself. The twelve stones, for the twelve tribes, represented the tribes of God as a whole. This number is the symbol of perfection in human agency, in connection here, as elsewhere, with Christ, as in the case of the shewbread.

Here also the Spirit sets us — Christians — in a more advanced position. There were twelve loaves of the shewbread, and we form but one in our life of union by the Holy Ghost with Christ our Head, which is the life we speak of here. Now it is His death that is recalled to us in the memorial left us by the loving-kindness of our Lord, who condescends to value our remembrance of His love.

I only speak here of this memorial as the sign of that which should always be a reality. We eat His flesh, we drink His life given for us. Being one now in the power of our union with Christ risen and glorified, for here I speak of our whole place, dead to the world and to sin, it is from the bottom of the

river into which He went down to make it the way of life-heavenly life — for us, that we bring back the precious memorial of His love, and of the place in which He fulfilled His work. It is a body whose life by blood is closed * which we eat, a poured out blood which we drink; and this is the reason why blood was entirely prohibited, to Israel after the flesh; for how can death be drunk by those who are mortal? But we drink it because, alive with Him, through the death of Christ we live, and it is in realizing the death of that which is mortal that we live with Him. The remembrance of Jordan, of death when Christ was in it, is the remembrance of that power which secured our salvation in the last stronghold of him who had the power of death. It is the remembrance of that love which went down into death, in order that, as to us, it should lose all its power, except that of doing us good, and being a witness unto us of infinite and unchangeable love.

[* The word “broken” is wrongly introduced in the common text. It was after He had given up His spirit to the Father, in full strength, that the blood was shed through the soldier’s spear. He laid down His life of Himself.]

The power of resurrection-life takes all strength from Satan: “He who is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy, though Christ’s grace is sufficient for us, His strength made perfect in weakness; but the creature has no strength against Satan, even though it should not be drawn away into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But, if this be true, it is also necessary to realise it practically. “Ye are dead... therefore mortify” (Colossians 3). This is what Gilgal means. Nay, we are always to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body (2 Corinthians 4:10). *

[*Colossians 3 is God’s declaration of our position; Romans 6 exhortation to take it up in faith; 2 Corinthians 4 carrying it out in practice in the inner man (Colossians 3:5-17).]

The matter in hand was not yet the taking of cities, the realization of God’s magnificent promises. Self must first of all be mortified. Before conquering Midian, Gideon must cast down the altar that was in his own house.

Remark further, the wilderness is not the place where circumcision is carried out, even though we may have been faithful there. The wilderness is the character the world takes when we have been redeemed, and where the flesh which is in us is actually sifted. But death, and our entrance into heavenly places, judge the whole nature in which we live in this world. But

then, consequent upon our death and resurrection with Christ, it is practically applied, and circumcision is the application of the Spirit's power to the mortification of the flesh in him who has fellowship with the death and resurrection of Jesus (compare 2 Corinthians 4:10-12). Therefore Paul says (Philippians 3), "We are the circumcision." As to an outwardly moral life, Paul had that before. Had he now added true piety to his religion of forms, the true fear of God to his good works? It was far more than that. Christ had taken the place of all in him — first of all as to righteousness, which is the groundwork. But further, the apostle says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead." Therefore it is in "pressing towards the mark" that he waits for the coming of Jesus to accomplish this resurrection as to his body.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 2, he speaks to us of the circumcision of Christ. Isaiah it only that he has ceased to sin (the certain effect indeed of this work of God)? No; for in describing this work he adds, "Being buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him, through faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead." The consequences of this heavenly life are found in Colossians 3:1, which is in immediate connection with the verse just quoted. Here also the work is crowned by the manifestation of the saints with Jesus when He shall appear. Not the rapture; the heavenly part is omitted in Colossians, save that our life is hid there, and that what is there is an object of hope; we are made meet for it, which indeed is just what is done here.

Our Gilgal is in verse 5: "Mortify therefore." It is not "die to sin." Mortify is active power. It rests on the power of that which is already true to faith: "Ye are dead: mortify therefore." This being the standing, it is realized. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead," said the apostle (Romans 6), when speaking on the same subject. * This is the practical power of the type of the stones brought from Jordan. They are a symbol of our place, being the result of death with Christ who was dead. ** But we are also raised up together with Him, + as having died with Him. But there is another aspect of truth, we were dead in sins. He came down in grace where we were, on the way down, so to speak, atoning for our sins. God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses. ++ All that He did was for us; and now, associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Spirit, I am also sitting in, not yet with, Him in heavenly places.

I appropriate to myself, or rather God ascribes to me, all that He has done, as though it had happened to myself: He is dead to sin, in Him I am dead to sin. Therefore I can "mortify": which I could not do as being still alive in the flesh. Where was the nature, the life, to do it in? I am risen with Him; I

am also in Him sitting in heavenly places. But here it is not the Ephesian doctrine — which teaches the purpose and counsels of God, and, Christ being exalted to the right hand of God, shows the simple act of divine power which takes us when dead in sins and sets us in Him — it is the process, so to speak, through which we pass as having been alive (not dead) in sins, and passes us through death, in Christ, into a better life. The other is equally true, so I have spoken of it; but, it is the change, the essential but subjective change spoken of in Colossians as far as death and resurrection with Him go, which is our present subject in Joshua.

[* We have three steps in this process: God's judgment, "Ye are dead"; the recognition of it by faith, "Reckon yourselves dead"; and the carrying it out in practice, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."]

[** The Epistle to the Romans gives, in the desert, faith's estimate of the position which Christ's death has given to us, of death to sin and life to God in this world, as involved in our being saved by His death into which we were baptized, but our resurrection which takes us out of the desert, and is Colossians and Jordan.]

[+ Thus far the Colossians.]

[++ Thus far, also, the Colossians; but we are not viewed there as dead in sins, but as having lived in them, now dead and risen.{This is Ephesian teaching. And this is God's sovereign act of power which has taken us when dead in sins and put us into Christ}.]

Now, circumcision being the practical application of that of which we have been speaking — the death of Christ to sin, to all that is contrary to our risen position, "the body of the flesh" — we remember the death of Christ, and the mortification of our members on the earth is accomplished through grace, in the consciousness of grace. Otherwise it would only be the effort of a soul under the law, and in this case there would be a bad conscience and no strength. This is what sincere monks attempted; but their efforts were not made in the power of grace, of Christ and His strength. If there was sincerity, there was also the deepest spiritual misery. In order to mortify there must be life; and if we have life, we have already died in Him who died for us.

The stones set up in Gilgal were taken out of the midst of Jordan, and Jordan was already crossed before Israel was circumcised. The memorial of grace and of death, as the witness to us of a love which wrought out our salvation, by taking up our sins in grace, and dying to sin once, stood in the place where death to sin was to be effected. In that He died, He died unto sin once; and we reckon ourselves dead to sin. Christ dying for sins, in perfect love, in unfailing efficacy, and His death to sin, give us peace

through His blood as to both, but also enable us through grace to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and to mortify our members which are on earth.

In every circumstance, then, we must remember that we are dead, and say to ourselves, If through grace I am dead, what have I to do with sin, which supposes me to be alive? Christ is in this death in the beauty and in the power of His grace; it is deliverance itself, and introduction morally into the condition in which we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. As to the glory, as running the race down here, the apostle says, “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” But that is another subject.

Thus, in being dead, and only thus, will the reproach of Egypt be taken away. Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly. It is only the heavenly man who has died with Christ that disentangles himself from all that is of Egypt. The life of the flesh always cleaves to Egypt; but the principle of worldliness is uprooted in him who is dead and risen with Christ and living a heavenly life. There is in the life of man, alive as such in this world (Colossians 2:20), a necessary link with the world as God sees it, that is, corrupt and sinful; with a dead man there is no such link. The life of a risen man is not of this world; it has no connection with it. He who possesses this life may pass through the world, and do many things that others do. He eats, works, suffers; but, as to his life and his objects, he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. Christ, risen and ascended up on high, is his life; he subdues his flesh, he mortifies it, for in point of fact he is down here, but he does not live in it. The camp was always at Gilgal. The people — the army of Jehovah — returned thither, after their victories and their conquests. If we do not do the same, we shall be feeble: the flesh will betray us. We shall fall before the enemy in the hour of conflict, even though it may be honestly entered into in the service of God. It is at Gilgal the monument of the stones from Jordan is set up; for if the consciousness of being dead with Jesus is necessary to enable us to mortify the flesh, it is through this mortification that we attain to the practical knowledge of what it is to be thus dead.

We do not realise the inward communion (I am not speaking now of justification), the sweet and divine enjoyment of the death of Jesus for us, if the flesh is unmortified. It is impossible. But if we return to Gilgal, to the blessed mortification of our own flesh, we find there all the sweetness (and it is infinite), all the powerful efficacy of this communion with the death of Jesus, with the love manifested in it. “Always bearing about in the body,” says the apostle, “the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body.” Thus we do not remain in Jordan; but there remains in the heart all the preciousness of this glorious work, a work

which the angels desire to look into, which is for us, and which Christ, in His love, appropriates to us. We find Him with us at Gilgala place of no outward show or victory to attract the eyes of men; but where He, who is the source of all victory, is found in the power and the communion which enable us to overcome.

But there were also twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan; and indeed, if we apply the power of the death of Christ to mortify the flesh, the heart — exercised in, and fully enjoying heavenly things — loves to turn again to Jordan, to the place where Jesus went down in the power of life and obedience, and to gaze upon that Ark of the Covenant, which stood there, and stayed those impetuous waters till all the people had passed over. One loves, now that He is risen, while viewing the power of death in all its extent, to behold Jesus there, who went down into it, but who destroyed its power for us. In the overflowing of the nations, Christ will be the security and the salvation of Israel; but He has been our security and our salvation with respect to much more terrible enemies. The heart loves to stand on the banks of that river — already crossed — and to realise, while studying what Jesus was, the work and the wondrous love of Him who went down into it alone, until all was accomplished. But in one sense we were there. The twelve stones show that the people had to do with this work, although the ark was there alone when the waters were to be restrained.

In the Psalms we can especially there contemplate the Lord, now that we are in peace on the other side the stream. Oh, that the Christian — each one in the assembly — knew how to seat himself there, and there meditate on Jesus gone down into death alone, and death when it overflowed all its banks, bearing its sting and the power of divine judgment with it! In doctrine the Psalms set forth also the connection between the death of Jesus and the residue of Israel passing through the waters of tribulation in the last days.

Behold, then, the people out of Egypt and in Canaan, according to the faithfulness of ‘God’s promise; but as yet nothing of Canaan possessed, nor any victory gained. It is a type for us of what is taught in the Colossians: made meet to be partakers, but the inheritance of the saints in light still in hope; * not only redeemed out of Egypt, but brought into Canaan, the reproach of Egypt being rolled away, and the people of God having taken their place at Gilgal — the true circumcision of heart of which we have spoken.

[* Christ’s state (only that He was actually raised) between His resurrection and ascension helps to understand it. He belonged evidently to heaven, not to this world, though He was not in heaven.]

Israel encamped at Gilgal.

The character of their communion with God is then pointed out, before their victories. They keep the passover in the plains of Jericho. Jehovah prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies.

The blood was no longer sprinkled, as in Egypt, upon the lintel and the two side-posts, that they might be sheltered from the destroyer, and preserved from the last judgment which spread terror throughout every house where the blood was not seen.

We need this aspect of the blood of Christ, while judgment threatens in the territory of sin and Satan, although called of God to come out of it. God's justice and our consciences require it. But here the passover is no longer this; it is the memorial of accomplished salvation. Neither is it participation by grace in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is the soul's communion; it is the sweet spiritual recollection of a work all His own, of His death as a lamb without blemish. We feed upon it, as His redeemed people, in the enjoyment of this position in the land of promise and of God — a land which belongs to us in consequence of this redemption, and of our being raised up with Christ. The death of Jesus can only be thus enjoyed on the other side of Jordan, as risen with Him. Then, in peace, in fellowship with Him, and with ineffable feelings of thankfulness, we return to the death of the Lamb; we contemplate it; we feed upon it. Our heavenly happiness and intelligence only increase our sense of its preciousness.

On the morrow after the passover the people ate of the old corn of the land. Thus, raised up, and in title and nature suited to it, and taking our place thus in fitness and hope in the heavenly places, it is Christ known as heavenly who feeds the soul, and maintains it in vigor and in joy. * From thenceforward, also, the manna ceased. This is the more remarkable, because Christ, we know, is the true manna, but Christ down here, Christ after the flesh, and suited to man, and to his wants in the wilderness; nor will He ever be forgotten as such. I contemplate Jesus (God manifest in the flesh) with adoration. My soul feeds upon the mighty attractions of His grace in His humiliation; delights in the blessed testimony of His love who bore our sorrows and carried our sicknesses, and learns to be nothing and serve, in Him who took the lowest place. It is in this He ministers to the secret affections of the heart as we pass through this world; still in that condition He remained alone. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; otherwise it abides alone.

[* Let us remark, also, that Christian simplicity and sincerity, the practical holiness of the Christian life, the unleavened bread which was eaten on the morrow after the passover, is a heavenly thing. Nothing on this side Jordan

can be this. It is of the growth of that land; therefore it is connected with Jesus, and peace through His death as a thing previous.]

But — while knowing what He has been — it is a Christ seated above, who came from above, who died and is raised again, and ascended up where He was before, whom I now know. His death, of the memorial of which we have spoken, is undoubtedly the basis of all. There is nothing more precious: but it is a heavenly Christ with whom we have now to do as the living One. For the rest, we remember Him in His humiliation and death; but this He gives us as its character. Even in the Lord's supper, analogous to the passover here celebrated it was "Do this in remembrance of me." And so in all His life, it was in the wilderness, and suited to us for the wilderness also; it is, in our little measure, in heart or in fact, the fellowship of His sufferings.

We contemplate, while seeking to imitate, the precious model which He has set before us, as a heavenly man upon the earth. But, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He has for our sakes sanctified Himself, that we might be sanctified through the truth. We delight ourselves with the contemplation of all His grace here below; our affections are drawn out by a suffering Savior. Nothing more precious than the Son of God winning the confidence of man's heart to God by His love in their midst when far from Him; but our present fellowship is with a Christ in heaven. And the Christ, whom we know on earth, is a heavenly Christ, and not an earthly Christ, as He will be to the Jews by-and-by. It was bread on earth no doubt, but bread come down from heaven; and this is a very important consideration. In passing through this wilderness (and we are passing through it), Christ, as the manna, is infinitely precious to us. His humiliation — His grace — comfort, also relieve, and sustain us. We feel that He has passed through the same trials, and our heart is sustained by the thought that the same Christ is with. us. This is the Christ we need for the wilderness — the bread which came down from heaven: but, as a heavenly people, it is Christ, as belonging to heaven and heavenly things, as associated with Him, the old corn of the land; for it is to Christ ascended up on high that we are united; it is there that He is our life. In a word, we feed on heavenly things, on Christ above, on Christ humbled and dying indeed as a sweet remembrance, but on Christ living as the present power of life and grace. We feed on the remembrance of Christ on the cross; this is the passover. But we keep the feast with a Christ who is the center of heavenly things, and feed upon them all (Colossians 3:1, 2). It is the old corn of the land into which we have entered. For He belongs to heaven.

Thus, before giving battle, in front of the very walls of Jericho (representative of the enemy's power), God gives us to enjoy the fruit of this heavenly land as being all our own. We remember the death of Jesus, as redemption long since wrought out; and we feed on the old corn of the land, on heavenly things, as our own present portion. For, being risen with Christ by His grace, all is ours.

After this beautiful picture of the position and the privileges of God's people, who — according to God's own rights — may enjoy everything before engaging in a single battle, we find that war must follow. But there is one thing necessary for making war and obtaining blessings by conquest. Jehovah presented Himself as Captain of the host; it is He Himself who leads us. He is there with a drawn sword in His hand Faith owns no neutrality in heavenly things. * "And Joshua said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of Jehovah am I come."

> [* I say, in heavenly things, because the heart is sensible of good qualities in the creature. The Lord loved the rich young man when He had heard his replies. But when a rejected and ascended Lord is to be followed, the will always sets itself either for or against. Faith knows this; it knows too the rights of God, and it maintains them.]

Remark here that the presence of Jehovah, as Captain of the host, as much demanded holiness and reverence, as when He came down to redeem His people (Exodus 3) in that divine holiness and majesty which were manifested according to their just requirements in the death of Jesus, who gave Himself that He might magnify and establish them for ever. Such as He was, who called Himself "I am," when He thus came down in righteousness and majesty; such also is He when standing in the midst of His people to bless and lead them in conflict.

The almighty power of God is with the church in its warfare. But His infinite holiness is there also, and He will not make good His power in their conflicts if His holiness is compromised by the defilement, the negligence, the heedless levity, of His people; or by their failure in those feelings and affections which become the presence of God, for it is God Himself who is there.

In **CHAPTER** 6 we find the principles on which the conquests of Israel are founded. The work is altogether God's. He may indeed exercise His people in conflict, but it is He who does all. "They went up every man straight before him." There is submission here in the use of means, readiness to follow a course which, in the eyes of the world, is absurd and without object; but which loudly proclaims the presence of the Lord in the midst of

His people. There is entire dependence upon God, a perfect confidence in Him, which openly declares it has nothing else to do but to obey Him.

The promise is sure; they act in obedience. That is the principle Joshua — type of the energy and the mind of the Spirit in one who enjoys communion with the Lord — is certain of success; and in this assurance of faith he acts without hesitation. In effect, all the strength of the enemy falls to the ground without the use of any means that could account for it.

Another principle is, that there must be no fellowship whatever with that which constitutes the power of the enemy of God, with the world, and that which is its strength. All is accursed. It is so with us in this world. If the world of Sodom had enriched Abraham, he would have been dependent on that world; he would have owed it something; he would not have been at liberty from it to belong entirely to God. "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed." God may use these things by consecrating them to Himself, if He will. But if man, if the Christian, meddle with them, the Lord must judge him. cities walled up to heaven, the greatest obstacles are as nothing; how can they be with God? But holiness, complete separation from the world because power is of God — that is the condition of strength. Jericho, representing the enemy's power and means of defense (inasmuch as it was the first city standing as a barrier to arrest the progress of God's people), is put under a curse for ever; and sentence is passed against any one who should rebuild it (see 1 Kings 16:34). The abstract principles of the power of God and the enemy's strength are presented by this city and its fall, in what evidences them, and in contrast. But, if God is there, and the world is utterly condemned, His grace calls out from this world a people saved by faith from its abominations, and Rahab, a poor unworthy sinner, is saved from its judgment, and has her place and part with the people of God. *

[* It is noticeable that she, like Ruth, the stranger, is in the line of the Lord's royal genealogy (Matthew 1:5).]

**CHAPTER** 7 lays open the principles of God's government, or His ways in the midst of His people who are in conflict. Victory leads to negligence. The work is thought easy. After a manifestation of God's power there is a kind of confidence which in reality is only self-confidence, for it neglects God. What proves this is that God is not consulted. Ai was but a small city. Two or three thousand men could easily take it. They went up and viewed the country, but God was forgotten. The consequence of this will be seen. If they had taken counsel of Jehovah, either He would have given no answer on account of the accursed thing, or He would have made its presence known. But they did not seek His counsel; they went forward, and they

were defeated. The people of God surrounded by the enemy, have lost their strength, and flee before the least city in the land. What Will they do now? This is more than they know. Engaged in battle, and unable to conquer, what can they do there, where victory alone is their safety? “The hearts of the people melted and became as water.” Joshua cries unto Jehovah, for in such a case even he who has the Spirit is taken by surprise, not having acted according to the Spirit. He must fall on his face before Jehovah, for their condition is not normal, not according to the Spirit who is the only guide and wisdom of His people. Joshua however recalls the power by which God had brought the people over Jordan, and contrasts it with their present condition, so evidently inconsistent with it. “Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan, O Lord! what shall I say?”

This was a perturbed state of mind, the effect of a mixture of unbelief with the remembrance of the wonders which the power of God had wrought. Joshua loves the people, and he sets before God the glory of His name; yet with a timorous wish that they had remained on the other side of Jordan (and what to do there? for unbelief ever reasons badly), away from the conflict which led to such disasters — a wish that betrayed the unbelief which disturbed his heart.

Such is the state of a believer’s soul in the conflict which the Holy Ghost brings him into, when the state of his soul does not inwardly correspond with the presence of the Holy Ghost who is our only strength for conflict. There is no escape. The position in which the saints find themselves is one which absolutely requires strength; yet the very nature of God prevents His bestowing it. We lament, we recognize His power, we dread the enemy. We talk of God’s glory: but we are thinking of our own fears and our own condition. Yet the thing was very simple. “Israel hath sinned.” Man, even when spiritual, looks at results (because he is in close contact with them), even while owning the power of God, and the connection between Him and His people. But God looks at the cause, and also at what He is Himself. It is true that He is love, but He cannot sacrifice the very principles of His being, nor deny Himself in those relationships which are founded upon what He is. His glory is indeed connected through grace with the well-being of His people. But He will vindicate His glory, and even bless His people in the end, without compromising these principles. Faith must count on the sure result of His faithfulness, but bring the heart (submitting to God’s ways) into accordance with those principles.

It would not be maintaining His glory in the midst of His people if He tolerated amongst them anything contrary to His essential character, and

made use of His power to maintain them in a condition which would deny His nature. The relationship would be broken, and God Himself compromised — a thing absolutely impossible. They had sin amongst them, and the strength of God is no longer with them; for God cannot identify Himself with sin.

And let us remember that there was sin also in the neglect which went forward without seeking counsel from God. Joshua's cry did not at once bring deliverance, but, first of all, discovery of the sin, with respect to which God is very precise and exact. When the government of His people is in question, He searches into everything, and takes cognizance of the smallest details (see ver. 11).

Further, God not only said, "therefore Israel could not stand," but "Thou canst not stand." Their weakness would continue. Sorrowful change! Before it was "No man shall be able to stand before thee." Now they could not stand themselves. Where there is not holiness, God allows the weakness of His people to be practically seen; for there is no strength but in Him, and He will not go out with them where holiness is wanting, nor thus sanction and encourage sin. Only, let us remark here, that God does not always withdraw His blessing at once from those who are unfaithful. He frequently chastens them on one hand, and blesses them on the other. He deals patiently, He instructs them, in His grace; He does not bless them on the side where the evil is, but He acts with admirable tenderness and perfect knowledge, taking the trouble, so to say, of following the soul in detail according to its condition and for its good; for He is full of grace. How often He thus waits for the repentance of His people! Alas! how often He waits for it in vain. But we have here the great principle on which He acts (as in the case of Jericho, that of His power exercised on behalf of His people), proving that all is of God.

Another important principle is here set before us. The people of God are viewed corporately, as to the effects of sin amongst them. God is in their midst. sin is committed there. He is there. But since there is only one God there, and the people are one, if God is displeased and cannot act, the whole people suffer in consequence, for they have no other strength but God. The only remedy is to put away the accursed thing.

We find the same thing at Corinth, modified according to the principles of grace. The wicked person must be put away. If not, they are all identified with the sin until they have put it away, and have thus "approved themselves to be clear." In doing so, they take God's part against the sin, and the relationship between God and the body reassumes its normal state. Nevertheless all this cannot fail to produce certain painful effects. If the

accursed thing is there, although God may have been glorified in the manifestation of the perfection of His ways — of His jealousy of sin, and perfect knowledge of all that happens (for Achan's confession justifies God, and the people have not a word to say), still, though the sin is no longer concealed, discipline must be carried out. The confession of Achan (whose sin had been brought to light, through the obedience of the people, or of Joshua, to the Lord's directions) does but ratify, in the eyes of all, the just judgment.

But it is well to remember here that Christian discipline has always the recovery of the soul for its object. Even if the offender should be delivered unto Satan, it is for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord — a most forcible reason for exercising this discipline, according to the measure of our spiritual power; for we cannot go beyond that. At the least we might always humble ourselves before God, in order that the evil may be removed. To be indifferent to the presence of evil in the church is to be guilty of high treason against God; it is taking advantage of His love to deny his holiness, despising and dishonoring Him before all. God acts in love in the church; but He acts with holiness and for the maintenance of holiness: otherwise it would not be the love of God which acted; it would not be seeking the prosperity of souls.

It is interesting to see that this valley of Achor, the witness and the memorial of the first sin committed by Israel after they had entered the land, is given them "for a door of hope" (Hosea 2:15), when the sovereign grace of God is in action. It is always thus. Fear sin, but do not fear the bitterness of its discovery, nor that of its chastisement: for at this point God resumes the course of blessing. Blessed be His gracious name for it! Alas! Shinar (Babylon) and money soon begin to affect the ways of the people of God. They find these things amongst their enemies, and the carnal heart covets them. Observe also that, if there is faithfulness and obedience, God never fails to manifest and take away that which hinders the blessing of His people. Let us follow the history of the people's restoration to God's favor.

**CHAPTER** 8 exhibits the return of Israel to their strength in God.

If all the people were compromised by Achan's sin, it was needful that they should be sensibly restored to confidence, that they should be established, and consequently that they should go through whatever was necessary to their restoration. They must experience many things. Much experience of this kind would be avoided by walking in the simplicity and integrity of faith. Jacob had more of it than Abraham, and it was when unfaithful that Abraham went through the most (that is, of such experience as is really felt to exercise the heart). But God makes use of this to teach us what we are,

and what He is: two things which — if we know them not — render experience necessary.

Success is now certain: but all the people must go up against this small city which, judging by human strength, might have been taken by two or three thousand men. Pride and false confidence are sharply rebuked by this. How much trouble must Joshua now take! Lay an ambush, feign to flee: all this to take a small city, and not much glory after all. It costs more pains to return into the path of blessing than it would have done to avoid the evil. But the simplicity of faith and its natural vigor can be regained no other way.

Meanwhile, the power of God is with them, and everything succeeds; although the manifestation of this power is not such as it was at Jericho. At length by God's command Joshua stretches out the spear that was in his hand toward the city. It does not appear that the ambush saw it, or that it was a concerted signal. * But as soon as it was stretched out, the ambush arose, entered the city, and set fire to it. It is thus that the Lord, working by His Spirit at the opportune moment produces activity in those even who may not know why. At a given time they are impelled onwards, and think they act from motives of their own, while it is the Lord who directs all their steps in harmony with what He is doing elsewhere: and thus He brings about the success of the whole affair.

> [* It the more appears that this was not a concerted signal, but that the action had the meaning which I have here assigned to it, because Joshua drew not his hand back till they had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai; and this does not agree with the idea of a mere signal.]

It is highly interesting to see the Lord thus the hidden spring of all action, giving impulse to the activity of His children, who in detail are ignorant of what it is that puts them in motion although, on the whole, the mind of God is revealed to them, even as Israel had the general orders of Joshua. When Christ stretches out the spear, all is activity to bring about the counsels of His wisdom and lead to the predetermined results of His mighty grace. May we only have faith to believe it!

We have still two other important facts to consider in this chapter. Jehovah had already shown in the taking of Jericho that it was His might alone that gave victory, or rather that made everything fall before Israel, the prince of this world having no power against Him; and that, the gold and silver being Jehovah's, the people were not to seek the treasures of the conquered world, nor to enrich themselves with its spoils In general, however, when Israel had exterminated their enemies, they took possession of everything, as of the promised land.

Now that these two great principles are established, (namely that the power of God is with His people, and that He will have holiness and consecration to Himself maintained in the camp,) Joshua takes formal possession of the whole country, as belonging to Jehovah.

This is not celebrating the memorial of their salvation by the blood of the Lamb; nor is it feeding on the old corn of the heavenly land in the place of rest; where the grace and perfection of Christ and the redemption He has wrought out are peacefully remembered. The people treat the land itself as belonging of right to Jehovah, according to the strength of the spiritual might which is in activity to assert His rights, and which recognizes them, although the conquest of the land is only just begun. Before Jericho (in type) they had fellowship with the cross, and with things above, without striking a blow.

Here, the conditions of the warfare being laid down, they publicly declare beforehand that it is Jehovah's land. Though Satan is still in possession of the contested land, by right it is Jehovah's. There were two actions by which Joshua verified this. He commanded the dead body of the king of Ai to be taken down from the tree as soon as the sun was down. This was the ordinance in [Deuteronomy 21:22, 23], "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God); that thy land be not defiled, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." Israel's victory was complete. The curse hung over their enemies, who were also Gods enemies. They were made a curse, and declared to be so. Now, according to Joshua's faith, the land was so entirely Israel's, as the gift of God, that it ought not to be defiled; he had, therefore, the dead body taken down that it should not be so in fact.

The other action was Joshua's building an altar on Mount Ebal. Having taken possession of Canaan as a consecrated land, they recognize Jehovah as the God of Israel by worshipping Him in the land. The altar was there as a witness, and as a bond between the people and Jehovah who had given them the land. The erection of this altar has been already spoken of, when considering the Book of Deuteronomy; I will not recur to it. I leave it to the reader to judge whether Joshua would have done better to set up this altar as soon as they had crossed the Jordan. Be that as it may, we do not always turn at once to God, when we enjoy that which His power has wrought. Our not doing so only proves our folly, whether it be in things connected with our joy or our safety. It was the Lords mind here to give us the testimony of divine strength and human weakness before this public assumption of the land in His name; the practical realization of being beyond Jordan in power and of Gilgal, brought home to them by its

contrast. It is taken possession of in connection with Israel's responsibility under the law.

Joshua now reads, before all the people, not only the curses attached to the violation of the law, but all that made known the ways of God in His government of the people.

But, if such a position as this proclaims the rights of God and manifests the confidence of the people, it soon leads to conflict. The enemy will not consent to the invasion and the taking possession of all the territory he has usurped. But the wiles of the enemy are more to be feared than his strength; indeed it is only these that are to be feared: for in his strength he meets the Lord: in his wiles he deceives, or seeks to deceive, the sons of men. If we resist the devil, he flees; but to stand against his wiles, we. need the whole armor of God. Christ met his wiles with Scripture, in the path of simple obedience, and, when he manifested himself, the Lord said, "Get thee hence, Satan."

The inhabitants of Gibeon pretended to have come from far. The princes of Israel use their own wisdom instead of asking counsel of Jehovah. This time it is confidence, not in the strength, but in the wisdom of man. The princes of the congregation, accustomed to reflect and to guide, are more likely to fall into this snare. Bad as they are in their unbelief, the people, eager for the result, are often nearer the mind of God to whom the result is sure. The princes had some misgivings, so that they are inexcusable. Apparently there was much advantage in gaining allies in a place where they had so many enemies. The Gibeonites flattered them too, as the servants of Jehovah. Everything was calculated to set their minds at rest.

Satan can talk religiously as well as another; but he deceives only when we take the management into our own hands, instead of consulting the Lord. Communion with Him was needed to discern that these were people of the country, enemies who dared not to be enemies; but to make peace with such is to deprive oneself of a victory, and of one's right to make good the judgment and the glory of God, in the unmingled possession of the land of blessing. Allies can only set aside that single-eyed dependence upon God, and that purity of moral relationship which exist between God and His people, when it is His power alone that sustains them. For allies were not Israel. Israel spares the enemy; and the name of Jehovah, which had been brought in, obliges His people to retain a perpetual snare in their midst.

Four centuries later, in the days of Saul, this produced its sorrowful fruits. To a spiritual mind the presence of the Gibeonites would always be an evil. Besides, what had Israel to do with allies? Was not Jehovah sufficient? May He give us always to trust in Him, to seek counsel of Him, to own none but

Him, and to be always subject to Him! This will ensure victory over every enemy, and the land will be all our own.

Moreover, this peace with the Gibeonites only brought fresh attacks upon Israel. But now all is plain. Jehovah says to Joshua, “Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thy hand.” This is all that conflict means for one who walks in the Spirit before God. There must be conflict, but conflict is only victory. It is the Lord who has delivered the enemy into our hands; none can stand before us.

All things are ours. The sun stands still, and the moon stays its course, witnessing to the power of God and to the interest He takes in blessing His people. We may be sure that, whithersoever the Spirit will go, there the wheels will go (Ezekiel 1:20). Joshua defeated all his enemies, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. This time they were faithful, they made no peace. What had Canaanites to do in Jehovah’s land? Has Satan any right to the land of promise? This is the light in which Joshua always beholds the land of Canaan (chap. 10:27). But, after the victory, Israel returned to the camp of Gilgal. We have already explained what Gilgal means. But the return thither of the conquerors of the Canaanitish kings contains the instructive lesson that, whatever our victories and our conquests may be, we must always return to the place that becomes us before God in the annihilation of self; to the application of the knowledge we have of God (the resurrection of Christ having set us in the heavenly places), to the judging and the mortifying of the flesh — to spiritual circumcision, which is the death of the flesh by the power of resurrection. There is a time to act and a time to be still, waiting upon God that we may be fit for action. Activity, the power that attends us, success, everything, tends to draw us away from God, or at least to divide the attention of our fickle hearts.

But the camp is the starting-point for victory, and the return from triumph for true strength is always to Gilgal. It is not there that the enemy attacks us if we are faithful. The attack will be on our side, whatever the maneuvers of our adversaries may be.

Let us observe also that, in spite of the people’s and Joshua’s failures, everything turned out well in the end. There were faults, and these faults received their chastisement, as in the case of Gibeon and of Ai. But, the walk of the people being faithful in the main, God made everything work together for good. Thus the peace with Gibeon led to victory over the kings who attacked that people. There was cause for humiliation and for chastisement in the details of their history; but, as a whole, the hand of God appears in it most manifestly.

It is seldom that every step of our way is taken in faith and dependence upon God. We do well to humble ourselves on account of this. But when the object is the Lord's object, He goes before us, and orders all things for the triumph of His people in this holy war, which is His own war. Only failures may bring their fruits for a long while.

Israel's victories bring fresh war upon them; but the confederation of their enemies only serves to deliver them all together into their hands. If God will not have peace, it is because He will have victory. A new principle is now set before us. God will in nowise allow the world's seat of power to become that of His people; for His people depend exclusively on Him. The natural consequence of taking Hazor would have been to make it the seat of government, and a center of influence in the government of God, so that this city should be that for God which it had before been for the world; "for Hazor before time was the head of all those kingdoms." But it was just the contrary. Hazor is totally destroyed. God will not leave a vestige of former power; He will make all things new. The center and the source of power must be His, entirely and exclusively His: a very important lesson for His children, if they would preserve their spiritual integrity.

In a certain sense the conquest of the land seemed complete; that is to say, there was no outward strength left, either to stand before them or to form a kingdom. But Israel had still many enemies in this land, enemies who did not, indeed, molest them while they continued faithful, but who taught the people many things that afterwards helped on their ruin. They had divided the conquered land; they had rest from war. When all is finished, we may reckon up our victories, but not before; till then we ought rather to be occupied in gaining more.

We may remark here that, in the result of God's dealings, the fault committed previously to the attack upon Ai seems blotted out, and had even contributed to the development of His purposes. At the time it had kept them back, and was punished. But God applied Himself to Israel's moral restoration to the confidence of faith, and the grand object of His dealings was in nowise hindered. This is no excuse; but it is a sweet and strong consolation which leads so much the more into worship. The fault committed in the matter of the Gibeonites appears to me more serious. It did not delay their progress; but, being the act of Joshua and the princes, it set them for ever in a false position with respect to those whom they spared.

**CHAPTER** 11 closes the first division of the book, that is to say, the history of Joshua's victories (typically that of the Lord's power by the Spirit, giving His people possession of the promises).

**CHAPTER** 12 is only a summary of their conquests. The Holy Ghost not only gives us the victory over our enemies, but makes us understand and know the whole extent of the country, and defines the particular portion of each; giving us details of everything it contains; of God's perfect arrangements for the appropriation of the whole, and the distribution of each part of His people, so as to produce a well-ordered whole, and perfect in all its parts, according to the wisdom of God. But here we have to realise the distinction maintained in the New Testament between the gifts of God, and the enjoyment of the gifts given. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "He hath made us sit together in heavenly places by the same power which placed Christ there, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him above every name that is named. Alas! how many earthly things still remain unsubdued among Christians. But the Holy Ghost takes cognizance of this condition, in view of, and in connection with, that which rightfully belongs to them: it is this which enables us to understand the second division of this book.

Although there was still a considerable part of the land to be possessed, Joshua parcels out the whole amongst the tribes of Israel, according to the command of Jehovah, who declares that He will Himself drive out its inhabitants before them. But the people poorly responded to this promise. The cities of the Philistines were indeed taken, but their inhabitants were not exterminated; they were spared, and soon regained power. Here we may remark that, wherever there is faithfulness, there is rest. The effect of Joshua's work was, that "the land had rest from war"; so also with that of Caleb (chap. 14:15). When the cities of the Levites were allotted them, we find the same thing again (chap. 21:43, 44). It is not so in detail. The whole extent of country is given to Israel, and each tribe has his share; the portion, therefore, which fell to each tribe was given them in full right by Jehovah Himself. Their borders were marked out; for the Spirit of God takes notice of everything in distributing the spiritual inheritance, and gives to each according to the mind of God. There is nothing uncertain in God's arrangements. But we find that not one tribe drove out all the enemies of God from His inheritance, not one realized the possession of all that God had given him.

Judah and Joseph take possession of their lots. We know that they always remained chief amongst Israel, fulfilling thus the counsels of God as to royalty for Judah, and the birthright which fell by grace to Joseph (chaps. 15-17; see 1 Chronicles 5:2). The tabernacle of God was also set up in peace (chap. 18); but, once at rest, the tribes are very slow in taking possession of their portion — too frequently the history of God's people. Having found peace, they neglect His promises. Nevertheless, as we have

seen, the Spirit of God did not fail to point out to the people in detail all that belonged to them.

The cities of refuge are appointed (chap. 20); that is, the land being Jehovah's, provision is made that it may not be defiled, and for the return of every man to his inheritance, after he had fled from it for a time, because of killing some person unawares. We have already seen the force of this. Only we may remark here, that not only have we seen spiritual title to all at once before Jericho — the rights of Jehovah maintained in the case of the king of Ai and mount Ebal, as the ground of present possession — but provision for restoration to enjoyment of the inheritance in detail when temporarily lost, which, in figure, applies to the people in the last days.

The establishment of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan gave rise to difficulties and suspicions. Nevertheless these tribes were faithful at heart. Their position had done them harm, their self-seeking having somewhat marred the energy of their faith: still, faithfulness to Jehovah was found in them.

Finally, Joshua sets the people, in the way of warning, under a curse, or under a blessing, according to their obedience or disobedience; and then recapitulates their history, telling them that their fathers had been idolaters, and that the people around them were so still.

But the people, not having yet lost the sense of the power of God who had blessed them, declare that they will serve Jehovah alone. They are thus placed under responsibility, and undertake to obey, as the condition of their possessing the land and enjoying the fruit of God's promise. They are left there, it is true, in peaceable possession of it all, but under the condition of obedience after having already allowed those, who should have been utterly destroyed, to remain in the land; and when, from the outset, they had not at all realized that which God had given them. What a picture of the assembly ever since the days of the apostles!

There is yet one remark to be made. When Christ shall return in glory, we shall inherit all things, Satan being bound. The assembly ought to realise now, by the Holy Ghost, the power of this glory. But there are things, properly called heavenly, which are ours, as being our dwelling-place, our standing, our calling; there are others which are subjected to us, and which are a sphere for the exercise of the power that we possess. Thus the limits of Israel's abode were less extensive than those of the territory to which they had a right. Jordan was the boundary of their abode, the Euphrates that of their possession. The heavenly things are ours; but the manifestation of the power of Christ over creation, and the deliverance of this creation, is

granted to us. It will be delivered when Christ Himself shall exercise the power.

Thus the “powers of the world to come” * were deliverances from the yoke of the enemy. These were not things proper to us; nevertheless they were ours.

[* So called, I doubt not, because they were samples of that power which will entirely subdue the enemy when Christ shall appear.]

# JUDGES

The Book of Judges is the history of the failure of Israel. Joshua sets before us the energy of God acting in the midst of the people, though there may be failure. In Judges we see the miserable state of the nation, now become unfaithful; and, at the same time, the intervention of the God of mercy in the circumstances into which their unfaithfulness had brought them. These interventions correspond with what are called revivals in the history of the church of God.

In this book we no longer see blessing and power marking the establishment of the people of God. Neither does it contain the fulfillment of God's purposes, after the people had manifested their inability to retain the blessing they had received, that indeed is yet to come for them, and for the assembly; nor the forms and government which, in spite of the evil and internal unfaithfulness of the people, could maintain their external unity, until God judged them in their leaders. God was still the only leader acknowledged in Israel; so that the people themselves always bore the penalty of their sin.

The misery into which their unfaithfulness brought them moving the compassion of God, His mighty grace raised up deliverers by His Spirit in the midst of the fallen and wretched people. "For his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." "And Jehovah raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." "And when Jehovah raised them up judges, then Jehovah was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, all the days of the judge; for it repented Jehovah because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." But Israel was unchanged. "And yet they would not hearken unto their judges." "And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn ways." This is the sorrowful history of the people of God; but it is also the history of the grace of God, and of His compassions towards His people.

Thus, in the beginning of the book, we see evil and failure, and also simple and blessed deliverances. But alas! the picture darkens more and more. There are grievous features even in the conduct of the judges, and the state of Israel becomes worse and worse; until weary of the results of their own unfaithfulness, in spite of the presence of the prophet, and the express word of God, they reject the kingship of the Almighty to adopt human forms of

government, and establish themselves on the same footing as the world, when they had God for their king!

This unfaithfulness, indeed, foreseen of God, was the reason why God left some of the nations in the midst of His people to prove them. The presence of these nations was in itself a proof of Israel's lack of energy and confidence in the power of God, who nevertheless would have preserved them from their subsequent disasters. But in the wisdom of His counsels, God, who knew His people, left these nations in their midst, as a means of proving them. Israel will be fully blest only under Messiah, who by His might will bring in their blessing, and by His might will preserve it to them.

Alas! this history of Israel in Canaan is also that of the assembly. Set up in heavenly blessing on the earth, it has failed from the beginning in realizing that which was given to it; and evil developed itself in it as soon as the first and mighty instruments of blessing which had been granted it were removed. Things have gone from bad to worse. There have been revivals, but still the same principle of unbelief; and the decay of each revival has marked increasing progress in evil and unbelief in proportion to the good which has been thus forsaken. The revival never reaches to the extent of laying hold of what God is, what He revealed Himself as at first for His people, what the first power of revelation and action of the Spirit. When departed from, God is more and more lost. The part of His blessing afresh brought forward is neglected and abandoned, so that there is a more entire forgetfulness of Him, and nature and the world resume their place, but now not merely without, but to the exclusion of, God, and setting up of man and nature, by departing from the primitive source of blessing and strength. *

> [* It is a striking fact in man's history that the first thing that he has always done when God has set up something of His own on the earth has been to spoil it. Man himself eats the forbidden fruit; Noah gets drunk; Aaron's sons offer strange fire; Israel makes the golden calf; Solomon falls into idolatry; Nebuchadnezzar sets up his idol and persecutes. God's patience has gone on dealing with souls, all through, in spite of it.]

Nevertheless God has always had His own people, and His faithfulness has never failed them, whether in secret, or manifesting openly, in His kindness, His grace towards His assembly in public power — a power that it ought always to have enjoyed. This sad succession of falls will have an end at the coming of Jesus, who will accomplish His purposes respecting the assembly in its heavenly glory; purposes, of which it should have always been the faithful witness here below.

The power and the presence of God did not forsake Israel at the time of Joshua's departure. It was always to be found wherever there was faith to

make use of it. This is the first truth which this book presents. It is what Paul said to the Philippians, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do.”

This presence of God with them in blessing to faith makes itself known at one time by victory over most powerful enemies (chap. 1:1-7); at another by the obtaining of special blessing, “springs of water” (vers. 13-15), and in all the detail of their realization of the promises. The Philistines even were driven out (ver. 18). But at the same time, the faith of Judah and Simeon, of Ephraim and Manasseh, and of all the tribes failed; and consequently their energy, and their sense of the value of God’s presence, and of their own consecration to Him, failed also, together with their perception of the evil existing among their adversaries — a perception which would have rendered their presence in the midst of them insupportable.

What dishonor to God, what sin, to spare, to tolerate, such people! What unfaithfulness towards God was this indifference; and what an infallible source of evil and corruption in Israel! But they were insensible to all this. They were wanting in spiritual discernment as well as in faith; and the sources of evil and misery dwelt beside the people, even in the land, the land of God and of Israel.

Alas! if such was the condition of the people, and they were satisfied with it, chastening, as at Ai, was no longer in question. But the angel of Jehovah (the operative power of God in the midst of the people) quits Gilgal (that spiritual circumcision of heart, which precedes victory, and tempers the soul anew that we may overcome in conflict) and comes up to Bochim, to the place of weeping, in the midst of the people, declaring that He will no longer drive out the enemy whom Israel had spared.

God had been then at Gilgal! What a blessing amid those exercises and inward conflicts of heart, in which true practical circumcision is accomplished, in which the source and influence of sin are felt in order to judge it before God; so that, the flesh being judged, we may in conflict (and also in communion) enjoy the strength of God, who cannot grant it to the flesh and to sin.

This inward mortification is a work of no outward glory; it is unseen, or little and pitiful in the eyes of man; it makes us little in our own, but God and His grace great, and associates the heart with Him, giving the moral consciousness of His presence. Not as if we were strong; on the contrary there is the sense of entire dependence (compare 2 Corinthians 12), but dependence on divine strength, which really does all that is done, though God may do it through instruments if He sees good, and then the

responsibility of man comes in. At Jericho God did all, to show, being without man, who was the doerthen at Ai, responsibility. The strength was not shown at Gilgal. It was shown against the Amorites of the mountains, at Gibeon; but it was gathered at Gilgal. Historically it did not appear that the strength of God was at Gilgal. To have manifested it would have destroyed the proper work of Gilgal — the judgment in humbleness because of God, of everything in which flesh works. But, when forsaken, it was discovered that the angel of Jehovah had been there. It is exchanged for tears. But the tears are for lost blessings. God may be worshipped in Bochim: His relationship to the people was unaltered. He accepts these tears. But what a difference! The strength and the light of Jehovah's countenance are not there. But He is always the same for faith to count on, as when the sea fled from before His face, and Jordan was driven back. The sorrow of the position is felt, but alleviated by the sense that His grace cannot and will not fail (see <0063>Judges 6:13, 14). This change from Gilgal to Bochim is the key to the book; it is so, alas! but too often, the condition of God's children.

The Holy Ghost, having laid these general foundations, goes on to the historical development of Israel's position.

All the days of Joshua and of the elders that outlived him, Israel walked before Jehovah. It is the history of the assembly. While the apostles were there, it was preserved; but Paul (<4429>Acts 20:29) and Peter (<6001>2 Peter 2) alike warned the saints that unfaithfulness and rebellion would unhappily follow their departure. These evil principles were already there. The intermixture of unbelievers (the enemy's work) would become the means through which the evil would unfold itself and gain ground amongst them.

The Lord had spoken of this (<4013>Matthew 13), not indeed as to the assembly, but as to the good seed which He had sown; and Jude develops its progress and results with solemn perspicuity and precision.

But when another generation arises in Israel, which has not known Jehovah, and has not seen all the great works of His hand; and when they serve the gods of the people whom Israel had spared, God no longer protects them. Unfaithful within, the Israelites fall into the hands of the enemy without. Then, as we have seen, in their affliction Jehovah, moved with compassion, raised up judges, who, acknowledging His name, brought back the manifestation of His power in their midst.

God, knowing what the people were, and what was their condition, had left within the borders of their land that which put obedience to the proof — the Philistines, the Sidonians, etc., that they might learn war, and experience the ways and the government of Jehovah.

Thus the wisdom and foreknowledge of God, who knows what is in man, turned the unfaithfulness of the people into blessing. Outward prosperity, without trial, would not have remedied unbelief, whilst it would have deprived them of those exercises and conflicts in which they might learn what God was, His ways and His relations to them, as well as what their own hearts were.

We go through the same experience, and for the same reasons.

I will now go over the principal subjects presented in the history of this book. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar were, in succession, the first instruments raised up by God to deliver His people.

First we have to remark the failure of the people, who begin to serve false gods; thereupon their servitude. In their distress they cry unto Jehovah. This is always the way in which deliverance comes (chap. 3:9, 15; 4:3). In this last instance Jehovah departs from His usual ways. The nation had lost its strength and energy, even as to its internal affairs. This is the effect of repeated falls; the sense of God's power is lost.

At the period of which we speak, a woman judged Israel. It was a sign of God's omnipotency, for she was a prophetess. But it was contrary to God's ordinary dealings, and a disgrace to men. Deborah calls Barak (for where the Spirit of God acts, He discerns and directs); she communicates to him the command of God. He obeys; but he lacks faith to proceed as one who has had direct instruction from God and consequently needs no other. These direct communications give the consciousness of God's presence, and that He interposes on behalf of His people. Barak will not go without Deborah. But this want of faith is not to his credit. Men will keep the place which answers to the measure of their faith; and God will again be glorified through the instrumentality of a woman. Barak has faith enough to obey if he has some one near who can lean immediately on God, but not enough to do so himself. This is too often the case. God does not reject him, but He does not honor him. In fact, it is by no means the same faith in God. And it is by faith that God is honored.

We have, moreover, in this case, not the immediate destruction of the enemy, but the discipline of the people in war to recover them from the state of moral weakness into which they had fallen. They began with small things. A woman was the instrument; for fear does not honor God, and God cannot allow His glory to rest on such a condition as this. But little by little "the hand of the children of Israel prevailed against Jabin until they had destroyed him."

The usual effect of such a work of the Holy Ghost as this is to present the people as willingly offering themselves (chap. 5:2). Nevertheless the Spirit of God has shown us that unbelief amongst the people had caused many of them to stay behind; and thus they lost the manifestation and the experience of the power of God. The judgment of God amounts to a curse where there was an entire holding back, a refusing to be associated with the people in their weakness.

But again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and He delivered them into the hand of Midian. And the children of Israel cried again unto Jehovah. God reveals the cause of their distress to the consciences of the people. This was indeed an answer; but, for the moment, He left them as they were. He did not act in their midst by delivering them at once; but He acted for them in the instrument whom He had chosen to effect their deliverance. God glorified Himself in Gideon: but the concentration of this work in one man proves the people to be in a lower condition than before. Nevertheless, in these humiliating circumstances, God chooses means which display His glory in every way. Where He works, there is strength; and faith also, which acts according to that strength in its own sphere.

We will examine a little into the history of Gideon, and the features of the Spirit's work in this deliverance, as well as in the faith of him whom He raised up. It is evident that many thoughts had occurred to Gideon, many serious reflections, before the angel spoke to him. But it was the angel's visit that caused him to give form and expression to the thoughts with which his heart was occupied. Gideon suffered with the rest from the oppression of God's enemies; but it led him to think of God, instead of making up his mind to endure the bondage as a necessary evil. The angel says to him, "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor."

That which preoccupied the mind of Gideon is now manifested. It was not his own position, but the relation between Jehovah and Israel. * "If Jehovah," said he, "be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt? But now Jehovah hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

[* Not the elevation of Abrahamic promises, but the manifestation of redeeming power in Jehovah in favor of Israel. Something like Moses, to whom Jehovah had said, "thy people," but who ever said, "Thy people." So Gideon cannot separate himself from all Israel — God's people. "Jehovah is with thee," said the angel. "If Jehovah be with us," says Gideon, "why then is all this befallen us?" But this is an immensely important principle of faith and its activities. Note, too, what was passing in the heart of faith was the

ground Jehovah took in testimony (ver. 8), only adding the charge of disobedience.]

Faith, indeed, was the source of all these reasonings and exercises of mind. Jehovah had wrought all these wonders. He had brought the people up from Egypt. If Jehovah was with Israel, if such was His relation to His people, why were they in this sorrowful condition? (Oh, how applicable would this reasoning be to the assembly!)

Gideon acknowledges, too, that it is Jehovah who delivered them into the hands of the Midianites. How the thought of God raises the soul above the sufferings one is enduring! While thinking of Him one recognizes, in these very sufferings, the hand and the whole character of Him who sent them. It was that which lifted up this poor Israelite, laboring under the weight of oppression. “And Jehovah looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel.” The visit and the command of Jehovah imparted their form and their strength to that which before was only heart-exercise.

Nevertheless it was this heart-exercise which gave him strength; for it was the inward link of faith with all that Jehovah was for His oppressed people, in the consciousness of the relationship existing between them.

We will look now at the development of this faith, and see it employed for the deliverance of God’s people. Gideon experiences at first the sense of his own littleness, whatever may be the relationship between Jehovah and the people (chap. 6:15). Jehovah’s answer shows him the one simple means, “Surely I will be with thee.” Precious condescension! Sweet and powerful encouragement to the soul! Gideon’s faith was weak. The present state of the people tended, by its duration, to blot out the remembrance of the wonders which Jehovah had wrought when they came out of Egypt, and to weaken their consciousness of His presence. The angel of Jehovah condescends to tarry with him in order to strengthen his faith.

Gideon, who had addressed him with a secret consciousness that it was Jehovah, now knows indeed that he has seen the angel of Jehovah, of Elohim, face to face. It was a positive revelation, sufficient to annihilate him in himself, as was indeed the case; but also mightily to strengthen him in his walk amongst others, who had not known Jehovah in the same way. Although not with similar visions, yet it is always thus when God raises up a special instrument for the deliverance of His people.

Jehovah had made Himself known, and now he reassures Gideon: “Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.?’

A man who is humbled by the presence of God receives strength from God, if that presence is in blessing. Gideon recognizes and lays hold of this

for himself: Jehovah is with him in peace and in blessing. The word Shalom, translated “Peace be with thee,” is the same as that used in the name of the altar.

When God acts powerfully on the heart, the first effect shows itself always in connection with Himself. Gideon’s thoughts are occupied with Jehovah, they were so before this manifestation. But being taken up with Jehovah, it is by worship that he expresses his feelings, * when he receives an answer from Jehovah to all his thoughts. ** He builds an altar to the God of peace. The relationship of peace is thus established between God and His servant; but all this is between Gideon and Jehovah.

[* We observe a similar feeling in Eliezer (<012427>Genesis 24:27). It is very interesting to notice the different circumstances in which altars have been built to Jehovah. I will name a few passages: <010820>Genesis 8:20; <011207>12:7; compare <011304>13:4; see <012133>21:33; <012209>22:9; <012625>26:25; <013320>33:20; <013507>35:7. We may also remark <022404>Exodus 24:4; <060830>Joshua 8:30; and here <070601>Judges 6. It appears even that Gideon built two altars; the one for himself in worship, and the other by command as a testimony. <090707>1 Samuel 7:17; <091435>14:35; <111832>1 Kings 18:32. We may add <102425>2 Samuel 24:25; <150302>Ezra 3:2.]

[** It is instructive to observe here the difference between the exercises of heart which are the result of faith, and the answer of God to the wants and difficulties which are caused by those exercises. In verse 13 we have the expression of these exercises in a soul under the weight of the same oppression as his brethren, but who feels it thus because his faith in the Lord was real. Then we have the answer which produces peace, and, with peace, worship. It is the same, when, after having suffered death, the risen Jesus reveals Himself to His disciples with the same words that God uses here, and lays down the foundation of the church gathered together in worship. In Luke 7 we find the same experiences in the woman who was a sinner. She believed in the person of Jesus. His grace had made Him her all; but she did not know yet that one like her was pardoned and saved, and might go in peace. This assurance was the answer given to her faith. Now this answer is what the gospel proclaims to every believer. The Holy Ghost proclaims Jesus. This produces conviction of sin. The knowledge of God in Christ, and of ourselves, casts down (for sin is there, and we are in bondage, sold under sin); but it produces conflict, perhaps anguish. Often the soul struggles against sin, and cannot gain the mastery; it cannot get beyond a certain point (the greater number of the sermons from which it expects light go no farther); but the gospel proclaims God’s own resources for bringing it out of this state. “Peace be unto thee,” “thy sins are forgiven.” “Thy faith” (for she has faith), says Christ to the poor sinful woman, “hath saved thee.” This was what she knew not yet. Compare <440237>Acts 2:37, 38.]

Now comes his public service, which is also fulfilled by re-establishing, first of all, in the bosom of his own family, and in his own city, the relationship between God and His people. Israel must put away Baal before

God can drive out the Midianites. How could He do so, while the blessing might be ascribed to Baal?

Gideon is therefore commanded to give a striking testimony, which calls the attention of the whole people to the necessity of casting out Baal, in order that God may intervene.

Faithfulness within precedes outward strength: evil must be put away from Israel before the enemy can be driven out. Obedience first, and then strength: this is God's order.

When Satan's power in superstition (in whatever way it may be outwardly manifested) is despised, it is destroyed; supposing always that God is with him who pours contempt on it, and that he is in the path of obedience.

Gideon overthrows Baal; and, on the anger of the people fearful through superstition. What can this God do? he cannot defend himself, said even he to whom the altar belonged. The power of God acted on their minds, for faith was there. But the opposition of the enemy did not cease on that account. There is nothing so despicable as a despised God. But if Satan cannot be a God amongst men, he is not at the end of his resources, he will incite them to open hostility against those who overthrow his altars; but if we are standing on God's side, the only effect of this will be to bring him thereby into the presence of God's power, and to give us victory, deliverance, and peace.

The Midianites come up against Israel. All is ready for the Lord's intervention. The Spirit of Jehovah comes upon Gideon. This is a new phase in the history; not only faithfulness, but power. Gideon blows the trumpet, and those who shortly before would have slain him now follow in his train. He sends messengers to all his tribe. Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali come up also. The power of the Spirit, which sways the minds of men, is with the faith that acknowledges God, that acknowledges Him in His relationship to His people, and faithfully puts away the evil which is incompatible with that relationship.

God gives another proof of His great condescension, by granting a sign to strengthen the weak but real and sincere faith of Gideon; who feels, whilst repeating his request (ver. 39), that God might well chasten him for his lack of faith. Nevertheless the Lord grants his petition.

Thirty-two thousand men followed Gideon. But Jehovah will not have so many. He alone must be glorified in their deliverance. Their faith was indeed so weak, even while the Spirit of God was at work, that, when in the presence of the enemy, twenty-two thousand men were content to return at

Gideon's invitation. The movement produced by the faith of another is quite a different thing from personal faith.

But ten thousand men are still too many. Jehovah's hand alone must be seen. Those only may remain who do not stop to quench their thirst at their ease, but who refresh themselves hastily, as opportunity offers, more occupied with the combat than with their own comforts by the way. This was what was needed for Israel — that Jehovah should have His place in their hearts and faith; and it suited the just judgment of God in Israel that they should, as to their place in the work, be left out of the glory of it.

Gideon now displays entire confidence in God. Previously, the weakness of his faith had made him look too much at himself, instead of simply looking to God. His deep sense of Israel's condition prevented his hesitating for a moment because the people were not with him; what could be done with this people? In the mistrust which arose from a disposition to look too much to himself, what he needed was the certainty that Jehovah was with him. But, having now the assurance that Jehovah will deliver Israel by his means, he trusts entirely to Him.

Jehovah throws terror and alarm into the midst of the enemy; and acquaints Gideon with this. It is affecting to see the care which God takes to impart confidence to His servant, suitably to the need which the state of things had created. Already the name of Gideon resounded with dread in the numerous army of the Midianites. Then, terror-stricken, they destroy each other. The confidence of the Midianites, founded only on Israel's want of power, melted away before the energy of faith; for the enemy's instruments have always a bad conscience. It is Jehovah who does everything. The trumpets and the lamps alone announce His presence, and that of His servant Gideon. The multitude of Israel pursue the enemy, profiting by the work of faith, although without faith themselves: the usual result of such a movement.

Nevertheless, they did not all unite with Gideon in pursuit of the Midianites. But, for the moment, Gideon despises the cowardice which disowns him through a remaining fear of the oppressor's power. On his return he chastises, in the righteous indignation of faith, those who at such a moment had shown themselves favorable to the enemy, when the servants of God were "faint yet pursuing" (chap. 8).

While the work was yet to do, they were taken up with the work and passed on: there is time enough for vengeance when the work is done. Gideon has also the prudence to set himself aside, in order to allay the jealousy of those who felt their pride wounded, because Gideon had had more faith than themselves. They did not boast of their own importance, or request to be called, when Midian had power over the land of Israel. It would be wrong

to contend with such persons. If you are satisfied with having done the work of God, they will be satisfied with the spoil they find in pursuing the enemy; they will make a victory of it to themselves. It must be allowed them; for in fact they have done something for the cause of God, although tardy in espousing it. They came when they were called, and willingly, as it appears; they followed Gideon's directions, and brought him back the heads of the princes. The secret of faith and of Jehovah was with Gideon. It was useless to speak of it to them. The people did not know their own weakness. Gideon must be strong on Jehovah's side for Israel, since Israel could not be so with him. But for that very reason they could not understand why they were not called before. It had to be left unexplained; a proof of the sad state of Israel. But the danger was removed, and the difficulty set aside, in that Gideon wisely contented himself with calming their minds, by not insisting upon his own importance, which arose from a faith of which they did not feel themselves incapable, and the difficulties of which they could not appreciate, since they possessed it not. We must be near God in order to feel what is wanting in His people's condition as to Him: for it is in Him we find that which enables us to understand both His strength, and the exigencies of our relationship with Him.

During the lifetime of Gideon, Israel dwelt in peace.

Although the details of this deliverance have an especial interest, it appears to me to mark a lower condition of the people than at the period of the preceding ones. It then seemed quite a natural thing that some servant of Jehovah, trusting to His arm, should deliver the people from the yoke that oppressed them. Or else the people — awakened by the words of a prophetess — released themselves, and, by the help of God, obtained the victory over their enemies. But in this case even the sense of Jehovah's relationship to His people had to be restored. That is what God does with Gideon, as we have seen, and that with touching condescension and tenderness. But it was requisite to do it. Therefore God alone accomplished the deliverance of His people. The people must not be employed in it, lest they should attribute it to themselves; for the farther off we are from God, the more ready we are to ascribe to ourselves that which is due only to Him.

After Gideon's death we see the results of this distance from God in the internal struggles which took place between the children of Israel. They are ungrateful to the house of Gideon, and war breaks out amongst them through the leader whom they set up, and who, instead of fighting with the enemies of God, only seeks dominion over the people who are now at peace (chap. 9).

The overthrow of the men of Shechem and of Abimelech is followed by temporary peace, after which the people fall again into their idolatrous iniquity, and Jehovah sells them into the hands of the nations whose gods they serve. Sorely distressed by their enemies, the children of Israel cry unto Jehovah, who reproaches them for their past conduct, and sends them back to the gods they had been worshipping. Then the people put away the strange gods from among them. Jehovah is moved with compassion (chap. 10).

Israel, without a leader, have recourse to the captain of a troop of "vain men," and promise to obey him if he will put himself at their head. Jephthah consents. But although this was a deliverance, yet we see in it all how deeply Israel had fallen. Jephthah himself suffers cruelly from his rash vow; and, moreover, when the pride of the Ephraimites led them to complain that they had not been treated with due respect, the calmness and wisdom of one who knew Jehovah as Gideon did, were not found in Jephthah. What a difference between these days and those of Joshua! God multiplies His deliverances; but this has no effect on the unbelief of the people, and their condition continues to grow worse and worse (chaps. 11, 12).

After Jephthah, Israel again enjoys an interval of peace under the guidance of several judges whom God raises up. But they soon return to their former course of sin, and Jehovah delivers them into the hand of the Philistines. Samson's history gives us the commencement of Israel's relationship with these bitter enemies, which only ceased when David had subdued them. The Philistines at this period were at the height of their power. But the important thing here is the history of Samson (chaps. 13-16).

Samson, as a type, sets before us the principle of Nazariteship, entire separation to God, the source of strength in conflict with our enemies, looked at as enemies who seek to gain the upper hand amongst the people of God, within their own limits and in their own heart.

The Philistines were not a scourge, a chastisement sent from without; they dwelt in Israel's own territory, in the land of promise. Undoubtedly, before this, other nations whom the faithlessness of the people had left in the midst of Canaan had been a snare to them, leading them to intermarriage with idolaters, and to the worship of false gods; and Jehovah had given them up into the hands of their enemies. But now, those who had been suffered to remain in the conquered land assume dominion over Israel.

Here, then, that which can give victory and peace to the heirs of promise is the strength imparted by separation from all that belongs to the natural man, and entire consecration to God, so far as it is realized. This Nazariteship is

spiritual power, or rather that which characterizes it, when the enemy is within the land. For Samson judged Israel during the dominion of the Philistines (chap. 15:20). Afterwards Samuel, Saul, and above all David, entirely changed the state of things.

When the Canaanite, when the power of the enemy, reigns in the land, Nazariteship alone can give power to one who is faithful. It is a secret unknown to the men of the world. Christ exemplified it in its perfection. Evil reigned amongst the people. The walk of Christ was a walk apart, separate from evil. He was one of the people, but, like Levi (Deuteronomy 33:9), He was not of them. He was a Nazarite. But we must distinguish with respect to this.

Morally, Christ was as separate from sinners while on earth, as He is now. But, outwardly He was in their midst; and, as the witness and expression of grace, He was spiritually in their midst also. Since His resurrection He is completely separate from sinners. The world sees Him not, and will see Him no more save in judgment.

It is in this last position, and as having put on this character of entire separation from the world, that the assembly, that Christians, are in connection with Him. Such a High Priest became us. The assembly retains its strength, Christians retain their strength, so far only as they abide in this state of complete separation, which the world does not understand and in which it cannot participate. Human joy and sociability have no part in it; divine joy and the power of the Holy Ghost are there. The life of our adorable Savior was a life of gravity, always grave and generally straitened (not in Himself, for His heart was a springing well of love, but because of the evil that pressed Him on every side): I speak of His life and of His own heart. With regard to others, His death opened the flood-gates, in order that the full tide of love might flow over poor sinners.

Nevertheless, whatever may have been the Lord’s habitual separateness, He could say, with reference to His disciples, “These things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” It was the best of wishes, divine joy instead of human joy. The day will come when these two joys shall be united, when He will again drink wine, though in a new way, with His people in the kingdom of His Father; and all will be His people. But at present this cannot be; evil reigns in the world. It reigned in Israel, where there ought to have been righteousness. It reigns in Christendom, where holiness and grace should be manifested in all their beauty.

The separation unto God, of which we have been speaking, is under these circumstances the only means of enjoying the strength of God. It is the

essential position of the assembly. If it has failed in it, it has ceased to manifest the essential character of its Head, in connection with itself, "separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"; it is but a false witness, a proof among the Philistines that Dagon is stronger than God; it is a blind prisoner.

Nevertheless it is remarkable that, whenever the world draws away, by its allurements, that which God has separated from it unto Himself, this brings down the judgment of God upon the world, and leads to its ruin. Look at Sarah in the house of Pharaoh; and in this instance, Samson, blind and prisoner in the hands of the Philistines; and again also Sarah in the house of Abimelech, although God, on account of the integrity of his heart, did but chasten the latter.

The Nazarite then represents Christ, such as He was here below in fact and by necessity; and also such as He now is completely and in full right, seated on the right hand of God in heaven, hidden in God, where our life is hid with Him. The. Nazarite represents the assembly or an individual Christian, so far as the one and the other are separated from the world and devoted to God, and keep the secret of this separation.

This is the assembly's position, the only one which God recognizes. The assembly, being united to Christ who is separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, cannot be His in any other manner. It may be unfaithful to it, but this is the standing given it with Christ. It can be recognized in no other.

Samson represents to us also the tendency of the assembly, and of the Christian to fall away from this position, a tendency which does not always produce the same amount of evil fruit, but which causes the inward and practical neglect of Nazariteship, and soon leads to entire loss of strength, so that the assembly gives itself up to the world. God may still use it, may glorify Himself through the havoc it makes in the enemy's land (which ought to be its own); He may even preserve it from the sin to which the slippery path it treads would lead it. But the state of mind which brought it there tends to yet lower downfalls.

God makes use of Samson's marriage with a Philistine woman to punish that people. Still, in the freshness of his strength, his heart with Jehovah, and moved by the Holy Ghost, Samson acts in the might of this strength in the midst of the enemies he has raised up against him; and, in point of fact, he never marries this Philistine woman.

I have said that God used this circumstance. It is thus He may use this spiritual strength of the assembly, so long as in heart it cleaves to Him,

although its walk may not be faithful or such as He can approve. For it is evident that Samson's marriage with a daughter of Timnath was a positive sin, a flagrant infringement of Jehovah's ordinances, which is in no wise justified by the blessing which the Lord bestowed upon him when wronged by the Philistines. It was not in his marriage he found blessing, but quite the contrary.

Accordingly Samson has not Israel with him in the conflicts occasioned by his marriage; the Spirit of God does not act upon the people as He did in the case of Gideon, of Jephthah, or Barak.

Moreover, when Nazariteship is in question, opposition must be expected from the people of God. A Nazarite is raised up in their midst, because they are no longer themselves thus separated unto God. And this being the case, they are without strength, and will allow the world to rule over them, provided that outward peace is left them; and they would not have any one act in faith, because this disquiets the world and incites it against them. "Knowest thou not," said Israel, "that the Philistines are rulers over us?" Even while acknowledging Samson as one of themselves, the Israelites desire to give him up to the Philistines in order to maintain peace.

But in the part of Samson's life now before us there are some details which require more attention.

His marriage was a sin. But the separation of God's people had no longer that measure of practical application which the mind of God had assigned it. The fact itself was inexcusable, because it had its origin in the will of Samson, and he had not sought counsel from God. But, owing to the influence of circumstances, he was not conscious at the time of the evil he was committing, and God allowed him to seek peace and friendship with the Canaanite world (that is to say, the world within the enclosure of God's people), instead of making war against them; so that, as to the Philistines, Samson had right on his side in the contentions which followed.

Before his marriage Samson had slain the lion, and had found honey in its carcass. He had strength from God while walking in his integrity. This is the "riddle," the secret of God's people. The lion has no strength against one who belongs to Christ. Christ has destroyed the strength of him that had the power of death. By the might of the Spirit of Christ our warfare is victory, and honey flows therefrom. But this is carried on in the secret of communion with the Lord. David maintained this place better in the simplicity of duty.

Samson did not keep himself from those connections with the world to which the condition of the people easily led. This is always a Christian's

danger. But whatever may be their ignorance, if the children of God make any alliance with the world, and thus pursue a line of conduct opposed to their true character, they will assuredly find disappointment. They do not keep themselves apart for God; they do not keep their secret with God, a secret which is only known in communion with Himself. Their wisdom is lost, the world beguiles them, their relationship with the world becomes worse than before, and the world despises them, and goes on its own way, regardless of their indignation at its behavior towards them.

What had Samson to do there? His own will (chap. 15) is in exercise, and takes its share in the use of that strength which God had given him (like Moses when he slew the Egyptian). We always carry a little of the world with us when, being children of God, we have mingled with it. But God makes use of this to separate us forcibly and thoroughly from it, making union impossible by setting us in direct conflict with the world even in those very things which had formed our connection with it. We had better have remained apart. But it is necessary that God should thus deal with us, when this union with the world becomes an habitual and a tolerated thing in the church. * The most outrageous circumstances pass unnoticed. Think of a Nazarite married to a Philistine! God must break off such a union as this by causing enmities and hostilities to arise, since there is no intelligence of that moral nearness to God which separates from the world, and gives that quietness of spirit which, finding its strength in God, can overcome and drive away the enemy, when God leads into conflict by the plain revelation of His will.

> [* In this union, when it takes place between the world and true Christians, or those at least who profess the truth the world always rules; when, on the contrary, it is with the hierarchy that the world is connected, it is then a superstitious hierarchy that rules, for this is necessary in order to restrain the will of man by religious bonds adapted to the flesh.]

But if we are linked with the world, it will always have dominion over us; we have no right to resist the claims of any relationship which we ourselves have formed. We may draw nigh to the world, because the flesh is in us. The world cannot really draw nigh to the children of God, because it has only its own fallen and sinful nature. The approximation is all on one side and always in evil, whatever the appearance may be. To bear testimony in the midst of the world is another thing.

We cannot therefore plead the secret of the Lord, the intimate relationship of God’s people to Himself, and the feelings they produce; for the secret and the strength of the Lord are exclusively the right and the strength of His redeemed people. How could this be told to his Philistine wife? What influence would the exclusive privileges of God’s people have over one

who is not of their number? How can we speak of these privileges when we disown them by the very relationship in which we stand? We disown them by imparting this secret; for we then cease to be separated and consecrated to God, and to confide in Him as we can do in no other. This experience should have preserved Samson, for the future, from a similar step. But in many respects experience is useless in the things of God, because we need faith at the moment; for it is God Himself whom we need.

Nevertheless Samson here still retains his strength. The sovereign will of God is fulfilled in this matter, in spite of very serious faults which resulted from the general state of things in which Samson participated. Once in the battlefield, he exhibits the strength of Jehovah who was with him; and in answer to his cry Jehovah supplies him with water for his thirst (chap. 15).

It is here that this general history of Samson ends. We have seen that the people of God, his brethren, were against him — the general rule in such a case. It is the history of the power of the Spirit of Christ exercised in Nazariteship, in separation from the world unto God; but in the midst of a condition entirely opposed to this separation; and in which he who is upheld by the power of this Spirit, finding himself again in his habitual sphere, is always in danger of being unfaithful; and so much the more so (unless he lives very near to God in the repose of obedience) from his consciousness of strength.

Christ exhibited the perfection of a heavenly walk under similar circumstances. We see that no one understood the source of His power, or His authority. He must have given up all hope of satisfying men with respect to the principles by which He was guided. They must have been like Him to comprehend Him, and then they would not have needed to be convinced. To walk before God and leave His justification with God was all that could be done. He silenced His enemies by the well-known principles of God and of all good conscience; but He could not reveal the secret between Him and the Father, the element of His life, and the spring of all His actions. If the truth came out, when Satan pushed things so far that nothing else could be said, His enemies treated Him as a blasphemer, and He openly denounced them as the children of Satan. We find this particularly in John’s Gospel (see chap. 8). But at that time Jesus held no longer the same relationship to the people. Indeed, from the beginning of this Gospel, they are treated as rejected, and the Person of the Son of God is brought forward.

From the commencement of His ministry, He maintained the place of an obedient servant, not entering on public service until called of God, after having taken the lowest place in John’s baptism. This was the point at issue

when He was tempted in the wilderness. The tempter endeavored to make Him come out of His place as the obedient man, because He was the Son of God. But the strong man was bound there: to remain in obedience is the only way to bind the adversary. Christ ever walked in this perfect separation of the inner man, in communion with His Father, and entire dependence upon Him in obedience without a single moment of self-will. Therefore was He the most gracious and accessible of men: we observe in His ways a tenderness and a kindness never seen in man, yet we always feel that He was a stranger. Not that He came to be a stranger in His relationship with men; but that which lay deepest in His own heart — that which constituted His very nature, and consequently guided His walk by virtue of His communion with the Father — was entirely foreign to all that influences man.

He abode emphatically alone. It is striking that not once His disciples understood what He said. The one only trace of a heart going with Him was Mary at Bethany; and that had to be told to the whole world. In Him, sympathy for every sorrow; for His, none.

This spirit of self-denial, entire renunciation of His own will, obedience, and dependence upon His Father, is seen throughout the life of Jesus. After John's baptism He was praying when He received the Holy Ghost. Before calling the apostles He spent the whole night in prayer. After the miracle of feeding the five thousand with five loaves He went up into a mountain apart to pray. If the request is made to sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom, it is not His to give, but to them for whom it is prepared of His Father. In His agony of Gethsemane, His expectation and dread of death is all laid before His Father; and the cup which His Father has given Him, shall He not drink it? The effect is that all is calm before men. He is the Nazarite, separated from men by His entire communion with His Father, and by the obedience of a Son who had no other will than to fulfill the good pleasure of His Father. It was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

But it was when man would not receive Him, and there was no longer any relationship whatever between man and God that Jesus fully assumed His Nazarite character, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens. It is Christ in heaven who is the true Nazarite, and who, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, has sent Him forth upon His disciples, in order that, by the power of the Holy Ghost, they might maintain the same position on the earth, through communion with Him and with His Father; walking in the separateness of this communion, and capable therefore of using this power with a divine intelligence that enlightens and sustains the obedience for which they are set apart unto the

glory of Christ, and for His service. “If ye abide in me,” said He to His disciples, “and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” They were not of the world, even as He was not of the world. The assembly, which was formed of His disciples, should walk as separated from the world and set apart unto Himself in a heavenly life.

Christ is then the antitype of Samson’s history, as to the principle it contains. But its detail proves that this principle of strength has been entrusted to those who were alas! but too capable of failing in communion and obedience, and thus of losing its enjoyment.

Samson sins again through his intercourse with “the daughter of a strange God”; he connects himself again with women of the Philistines, amongst whom his father’s house and the tribe of Dan were placed. But he retains his strength until the influence of these connections becomes so great that he reveals the secret of his strength in God. His heart, far from God, places that confidence in a Philistine which should have existed only between his soul and God (chap. 16).

To possess and keep a secret proves intimacy with a friend. But the secret of God, the possession of His confidence, is the highest of all privileges. To betray it to a stranger, be he who he may, is to despise the precious position in which His grace has placed us; it is to lose it. What have the enemies of God to do with the secret of God? It was thus that Samson gave himself up to his enemies. All attempts were powerless against him so long as he maintained his Nazariteship. This separation once lost, although Samson was apparently as strong, and his exterior as goodly as before, yet Jehovah was no longer with him. “I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that Jehovah was departed from him.”

We can scarcely imagine a greater folly than that of confiding his secret to Delilah, after having so many times been seized by the Philistines at the moment she awoke him. And thus it is with the assembly: when it yields itself to the world, it loses all its wisdom, even that which is common to man. Poor Samson! his strength may be restored, but he has lost his sight for ever.

But who has ever hardened himself against the Lord, and prospered? <1894> Job 9:4.

The Philistines ascribe their success to their false God. God remembers His own glory, and His poor servant humbled under the chastisement of his sin. The Philistines assemble to enjoy their victory and glorify their false gods. But Jehovah had His eye on all this. In his humiliation, the thought of the Lord had more power over the heart of Samson; his Nazariteship was

regaining strength. He makes his touching appeal to God. Who would fear a blind and afflicted prisoner? but who amongst this world knows the secret of Jehovah? A slave and for ever deprived of sight, his condition affords an opportunity, which his strength had not been able to obtain, before his unfaithfulness deprived him of it. But he is blind and enslaved, and he must perish himself in the judgment which he brings upon the impiety of his enemies. He had identified himself with the world by hearkening to it, and he must share the judgment which falls upon the world. *

> [* There was something of this, though in a very different form and manner, in Jonathan. His faith was not perfect. He held the world with one hand and David with the other, though the excuse of natural relationship might be there.]

If the unfaithfulness of the assembly has given the world power over it, the world has on the other hand assailed the rights of God by corrupting the assembly, and therefore brings down judgment upon itself at the moment of its greatest triumph: a judgment which, if it puts an end to the existence, as well as to the misery of the Nazarite, destroys at the same time in one common ruin the whole glory of the world.

In the details of prophecy this applies to the closing history of the Jewish people. * Only there the remnant is preserved, to be established on a new base for the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

> [* As to the professing church it is somewhat different, because the saints are taken away to glory, and the rest, being apostate, are judged; but the fact of judgment on the world is identical.]

The chapters that follow (17-21) are not comprised in the historical order of this book. They lift the veil to disclose some incidents of the inner life of this people whom the patience of God bore with so long, touched with the afflictions of His people in the sufferings occasioned by their sins. Had they been obedient when Jehovah was their King, their prosperity had been secure. Self-willed as they were, the absence of restraint — when they had no king — gave room to all kinds of license. The last event, related in this book, shows to what a height disorder had risen in Israel and how they fell away immediately from God. But it affords a very important lesson. If the state of God’s people collectively gives rise to iniquities which require discipline, the whole people are involved in the chastisement that follows; the effect of which is to make them take their condition to heart. That condition had prevented the repression of iniquity, or its immediate punishment when committed. But the people are set in the presence of God, who judges the whole matter, and all the people must have to do with it.

Israel at first did not even take counsel with Jehovah to learn how the sin should be dealt with. They acted from natural indignation (which was nevertheless quite righteous). Jehovah allowed all this in order that the people might learn where they were. The evil which required chastening had so blunted their spiritual state that they had not the thought of waiting in the first place on Jehovah to know what was to be done. Their course of action is determined before they consult Him, for they were far from Him. They merely ask who is to go up first. Jehovah points out Judah, but Judah is defeated. Twice beaten when they expected an easy victory, the people humbled and in tears have recourse again to Jehovah, and inquire if they shall go up. Jehovah then gives them the victory. Gibeah well deserved this discipline; but, to execute it, Israel itself needed discipline, and God allowed all to take part in it in order to make it take effect upon all.

But what a state were they all in, when the whole tribe of Benjamin joined the men of Gibeah, when guilty of such enormities! And observe, that Phinehas was still high priest, although he had already grown to manhood in the wilderness. How patiently God dealt with this people, delivering them when they had so quickly fallen into sin and into such depths of sin! What does God not see in this world, and even in His people? It is important to note this bringing to light of that inward state which, in the general history, is not done. It sheds a much fuller light on the ways of God. But it must be remarked that this is disaster and shame within, and from within, and under God’s hand, but not judgment by enemies without through departure from God Himself.

# RUTH

The Book of Ruth tells us also of the days of the judges, when there was no king in Israel; but it shows us the fair side of those days, in the operations of the grace of God, who (blessed be His name!) never failed to work in the midst of the evil, as also in the steady progress of events towards the fulfillment of His promises in the Messiah, whatever may have been the simultaneous progress of the general evil.

Ruth, a stranger seeking shelter by faith under the wings of the God of Israel, is received in grace, and the genealogy of David, king over Israel according to grace, is linked with her. It is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Himself after the flesh.

This book appears to me to set before us in type, the reception in grace of the remnant of Israel in the last days, their Redeemer (the kinsman, who has the right of redemption) having taken their cause in hand.

Eli-Melech (which signifies God the King) being dead, Naomi (my delight, my pleasure) becomes a widow, and eventually loses her children also. She typifies the Jewish nation, who, having lost her God, is like a widow and has no heir. Yet there shall be a remnant, destitute of all right to the promises (and therefore prefigured historically by a stranger), who will be received in grace (similarly to the Gentiles and the assembly *)who will faithfully and heartily identify itself with desolate Israel; for Ruth clave to her and to her God (see chap. Ruth 1:16). God will own this remnant, which, poor and afflicted itself, will in heart obey the commands given to the people.

[* Compare Micah 5:3, last part.]

Naomi, who in her destitution is a type of the nation, acknowledges her condition: she calls herself Mara (bitterness).

He who was nearest of kin, who would willingly have redeemed the inheritance, refuses to do so, if Ruth must be taken with it. The law was never able (nor the assembly either) to re-establish Israel in their inheritance, nor to raise up in grace the name of the dead.

Boaz (in him is strength), upon whom the remnant had no direct claim (and who typifies Christ risen, in whom are the sure mercies of David), undertakes to raise up the name of the dead, and to re-establish the heritage of Israel. Acting in grace and in kindness, and encouraging the patient humble faith of the remnant, the meek of the earth, he shows himself

faithful to fulfill the purpose and the will of God with respect to this poor desolate family. Nothing can be more touching and exquisite than the details given here. The character of Ruth, this poor woman of the Gentiles, has great beauty.

“Naomi took the child that was born to her, and laid it in her bosom”; and they said, “There is a son born to Naomi.” In fact the heir of the promises will be born unto Israel as a nation, although the fulfillment of the promise affects the remnant only, which, fully identifying itself with the interests of God’s people, has sought neither the rich nor the poor, but, in faith and obedience, has kept the testimony of God amongst the people in the path appointed by Him.

Thus, if on one side the Book of Judges shows us the falling away of the people of Israel, and their failure under responsibility, even when God was their helper, on the other side this touching and precious book sets before us, as the dawn of better things, grace acting in the midst of difficulties, securing the fulfillment of promise, and embellishing this scene of misery and sin by lovely and beautiful instances of faith, precious fruits of grace, whether in weakness and devotedness, or in strength and kindness, and always in accordance with the perfect will of God, and assuring by this touching history, as a type, the full restoration of Israel to blessing according to promise. It is a refreshing and lovely picture in the midst of the hard-mindedness and sorrows of Israel.

In the succeeding books we shall see prophecy, and the history of God’s dealings, developing the body of events which tended to the fulfillment of His designs, the first principles, the elements, of which are laid down in that which is shown us in this. For Ruth furnishes a kind of intermediate link between the fall of Israel under God’s immediate government, and the future fulfillment of His purposes.

Prophecy, which unfolds these purposes and gives moral proof of this fall, begins with Samuel: we learn this from the apostle Peter, and that Christ is the object of prophecy (see Acts 3:24).

Eli, the last judge and priest, departs; his family is to be cut off; the ark of the covenant is taken by the Philistines; and Samuel, consecrated to God in a new and extraordinary manner, comes in with the special testimony of the Lord.

# 1 SAMUEL

We have seen that the Book of Ruth occupies, in its purport, an intermediate place between the end of the period in which Israel was governed by God Himself, who interposed from time to time by means of judges, and the setting up of the king whom He selected for them. This period, alas! came to an end through the people's failure, and their inability to make a right use, by faith, of their privileges.

The Books of Samuel contain the account of the cessation of Israel's original relationship with God, founded on their obedience to the terms of the old covenant, and the special prescriptions of the Book of Deuteronomy; the sovereign interference of God in prophecy; and the setting up of the king whom God Himself had prepared, with the circumstances which preceded this event. It is not merely that Israel failed under the government of God: they rejected it.

Placed under the priesthood, they drew nigh to God in the enjoyment of privileges which were granted them as a people acknowledged by Jehovah. We shall see the ark — which, as it was the nearest and most immediate, so was it the most precious link between Jehovah Elohim and the people — fall into the hands of the enemy. What could a priest do, when that which gave his priesthood all its importance was in the enemy's hands, and when the place where he drew near to Jehovah (the throne of God in the midst of Israel, the place of propitiation by which in mercy Israel's relationship with God, through the sprinkled blood, was maintained) was no more there?

It was no longer mere unfaithfulness in the circumstances in which God had placed them. The circumstances themselves were entirely changed through God's judgment upon Israel. The outward link of God's connection with the people was broken; the ark of the covenant, center and basis of their relationship with Him, had been given up by the wrath of God into the hands of their enemies. Priesthood was the natural and normal means of maintaining the relationship between God and the people: how could it now be used for this purpose?

Nevertheless God, acting in sovereignty, could put Himself in communication with His people, by virtue of His grace and immutable faithfulness, according to which His connection with His people existed still on His side, even when all acknowledged relationship between Him and them was broken off by their unfaithfulness. And this He did by raising up a prophet. By his means God still communicated in a direct way with His

people, even when they had not maintained their relationship with Him in their normal condition. The office of the priest was connected with the integrity of these relations; the people needed him in their infirmities. Still under the priesthood the people themselves drew nigh to God through the medium of the priest, according to the relationship which God had established and which He recognized. But the prophet acted on the part of God outside this relationship, or rather above it, when the people were no longer faithful.

The setting up of a king went much farther. It was a new order of relationship which involved most important principles. The relationship of God with the people was no longer immediate. An authority was set over Israel. God expected faithfulness from the king. The people's destiny depended upon the conduct of the one who was responsible before Jehovah for the maintenance of this faithfulness.

It was God's purpose to establish this principle for the glory of Christ. I speak of His kingdom over the Jews and over the nations, over the whole world. This kingdom has been prefigured in David and in Solomon. To ask for a king, rejecting God's own immediate government, was folly and rebellion in the people. How often are our follies and our faults the opportunity for the display of the grace and wisdom of God and for the fulfillment of His counsels hidden from the world until then! Our sins and faults alone have conduced to the glorious accomplishment of these counsels in Christ.

These are the important subjects treated of in the Books of Samuel, so far at least as the establishment of the kingdom. Its glorious condition and its fall are related in the two Books of Kings.

It is the fall of Israel which puts an end to their first relationship with God. The ark is taken; the priest dies. Prophecy introduces the king — a king despised and rejected, man having set up another, yet a king whom God establishes according to the might of His power. Such are the great principles unfolded in the Books of Samuel.

History shows us here, as everywhere, that there is but One who has remained faithful — an humbling result for us of the trial to which God has subjected us, but one well adapted to keep us humble.

If we have spoken of the fall of the priesthood, we must not infer from it that priesthood ceased to exist. It was always necessary to a people full of weakness (as it is to ourselves on earth); it interposed in the things of God to maintain individual relationship to Him in them, but it ceased to form the basis of relationship between the whole people and God. The people were

no longer capable of enjoying this relationship through this means alone; and the priesthood itself could suffice no longer, having so deeply failed in its standing. We shall do well to dwell a little on this, which is the turning-point of the truths we are considering.

In Israel's primitive state, and in their constitution generally, as established in the land given to them, priesthood was the basis of their relationship with God; it was that which characterized and maintained it (see Hebrews 7:11). The high priest was their head and representative before God, as a nation of worshippers; and in this character (I speak here neither of redemption from Egypt nor of conquests, but of a people before God, and in relationship with Him), on the great day of atonement he confessed their sins over the scape-goat. It was not merely intercession. He stood there as head and representative of the people, who were summed up in him before Jehovah. The people were acknowledged, although faulty. They presented themselves in the person of the high priest, that they might be in connection with a God, who, after all veiled Himself from their eyes. The people presented everything to the priest; the high priest stood before God. This relationship did not imply innocence. An innocent man should have stood himself before God. "Adam, where art thou?" This question brings out his fall.

Still the people were not driven away, though the veil was between them and God; the high priest, who sympathized with the infirmities of the people, being one with them, maintained the relationship with God. They were a very imperfect people, it is true; yet by this means they stood themselves in connection with the Holy One. But Israel was not able to maintain this position; not only was there sin (the high priest could remedy that), but they sinned against Jehovah, they turned away from Him, and that even in their leaders. The priesthood itself, which should have maintained the relationship, wrought for its destruction by dishonoring God and repelling the people from His worship, instead of attracting them to it.

I pass over the preparatory circumstances; they will be considered in detail in their place. God then sets up a king, whose duty it was to preserve order and to secure Gods connection with the people by governing them, and by his own faithfulness to God. This is what Christ will accomplish for them in the ages to come; He is the anointed. When the king is established, the priest walks before him (1 Samuel 2:35). It is a new institution, the only one capable of maintaining the relationship of the people with God. Priesthood is no longer here an immediate relationship. It provides indeed, in its own functions, for the wants of the people. The king watches over it, and secures order and blessing.

Now the assembly's position is altogether different. The saint now approaches God directly. Together with the priesthood, which is exercised for the saints on earth, to maintain them in their walk here and in the enjoyment of their privileges, it is united to the Anointed; the veil exists no longer. We sit in the heavenly places in Christ, made accepted in the Beloved. The favor of God rests upon us, members of the body of Christ, as upon Christ Himself. That which has unveiled the holiness of God has disclosed all the sin of man, and has taken it away. *

[* I refer here to that of His believing people.]

Thus in Christ, members of His body, we are perfect before God, and perfectly accepted. The priest seeks neither to give us this position, nor to maintain relationship with God as to those who are not in this position. The work of Christ has placed us in it. How intercede then for perfection? Can intercession make the Person and the work of Christ more perfect in the sight of God? Certainly not. But we are in Him. In what manner then is this priesthood exercised for us? In maintaining mercy-needing creatures in their walk, and so in the realization of their relationship with God. * The Christian indeed enters into a still clearer manifestation of God and more absolute relationship with God, that of being in the light as God is in the light. We are seated in the heavenly places, made accepted in the Beloved, loved as He is loved, the righteousness of God in Him. He is our life; He has given us the glory that was given Him. Now the Holy Ghost, who came down from heaven after that Jesus was glorified, has introduced us consciously into the unveiled presence of God. Nevertheless we, though without excuse in doing it, fail and pick up defilement here below. Through the advocacy of Him who is in the presence of God for us our feet are washed by the Spirit and the word, and we are rendered capable of maintaining a communion (of which darkness knows nothing) with God in that light. Hereafter, in the presence of Jesus the King, priesthood will no doubt sustain the connection of the people with God, whilst He will bear the weight of government and of blessing for the people in every sense.

[* There is a shade of difference between the priesthood and the advocacy of Christ. The priesthood is in Christ appearing in the presence of God for us; but this as to our place before God is perfection. It does not therefore refer to sin in its daily exercise, but mercy and grace to help in time of need. We enter boldly into the holiest. Advocacy refers to our sinning, because the question, where it is spoken of (1 John 2:2), is communion, and this is wholly interrupted by sin.]

We find then, in the beginning of this book, priesthood existing before God in the original form we have mentioned. Eli, pious himself, and fearing God, maintained no order in the priestly family. The priesthood, instead of

binding the people to God, morally separated them. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were at Shiloh; but their conduct made the offering of the Lord to be abhorred of the people. Such was the state of things in Israel. At the same time, in the family of Elkanah, Hannah, chosen of Jehovah for blessing, was in trial; the desires of her natural heart were not satisfied, and the adversary tormented her by means of the prosperous Peninnah. But He, whose strength is perfected in weakness, having made manifest (as ever in such a case) the powerlessness of nature, gives blessing according to His own will, against all hope, in order that that which was of Him should be evidently wrought by His own power. Hannah has a son according to her petition, a son devoted to the Lord. His family was of the tribe of Levi (1 Chronicles 6).

In the beautiful song of 1 Samuel 2 Hannah recognizes this great principle of sovereign grace, and of the power of God; that He brings down the proud and those who trust in the flesh, and exalts the weak and impotent. “For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah’s; and he hath set the world upon them.” This was what Israel, poor and fallen, and a feeble remnant waiting for Jehovah, needed to learn; that is, that everything hung upon God and God alone, who did not seek for power in man, but manifests it in His own dealings by destroying all His enemies, and who will at length “give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.” It is the history of God’s interposition in favor of poor fallen Israel; and that by the manifestation of His power in giving strength to His King, His Christ. It is a prophecy of the ways of God, of the great principles of His government with respect to the position of Israel, from the moment of its utterance until the establishment of the millennial kingdom in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

Immediately after this testimony from God upon which faith might rest, the inward state of the people is revealed, and the iniquity of the priesthood, which should have been the instrument for cleansing this iniquity of the people, but which, on the contrary, brought down judgment upon them. “Ye make Jehovah’s people to transgress,” said Eli. “If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against Jehovah, who shall intreat for him?”. Such was the state of things according to Eli himself. “Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because Jehovah would slay them. And the child, Samuel, grew on, and was in favor both with Jehovah, and also with men, happy in sharing (however feeble the copy) the testimony born to Jesus Himself.

As to the sons of Eli, they are an example of that which but too often happens. How frequently, alas! do we see that, when the judgment of God is on the point of breaking forth, people are unconscious of it (their moral

perception being darkened by the evil). The eyes of God are elsewhere, as well as the spiritual discernment which He gives to His own, as was the case here with Samuel. Nevertheless God warns Eli by means of a man of God. His judgment on the priestly family and on the priesthood is pronounced before Jehovah reveals Himself to Samuel.

This judgment announces the change in the order of divine government, which was to take place through the setting up of a king, an anointed one (a Christ), and through the consequent position of the priesthood, as we have already remarked (ver. 35). "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before mine anointed * for ever. Such, I apprehend, will be millennial order.

> [* Joshua, on the contrary, went in and out under the direction of Eleazar, who inquired of God.]

In **CHAPTER** 3 God reveals Himself to Samuel; and he is known to be a prophet of Jehovah from Dan even to Beersheba.

Eli, judged for having loved his sons more than Jehovah, comforts our hearts nevertheless by his submission. If he failed in the energy of faithfulness, he was yet true in heart to Jehovah, and his personal piety is the more conspicuous in the devotedness to God's glory which he manifests in these circumstances, finding his death in the Ichabod of His people.

Sad and affecting history of the effect of God's righteous judgment upon one whose heart was set upon His glory in His people, but who had not had firmness enough to prevent the people, and even his own sons, from dishonoring Jehovah Himself in the priestly service!

Here begins the display of the means which God employs in His sovereignty to be in relationship with His people, when the ordinary relations He had established are interrupted.

In **CHAPTER** 4 the enemies of God and of His people display their strength; the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel. God, in overruling providence, makes all things concur to bring about the purposed result.

We shall do well to pause a moment here; for the Philistines are of considerable importance, on account of the part they take in this history, as the power of the enemy. They appear to me to represent the power of the enemy acting within the circle of God's people. They were in the territory of the Israelites — within the land, and even on this side of the Jordan. They were not, like the Egyptians or Assyrians, enemies from without.

Habitually hostile to Israel, to those who by God's appointment should have possessed the land of promise — so much the more dangerous from being always at hand, and claiming possession of the country, the Philistines set before us in type the power of the enemy acting from within. I do not mean the flesh, but the enemy within the pale of the professing church, acting of course through instruments, the oppressor of God's true people to whom the promises belong.

Israel, corrupt in all their ways, and daring in their ways with God, because they had forgotten His majesty and His holiness, seek to identify Jehovah * with them in their unfaithful condition, as He had been in their original state, instead of coming before Him to learn why He had forsaken His people. God will neither acknowledge nor succor them. On the contrary, the ark of the covenant, the sign and the seat of His relationship with the people, is taken. His throne is no longer in the midst of the people; His tabernacle is empty; all ordered relationship is interrupted. Where can they offer sacrifice? where draw nigh to Jehovah their God! Eli, the priest, dies; and his pious daughter-in-law, overwhelmed by these disastrous tidings, pronounces the funeral oration of the unhappy people in the name she bestows on that which could no longer be her joy. The fruit of her womb bears but this impress of her people's calamity; it is only Ichabod in her sight.

> [* Observe the contrast between this case and that of Achan, although there was sin in the latter. The sin was confessed and judged in detail, although the people were chastised.]

What a blessing to have had through grace the song of Hannah already given by the Spirit to sustain the faith and hope of the people! All outward connection is broken; but God upholds His own majesty; and if unfaithful Israel had not been able to withstand the worshippers of idols, the God whom Israel had forsaken vindicates His glory, and proves, even in the heart of their temple, that those idols are but vanity.

The Philistines are obliged to acknowledge the power of the God of Israel, whom Israel could not glorify. His judgments suggested a means to their natural conscience which, while proving that the influence of the almighty power of God is felt even by creatures devoid of intelligence, causing them to act against their strongest instincts, manifests also that it was indeed Jehovah, the Omnipotent God, who had inflicted the chastisement under which they were suffering.

God maintains His majesty even in the midst of Israel. He is no longer among them securing their promised blessings. His ark, exposed through their unfaithfulness to the unworthy treatment of the Philistines and of the

inquisitive, becomes (as the token of God's presence) the occasion of judgment inflicted on the temerity of those who dared to look within it, forgetful of His divine majesty who made it His throne and kept His testimony therein.

But how often the absence of God causes His value to be felt, whose presence had not been appreciated!

Israel, still deprived of Jehovah's presence and glory, laments after Him. Let us remark here that God could not remain among the Philistines. Unfaithfulness might subject His people to their enemies, although God was there. But, left (so to say) to Himself, His presence judged the false gods. Association was impossible; the Philistines desire Him not. You cannot glory in a victory over One who, when captured, is your destroyer. The Philistines get rid of Him. Never can the children of Satan endure the presence of the true God.

Moreover the heart of God is not alienated from His people. He finds His way back to the people of His choice in a sovereign manner, which proves Him to be the God of all creation. But, as we have seen, He asserts His majesty. More than fifty thousand men pay the penalty of their impious temerity. God returns; but still it needs that He open a way for Himself after His own purposes and dealings, according to which He re-establishes His relationship with the people. Thus Samuel appears again on the scene when, the ark having abode in Kirjath-jearim twenty years (chap. 7), Israel laments after Jehovah. The ark is not put back in its place, nor is the original order restored.

Samuel begins to act, by his testimony, upon the conscience of the people, and to put away that which weakened them by dishonoring God. He tells them that, if they will turn to Jehovah with all their heart, they must put away the strange gods, and serve Jehovah alone. A mingled worship was intolerable. Then would Jehovah deliver them. The prophet Samuel is now the meeting-point between the people and God. God now acknowledges him alone.

The ark is not found again in its place until the king chosen of God is established on the throne; it is only placed entirely in God's order when the son of David rules in peace and in strength at Jerusalem. * It is consulted once (1 Samuel 14:18, 19), but its presence is without effect and without power. It exists, but in connection with those in whom faith and integrity were no longer found, so that nothing resulted from it. It the rather proved that God was elsewhere, or at least that He wrought elsewhere.

[* Compare <19780>Psalm 78:60, 61; 132. The ark is in connection with Sion, the seat of kingly grace. Solomon only, as the man of peace, could build the house.]

But we will pursue the history. At Samuel's call the strange gods are put away. The people gather around him, that he may pray for them. They offer no sacrifice; they draw water and pour it out upon the ground in token of repentance (see <10444>2 Samuel 14:14); they fast and confess their sin. Samuel judges them there.

But if Israel assembles, even for humiliation, the enemy at once bestirs himself in opposition; he will tolerate no act which places the people of God in a position which recognizes Him as God.

The Israelites are alarmed, and have recourse to Samuel's intercession. Samuel offers a sacrifice, * token of entire surrender of self to the Lord, and of the people's relationship with Him; but it is not before the ark. He entreats Jehovah, his prayer is heard, and the Philistines are smitten before Israel. And it was not an exceptional case, although they lost nothing of their formidable character, or of their hatred for Israel. Samuel brings down God's blessing upon the people, and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

[* That is to say, a burnt-offering. This is remarkable. It was not sacrifice for sin, but sacrifice which recognized the relationship existing between the people and God. Christ only, as we have seen elsewhere, is the true burnt-offering.]

The cities of Israel were restored. There was peace between Israel and the Amorites. Samuel judged Israel at Ramah and built an altar there. All this is an exceptional and extraordinary position for Israel, in which they depended entirely on Samuel, who, while living himself as a patriarch, as though there were no tabernacle, becomes, through his own relationship with God, by faith, the support and upholder of the people, who in fact had no other.

But faith is not transmitted by succession. Samuel could not make prophets of his sons. They were no better as judges than Eli's sons had been as priests, and the people had no faith themselves to lean immediately upon God. They ask to be made like unto the nations.

"Make us now a king," said they to Samuel. Where was Jehovah? For Israel, nowhere. But it was evil in the eyes of Samuel, and he prayed unto Jehovah. While acknowledging that the people had, as usual, rejected Him, God commands Samuel to hearken unto their voice. Samuel warns them according to God's testimony, and sets before them all the inexpediency and consequences of such a step; but the people will not hearken unto him.

God brings to the prophet, through providential circumstances, the man whom He had chosen to satisfy the carnal wishes of the people. In all this He judges the people and their king. (“He gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath.”) But He remembers His people. He does not forsake them. He acts by Saul on their behalf, while showing them their unfaithfulness, and afterwards in cutting off the disobedient king. Beauty and height of stature distinguished the son of Kish. But in the signs that Samuel gave him, when he had anointed him, there was a meaning which should have carried his thoughts beyond himself.

How often there is a meaning, a language, perfectly intelligible to one who has ears to hear, but which escapes us, because our gross and hardened heart has no spiritual intelligence or discernment! And yet all our future hangs upon it. God has shown our incapacity for the blessing it involved. Nevertheless the means were not wanting.

Although the significance of this circumstance was less evident than that of the other signs, yet Rachel’s sepulcher should have reminded Saul, the son and heir according to the flesh of the one who was born there, that the son of the mother’s sorrow was the son of the father’s right hand (Genesis 35:18).

Now God had not abandoned Israel; faith was still there; men were going up to God. There were some in Israel who remembered the God of Bethel, who had revealed Himself to Jacob when he fled, * and who in His faithfulness had brought him back in peace; and God gave Saul favor in their eyes. The servants of the God of Bethel salute him and strengthen him on his way. But the hill of God was possessed by the garrison of the Philistines — another circumstance which, by its significance, should have gone to the heart of a faithful Israelite who desired the glory of God and the good of His people. But the sign which accompanied it made it much more forcible; for the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Saul in this place, and he was turned into another man, called therefore to “do as occasion served him, for God was with him” (chap. 10:7). **

[* The God who had said to him in the day of his trouble, when driven out from before his enemy, that He would not forsake him.]

[* Accordingly it was the Spirit of prophecy, the Spirit which acted in blessing, which indicated the presence of God, and that to which Saul should have recourse, even though (yea, because) the hill of God, the public seat of His authority in Israel, was in the hands of the enemies of the true people of God. This scene pictured the whole state of Israel.]

It often happens, that faith sets forth clearly what should be done, while the heart, waxen fat and unfaithful, does not see it at all.

And what do these signs mean? There are those in Israel who remember the God of Bethel, and who seek Him — upright and prepared hearts, who know Him as the resource of faith. But the hill of God, the public seat of His strength, is in the enemy's hands. Still, if this be so, the Spirit of God is upon the man who takes cognizance of it, and it is at this very hill that the Spirit comes upon him. The name of God is also significative here. It is God abstractedly — God the Creator: God Himself is in question. The Spirit of Jehovah comes upon Saul, because He resumes there the course of His relations with Israel.

But Samuel is still the only one whom God recognizes as the link between Himself and the people. It is when Saul has had to do with Samuel, that he is another man. He must wait for Samuel, that he may know what to do, and that blessing may rest upon him. He must thus acknowledge that blessing is connected with the prophet, and not act without him; he must wait for him with perfect patience (seven days), a patience which, submitting to God's testimony, will not seek for blessing apart from His ways.

Here also we see in the Philistines the enemies who put faith to the proof. We have often enemies over whom we gain an easy victory, and on whose account we are considered spiritual, yet they are not such as (on God's part, and it may also be said on their own part) put faith to the proof. With these patience must have her perfect work. And the Philistines held this place with respect to Saul. It was all well that the people should be delivered from their other enemies; but they were not the ones which were a snare to them, and which manifested the power of the enemy in the very midst of Israel and the promises.

Do spiritual powers rule over us in the assembly, in the place where the promises of God should be fulfilled? And what power do we see to overthrow the power of evil and spiritual wickedness within the borders of the professing church?

It was from the Philistines that Saul should have delivered the people of God (see chap. 9:16). The hill of God was in the Philistines' hands (see also chap. 14:52). If Saul had waited for Samuel, he would have declared unto him all that he should do. Now we shall see that, two years later, Saul is put to the proof as to this in the presence of the Philistines; and whatever may have been the delay, the thing had not been altered; all the intermediate success should have increased his faith and strengthened him in obedience.

Samuel calls the people together at Misspell. There he sets before them their foolishness in rejecting the God of their salvation. But he proceeds to the choice of a king, according to the command of God. God meets the wishes

of the people. If the flesh could have glorified God, nothing was wanting to induce them to trust in Him. God adapts Himself to them in outward things; and further, as we know, had the people followed Jehovah, Jehovah would not have forsaken them (chap. 12:20-25).

And now that God has set up a king, those who will not own him are “men of Belial.” The people however scarcely see God in it at all: they only recognize Him in those things which the flesh can perceive, such as the beauty of the king and the success of his arms, that is to say, the things in which God suits Himself to nature, and in which He grants blessing, in order that He may be known and trusted. In this they rejoice, but they go no farther. Faith is not of nature.

As yet all goes well with Saul; he does not take vengeance on those who oppose him. Before his faith is tried, his natural character would gain him favor with men. And now, in those things which have given rise to the carnal movement that led the people to desire a king, all apparently prospers to their wish. The Ammonites are so thoroughly defeated, that two of them are not left together. Here also Saul acts with prudence and generosity. He does not allow the people’s desire for vengeance to be carried out. He owns the Lord in the blessing granted to the people. In truth God was with them, granting to the flesh all the means and helps necessary for walking with Him, had the thing been possible. Samuel is there on God’s part, and supports by his authority the king whom God has set up. At Samuel’s invitation the people assemble at Gilgal (a place memorable for the blessing of the people and their association with Jehovah, the flesh being judged, on entering the land), to renew the kingdom there, and again to recognize a throne whose authority had just been confirmed by successful efforts for the deliverance of God’s people. Peace-offerings and great rejoicing make the ceremony more imposing.

Samuel (chap. 12) receives the people’s testimony to his fidelity. He sets before them the ways of God towards them, their ingratitude and foolishness in having asked for a king and rejected God. Nevertheless, while giving a sign from God which added the weight of God’s own testimony to his words, he declares to the people that, if henceforth they would obey Jehovah, both the king and the people should continue to follow Jehovah (that is, they would walk under His blessing and guidance); but if not, Jehovah would be against them. For Jehovah would not forsake them, and he himself (Samuel) would assuredly not cease to pray for them, and would teach them the good and the right way: that is to say, he places the people, as to their public conduct, in the position they had chosen, and set them under their own responsibility before Jehovah; but at the same time, full of love to them as the people of God, their rejection of himself

does not for a moment suggest the thought to him of giving up his intercession or his testimony for their welfare. Beautiful picture of a heart near the Lord, which, in forgetfulness of self, can love His people as its own! To fail in this would have been to sin against the Lord (compare 2 Corinthians 12:15).

Here then is Saul established in his place, and his authority confirmed by the blessing of God. Samuel retires, confining himself to his prophetic office, and Saul is now called to prove himself faithful and obedient in his present position, surrounded by all the advantages which the blessing of God and the solemn act of His prophet could confer upon him.

Let us now recapitulate the history we have been examining.

Israel, unfaithful, no longer maintain their relationship with God under priesthood. The ark is taken, the priest dies, and Ichabod is written on the condition of the people. God raises up a prophet, who becomes the means of communication between Himself and the people; but, threatened by the Ammonites, the people at length demand a king. God grants their request, testifying at the same time His displeasure, since He Himself was their King. The Spirit of prophecy continues nevertheless to be the channel of divine communication to the people. Signs, which indicate the state of the people, are given to Saul, the elected and anointed king: first of all, some faithful ones who own the God of Bethel — that is to say, the faithful God of Jacob, who had promised not to leave him till He had performed all that He had promised him; and, next, the hill of God — the seat of authority among the people — in possession of the Philistines, the power of the enemy in the land of promise.

The Spirit of prophecy comes upon Saul, showing him where God was amid these circumstances; and Samuel tells him to wait for him at Gilgal. Meantime, as we have seen, he is strengthened by the blessing of God upon his undertakings.

Saul reigns two years. He then selects three thousand men: two thousand are with him, and one with Jonathan. Jonathan, a man of faith, acts with energy against the enemies of God’s people, and smites the Philistines; but the energy of faith, acting (as it always does) in the very stronghold of the enemy, naturally provokes their hostility. The Philistines hear of it: Saul is roused to action, and calls together, not Israel, but the “Hebrews.”

Let us remark here that there is faith in Jonathan. The flesh, placed in the position of leader to God’s people, follows indeed the impulse given by faith, but does not possess it; and the word Hebrews, the name by which a Philistine would have called the people, indicates that Saul relied on the

gathering of the nation as a constituted body, and understood no better than a Philistine would have done the relation between a chosen people and God. And this is the position set before us in the history of Saul. It is not premeditated opposition to God, but the flesh set in a place of testimony and used in accomplishing God's work. We see in it a person linked with the interests of God's true people, doing the work of God according to the people's idea of their need — a true idea as to their actual need; but he is one who seeks his resources in the energy of man, an energy to which God does not refuse His aid when there is obedience to His will, for He loves His people; but which in principle, in moral and inward motive, can never of itself go beyond the flesh from which it springs. In the midst of all this faith can act, and act sincerely, and this is Jonathan's case. God will bless this faith, and He always does so, because it owns Him; and in this instance (and it is His gift) because it sincerely seeks the good of God's people.

All this is, in principle, a kind of picture of the professing church, which in this point of view anticipates the true reign of Christ, and in this position even fails in her faithfulness to God. True faith, in the midst of such a system, never rises so high as the glory of the coming One, the true rejected David, but it loves Him and cleaves to Him. If the church is merely professing, she persecutes Christ; but that in her which acts by faith loves and owns Him, even when He is hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

Jonathan having thus in faith attacked the Philistines, Saul, who ostensibly leads the people before God, is put to the proof. Will he show himself competent? Will he remember the true principle on which the blessing of the people rests? Will he act as a royal priest, or will he acknowledge the prophet to be the true link of faith between the people and God — a link the importance and necessity of which he ought to have recognized, since he owed to it his present place and power, and it had proved to him its own mission and prophetic authority by establishing his? When the critical moment arrives, Saul fails.

It is worth while to retrace here the tokens of the unbelief of the flesh.

The Philistines are smitten. The nation, active and energetic, hear of it; nothing could be more natural. Saul has but the same resource — no call upon God, no cry to Jehovah, the God of Israel; Samuel does not occur to his faith, although he remembers what Samuel had told him. If the Philistines have heard, the Hebrews must hear also. Israel fears; God gives no answer to unbelief when the trial of faith is His object. Saul calls the people after him to Gilgal, but they were soon scattered from him at the report of the Philistines having gathered together. Saul is at Gilgal, and Samuel comes again into his mind. It was no longer as when the kingdom

had been renewed. The circumstances naturally suggested Samuel as a resource. Saul tarries seven days for him according to his word. He waits for him long enough to satisfy the exigence of conscience. Nature can go a long way on this principle; but it has not that sense of its own weakness, and that all depends on God, which makes it wait on God, as the alone resource and worker. Then, as the people once brought the ark into the camp, he offers the burnt-offering. But, if he had had confidence in God, he would have understood that, whatever might be the result, he should wait for Him; that it was useless to do anything without Him, and that he ran no risk in waiting for Him. A faithful God could not fail him. He had thought of Samuel, and of his having told him to wait, so that he was without excuse; he remembered that the guidance and blessing of God were found with the prophet. But he looks at circumstances: the people are scattered, and Saul seeks to bring God in by an act of devotion without faith. It was the decisive moment; God would have confirmed his kingdom over Israel, would have established his dynasty. But now He had made choice of another.

Observe here, that it is not through being defeated by the Philistines that Saul loses the throne. The fault was between himself and God. The Philistines do not attack him. It is enough for Satan if he succeeds in frightening us away from the pure and simple path of faith. Samuel departs after having made known to Saul the mind of God. The Philistines pillage the land, which is defenseless. The people moreover had neither sword nor spear.

What a picture of the state of God’s people! How often we find that those who profess to be the children of God, to be of the truth, and heirs of the promises, are unarmed before the enemies who despoil them!

But faith in God is always blest; and if God has shown the effect of unbelief, He also shows its folly, since wherever faith is found, there all His strength is displayed; and then it is the enemy who is defenseless. Jonathan makes up his mind to attack the Philistines in the energy which he derives from faith in God; and if unbelief is manifest in Saul, the beauty of faith is exhibited in his son.

The difficulties are not lessened. The Philistines are in garrison, and their camp situated in a place of unusually difficult access, a narrow pathway up perpendicular rocks being the only means of approach. The Philistines were there in great number, and well armed. But it is hard for faith to endure the oppression of God’s people by the enemy, and the dishonor thus done to God Himself. Jonathan endures it not. Where does he seek for strength? His thoughts are simple. The Philistines are uncircumcised; they have not

the help of the God of Israel. “There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few”; and this is the thought of Jonathan’s faith, that fair flower which God caused to blossom in the wilderness of Israel at this sorrowful moment. He does not think about himself. Jehovah, says he, has delivered them up to Israel. He trusts in God, and in His unfailing faithfulness towards His people: his heart rests in this, * and he does not imagine for an instant that God is not with His people, whatever their condition may be. This characterizes faith. It not only acknowledges that God is great, but it recognizes the indissoluble bond (indissoluble because it is of God) between God and His people. The consequence is, that faith forgets circumstances, or rather nullifies them. God is with His people. He is not with their enemies. All the rest is but an opportunity of proving the real dependence of faith. Thus, there is no boasting in Jonathan; his expectation is from God. He goes out and meets the Philistines. He is there a witness for God. If they are bold enough to come down, he will wait for them and not create difficulties for himself, but he will not turn away from those which meet him in his path. The indolent and at the same time foolish and imprudent confidence of the enemy is but a sign to Jonathan that Jehovah has delivered them up. Had they come down, they would have lost their advantage; in bidding him come up, they set aside the insurmountable difficulty of access to the camp. Happy in having a faithful companion in his work of faith, Jonathan seeks no other assistance. He does not talk of the Hebrews; but he says, “Jehovah has delivered them up into the hand of Israel.” He climbs the rock with his armor-bearer. And in truth Jehovah was with him; the Philistines fall before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer slays after him. But while honoring the arm which faith had strengthened, God manifests Himself. The dread of God took hold of the Philistines, and everything trembles before the man whom faith (God’s precious gift) had led into action.

[* See the same proofs of faith in David, when he went out against Goliath.]

Faith acts of itself. Saul is obliged to number the people to find out who is absent. Alas! we are entering into the sad history of unbelief. Saul endeavors to obtain some directions from the ark, whilst elsewhere God was triumphing over the enemy without Israel. The tumult of their defeat continues to increase; and unbelief, which never knows what to do, tells then the priest to withdraw his hand. The king and the priest were not the link between God and the people. There was neither the people’s faith in God without a king, nor the king whom God Himself had given.

Here again, instead of Israel (whom Jonathan alone recognized), we find those whom even the Spirit of God calls Hebrews, * who, although they

were “of the fountain of Jacob,” are among the Philistines, content to be at ease among the enemies of God.

> [* This is the more remarkable, because the Spirit calls those who were with Saul and Jonathan Israelites. This gives special force to the word “Hebrews,” wherever it is found. God does not refuse the name of Israelite to the most timorous of the people (chap. 13:6), but He refuses it to those who join the Philistines. The idea was lost of the connection between the people and God. It was a nation like any other.]

Now that the victory is gained, all are glad to share the triumph and pursue the Philistines.

And poor Saul, what does he do? Never can unbelief — however good its intentions in joining the work of faith — do anything except spoil it. Saul speaks of avenging himself on his enemies. Jehovah is not in his thoughts; he thinks of himself, and hinders the pursuit by his carnal and selfish zeal. May God preserve us from the guidance and help of unbelief in the work of faith! God Himself can succor us through every means; but when man mixes himself up with the work, he does but spoil it, even when seeking to bring in strength.

Saul, at the moment of such blessing, is zealous to maintain the idea of honoring Jehovah’s ordinances, as he sought to do previously in asking His counsel at the ark, making much of His name, as though the victory had been due to him, and it was only some hidden sin which prevented his obtaining an answer from God. He had nearly put Jonathan to death, through whom God had wrought. He would discover the sin by bringing in God, who acts indeed, but only to make manifest the folly of the poor king.

Observe that faith in full energy can thankfully avail itself of the refreshment which God sets before it in its toilsome course, whilst the carnal zeal of that which is but an imitation of faith, and which never acts with God, makes a duty of refusing it. All that Saul can do, when he takes the lead, is to prevent their reaping the entire fruit of the victory. His intervention could only spoil the work of others; he has no faith to perform one himself.

Nevertheless God has pity on Israel, and keeps their enemies in check by means of Saul; for although unbelieving, he had not yet turned his hatred against God’s elect. He was not yet forsaken of Jehovah.

But this painful and solemn moment is at hand. Meanwhile he strengthens himself. There was constant war with the Philistines; but Saul, warlike as he was, could not overcome them, as David or even Samuel did. He sought carnal means amongst his fellows to attain his object.

Observe here with what frightful rapidity, and how even at once, the enemy gains the upper hand when we are not walking in the ways of God (compare ch. 1 Samuel 7:12, 14, and ch. 1 Samuel 13:16-23).

Observe also that all the forms of piety and of Jewish religion are with Saul; "Jehovah's priest in Shiloh (chap. 1 Samuel 14:3), wearing an ephod," and the ark (ver. 18). He consults with the priest. He prevents their eating flesh with blood. He builds an altar. The priest consults God; and, God giving no answer, Saul is ready to slay Jonathan as guilty, because he had eaten in spite of the oath.

Observe, at the same time, that it is the first altar Saul had built; that the priest is of the family which God had condemned. He builds his altar when rejected, and after the outward blessing which God had given, and which he attributes to himself, although he had only spoilt it.

On the other hand Jonathan's faith acts without taking counsel of flesh and blood: as the people said (chap. 1 Samuel 14:45), he wrought with God. The people did not know that he was absent. Happy Jonathan! faith had led him so far in advance that he did not even hear the senseless curse which his father invoked on whoever tasted food. The folly of another's unbelief did not reach him. He was at liberty, as he went along, to avail himself of the kindness of his God with joy and thanksgiving, and he pursued his course refreshed and encouraged — happy walk of simplicity which acts with God!

The consideration of these two chapters is very instructive, as setting before us the contrast between the walk of faith and that of the flesh, in the position which the latter takes, by virtue of its profession, in the work of God. It was the first time that Saul had faced the enemy on whose account God raised him up.

Nevertheless Saul is put to a final proof. Jehovah, by the mouth of Samuel, sends him to smite Amalek, and utterly destroy them and all that belonged to them. They were the cruel and determined enemies of God's people (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). They had been chief among the nations, their name and their pride were everywhere known (Numbers 24:7, 20); but it was a nation doomed of God.

God now entrusts Saul with the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 25:19. In this case all Israel accompanied him without fear. These were not the enemies from within who were daily wearing away their strength and courage. The victory is complete. The only question now is that of faithfulness to God, and of preferring His glory to self-interest. But Saul fears the people. The Spirit of God says "Saul and the people"; Saul says

"the people"; and that it was for God they spared. But our excuses, even when true, only condemn us. Saul, not having faith, not looking to God, fears the people more than God. What a slave is the unbeliever! If not the slave of the enemy, he is that of the people whom he appears to govern. Saul, unfaithful to God in the midst of the people, and surrounded by blessings from Jehovah, is at length deprived of the kingdom.

No humiliation, no brokenness of heart — he confesses his sin, hoping to avoid its punishment; but, unable to escape it, he entreats Samuel to honor him in spite of it. Samuel does so and then forsakes him. Everything changes now, and David appears on the scene. It is well to remark that the connected history of Saul's reign closes with the end of chapter 14.

**CHAPTER** 15 is given as a separate history on account of the importance of its contents — the definite rejection of Saul, a rejection which introduces David.

In **CHAPTER** 16 Samuel is sent of Jehovah to anoint this His chosen one. All glorying in the flesh and its birthright are here set aside; and the youngest, despised and forgotten of all, who kept the sheep, is chosen of God; "for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth." Samuel, taught of God, hesitates not in his decision, and can accept none of the seven who are at home. "Are here all thy children?" At length he anoints David, brought in from the field.

But God does not set David at once in the height of power, as He did in the case of Saul. He must make his way by grace and faith through all kinds of difficulties; and, although filled with the Holy Spirit, he must act in the presence of a power devoid of the Spirit, and which God has not yet set aside. He must be subject and be humbled, he must feel his entire dependence on God, that God is sufficient in all circumstances; and his faith must be developed by trial in which God is felt to be all. Beautiful type of One who, without sin, journeyed through far more painful circumstances! and not only a type, but at the same time a vessel prepared by God for the Holy Spirit, who could fill him with sentiments which, while describing so touchingly the sufferings of Christ Himself and His sympathy with His people, exhibit, to those who were to tread in weakness the same path as Himself, their resource in God. For one cannot doubt that the trials of David gave rise to the greater part of those beautiful psalms, which, depicting the circumstances, the trials, and the complaints of the remnant of Israel in the last days, as well as of Christ Himself (who, in Spirit, has identified Himself with them, and has undertaken their cause), have thus furnished so many other burdened souls with the expression and the relief of their sorrows; and although their interpretation of these psalms may have been incorrect, yet their hearts were not mistaken. *

[* This unintelligent use of the Psalms, however, has tended to keep pious souls down below their privileges as Christians. A child's place with the Father is never found in any of the Psalms, nor the spiritual feelings generated by the consciousness of the relationship. The word may be used as a comparison, but the relationship is never recognized, and could not be.]

We will return to our history.

The Spirit of Jehovah came upon David and forsook Saul, who, at the same time, is troubled by an evil spirit. The providence of God brings in David by means of one of Saul's servants who knew him, and presents him to Saul. Saul loves him, and keeps him in his presence; he becomes his armor — bearer, and he plays on a harp when the evil spirit troubles Saul. David, in God's sight, is the anointed king, but he must suffer before he reigns, however great his energy may be.

The Philistines, that type of the enemy's power, present themselves again with their champion at their head, against whom no one dares to fight. David had returned home, and was living in the simplicity of his usual life.

Although that which precedes gives the general idea of the position in which he had been placed, it appears that David had not remained long with the king (chap. 17:15). His father sends him to see his brothers, who are in Saul's army. There he sees the Philistine who defied the armies of Israel. Jonathan does not appear here. There is but one who can destroy this champion, who centers in his own person all the energy of evil. David's faith sees no difficulty in it because he sees God, and in the enemy an enemy of God without strength. He was but one of the "uncircumcised"; the rest matters little. In the performance of his ordinary duties David had already met with difficulties too great for a full-grown man; yet, although a mere youth, he had overcome them for a very simple reason" — Jehovah delivered." He had not boasted of this (it was the fulfillment of his duty); but he had learnt in it the strength and faithfulness of Jehovah. And this experience is now repeated. Man's armor is rejected; faith knows it not. God will perform the work by the most simple means.

David declares wherein his strength consists. "I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts." He then identifies himself with the people of God. "All the earth shall know that there is a God in Israel." Remark how the simplicity of faith rises to the consciousness of power and its effects in the hands of God (chap. 17:46). So ever when God leads the heart.

The stone which sinks into the forehead of Goliath deprives him of strength and of life. David cuts off the head of Goliath with his own sword, like Him who by death destroyed him that had the power of death.

The whole army of Israel profits by David's triumph. Saul, who had forgotten him, will not suffer him to go away. Alas! the flesh, and even the flesh in rebellion, can love Jehovah's elect on account of his kindness and the relief he ministers; but it knows him not. When he is doing Jehovah's work, he is as much a stranger to Saul as if they had never met.

But when Christ makes Himself known, the remnant (which Jonathan represented) loves Him as his own soul, and this beloved one becomes the object of his whole affection. This does not however, in its bearing, go beyond the personal reign of Christ. Jonathan represents the remnant which has loved Him in humiliation. As to this world, it is so always; there is a remnant who love Christ, and desire His kingdom, although it will put an end to the economy in which they stand. Of the assembly, properly so called, there is nothing here. It is a remnant who desire the coming of Christ. Saul, who sought his own glory and endeavored to uphold his house by carnal means, seeks the death of him who is to come and establish the kingdom. So the Jews with Christ.

The faith of David had rather a different character from that of Jonathan, although both conquered the Philistines. Jonathan is not deterred by difficulties: he sees the God of Israel and does the work of God which Saul neglects. It is the true and energetic faith of God's people. But David, the king — secretly so indeed, but chosen and anointed — meets face to face the great enemy of his people in all his might, the mere sight of whom dismayed the people, who fled before him.

That which distinguishes the faith of Jonathan most touchingly is his attachment to one who (to judge after the manner of men, as Saul did) eclipses his glory. But Jonathan is absorbed by his affection for the one whom God has chosen. He sees in him the true head of Israel — worthy to be so — who, however despised at the present moment, must prosper and reign as of God. It was also David's qualities which gained his affection. It was a personal attachment. He could appreciate David, and he forgot his own interests in thinking of him. The voice and the words of David sink deep into his heart, and bind him to the king whom God has chosen, while unknown, and in spite of everything. Saul, the professed head of the people, jealous of any one who might displace either himself or his descendants, is at enmity with David and forsaken of God; he is the instrument of the enemy against Jehovah's anointed. At length he falls by the more direct and open power of the enemy of God's people. Sorrowful end of that which had been a vessel of blessing and an instrument in the work of God, although but in a carnal way.

God causes David's true glory to outshine the official importance of Saul. The victories of the former are sung in such a manner as to excite the king's jealousy.

We will now briefly trace the features of David's faith in these new circumstances. Never does he lift his hand against Saul; he serves him obediently, he does his duty, and patiently bears the jealousy and malice which pursue him.

Poor Saul! troubled by the evil spirit, David plays on the harp to soothe him, and Saul seeks to slay him. David escapes. Saul fears him; for the God by whom he is himself forsaken is with David. He employs him at a distance from himself, but where he is more than ever in the view of the people. God always carries out His purposes in spite of all the carnal precautions of man. David is prudent. He has the wisdom of God, who is with him in all his ways. Energetic and unpretending, always successful, he is beloved by all Israel and Judah, before whom he goes in and out with all the strength and superiority of faith.

Saul seeks to turn all this to his own account; apparently he honors David, but he only does so in order to expose him to the enemy and get rid of him. David abides in his lowliness, and Merab is given to another. Michal affords Saul a more specious opportunity. As he was only required to destroy the power of the enemies of God's people, David accepts Saul's proposal and succeeds. Saul perceives more and more that Jehovah is with David, and becomes still more afraid of him: sad development of a sad state of soul! Yet Saul was not deficient in fine points of natural character, which manifested themselves at times in better feelings. But God was not in them (chap. 19). Jonathan's intercession has power over his father, and for a time all is well. But Saul, being forsaken of God, cannot bear that He should be with David. War breaks out; and David, God's own instrument in what He does for His people, defeats the Philistines and drives them away.

It will be observed here, that it is the Philistines who are there, through whom the power of faith is in question. It is with them that the battle of God and of faith is fought, that David always succeeded, and that Saul failed.

Saul is again troubled; and David, who seeks to refresh him, narrowly avoids being slain. He makes his escape and goes away to Samuel. Remark here how the grief, which egotism and self-love produce, makes room for the action of the evil spirit on the soul.

The power reappears here, which, hidden as it was, still governed the fate of Israel. David recognizes it, and, when he can no longer remain with Saul, he

does not seek in anywise to magnify himself by rising up against the outward form which God had inwardly judged but not destroyed. Instead of opposing it, he contents himself with acknowledging that manifestation of the power of God which had placed Saul in his royal position, and from which he had himself received the testimony and the communication of the strength and of the will of God; he takes refuge with Samuel. He is pursued thither by Saul and by his messengers, who, with their master, are subjected to this same power — a power which does not influence their hearts or guide their conduct, a power of which Saul had forfeited the blessing. What a picture of a useless, ruined vessel! sometimes prostrate under the energy of Satan, sometimes prophesying in that of God, from whom his heart is far away, by whom he is forsaken. His outward conduct is not disorderly; he does no harm except when Jehovah's anointed excites his jealousy and his hatred.

David is now driven away from the presence of Saul, and becomes a wanderer in the earth. It is no longer entire submission to Saul, whilst himself the vessel of the energy of God. Driven away by Saul, David had returned to the source of God's testimony; and Saul had again dared to seek his life, even when he was with Samuel. He has completely thrown off the last restraint, and forgotten all that should have reminded him of God, and stayed his hand. Seeking his own glory, and taking advantage of his acquired position, the presence of Samuel has no longer any hold upon his conscience. It is even no longer "Honor me before the elders of my people"; he does not value the prophet at all; he comes, in spite of himself, under an influence which he has despised. David is thus shielded from his malice. He could not now return to Saul. It would have been to unite himself with the despisal of God's testimony. For, what can be done when a man prophesies, and yet runs counter to the power which he cannot deny? David takes flight. But Saul's state is again tested by this state of things. Jonathan can scarcely credit his father's ill-will. But, before putting it to the proof, his devotion to David is very plainly manifested. His faith and his heart acknowledge that which the blinded Saul cannot receive (chap. 20:13, 17).

Even when David is driven away, Jonathan's faith is not shaken; his heart is not separated from the one whom his soul loved, when, radiant with youth and the glory of his victory over Goliath, David replied to Saul with a modesty that heightened its luster. He loves him when dishonored and a fugitive. He acknowledges him as God's elect, and links the hopes of his house with the glory of his beloved. *

[* See chapter 23:16, 17. But what Jonathan proposed there could not be; that is, connection between the old system in the flesh and God's grace and

purpose. Jonathan, though loving David, walked with the old, which God was going to judge.]

But Jonathan does not follow David, and he falls with Saul. Whatever opinion we may entertain with respect to the typical meaning of this part of his history, we see in him that whatever is allied to the carnal system, which is outwardly connected with the interests of the people and name of God, falls, as regards this world, with the system that perishes entirely.

David, informed by Jonathan of Saul's state of mind, departs; and Jonathan returns into the city.

The elect king is now rejected. He repairs to the priest, who gives him the hallowed bread, according to the sovereign grace of God, who rises above the ordinances that are connected with blessing, when that blessing is rejected — when He Himself is rejected in His chosen one, and in the power of His testimony. When this is the case, He sets faith above ordinances in His sovereign grace. Since God Himself and His testimony are rejected, the shewbread was considered common. God in fact was ordering all anew.

It was precisely the case of the Lord Jesus. The Person of the rejected One is above all the carnal ordinances, which have lost their signification where He is. Christ submitted indeed to all the ordinances and authorities; but the rejection of God's testimony in Him caused it to be perceived by degrees that He was One greater than the ordinances — One who set them aside, and replaced them by the manifestation of the effectual and eternal grace of God. It was much more important to give David food than to keep that which had grown old. God cared more for him than for the bread of the tabernacle.

David then takes the sword of Goliath. It was by the power of death that the Lord destroyed all his strength who had the power of death. Death is the best weapon in the arsenal of God, when it is wielded by the power of life.

David, his mind full of Saul's enmity, seeks refuge among the Philistines. What business had he there? This time God drives him thence without chastisement, but abundantly proving to him at the same time that he was out of place there. We escape from the wisdom which leads us into the midst of God's enemies, by the shame of that folly which causes us to be driven out again.

David now takes his place fully with the excellent of the earth (Hebrews 11:38). There the prophet Gad joins him; he is guided in a direct manner by the plain testimony of God, and soon after he is joined by the priest also; so that, rejected as he is, all that belonged to the testimony and the dealings of

God gathers around him. He was the king; the prophet was there; the priest was there also. The outward forms were elsewhere. Saul, on the contrary, as he had shown his contempt for Samuel by pursuing David even into his presence, without pity as without fear of God, and without remorse, rids himself of the priests by the hand of a stranger, an Edomite, a merciless enemy of the people, when the consciences of the latter would have withheld his hand. It is on this occasion that the priest is brought by God to David, in like manner as we find the prophet there after Saul had manifested his contempt of him. Thus a hostile king, he is a despiser of the prophet, an enemy of the priest of God.

What a sad history of the gradual but progressive fall of one who, having the form of good, has not faith in God, and whom God has forsaken! How sure are the ways of God, whatever appearances may be!

David, despised as he may be, is the king and savior of the people; he puts the Philistines to flight with great slaughter. He finds nothing but treachery in Israel, of which Saul makes use in the hope of seizing David. But as the wisdom of the prophet is with David, so has he also God's answer by the ephod of the priest which is with him.

Let us observe in passing, that Saul has greatly aggrandized himself to outward view. He is no longer with his six hundred men who followed him trembling; he can speak of his captains of thousands and captains of hundreds; he can bestow fields and vineyards; he has his Doeg, the head over his herdsmen. Before God, inwardly, he makes frightful progress in evil; he is not only forsaken of God, but he breaks through all the restraints of conscience, and of the testimony and ordinances of God. For the prophet Samuel and the priests ought to have been a restraint to one who professed to be identified with the interests of God's people.

Outward progress in prosperity, joined to actual progress in evil inwardly, is a very solemn thing. It is at once a snare to the flesh and a trial to faith. David, on the contrary, is apparently — and in fact, as to circumstances — driven out from the people. He has neither home nor refuge. But the testimony of God, in the person of the prophet Gad, and communion with God by the priest's ephod, are his portion in his exile. Cast out by man, he is where the resources of God are realized according to the need of His people.

Remark also that David himself acts as priest, to obtain the expression of God's mind. He takes the ephod to seek counsel of God; he eats the shewbread, a remarkable type of Christ teaching us that, when all is ruined, blessing is made over to those who by faith walk in obedience,

understanding the duty of the believer who discerns the moral place of faith, what it owes to God, and how it may rely on Him.

Remark, also, that that which here distinguishes David is not shining deeds, the fruit of the power of faith, but the instinct and intelligence of that which is suitable to his position a moral discernment of that which is pleasing to God, and of the line of conduct which His servant should pursue as the vessel of His spiritual energy, while the power which belongs to him is in the hands of another. It is the walk of one who has apprehended that which is suitable to this difficult position, in all the circumstances it brings him into; who respects that which God respects, and does the work of God without fear when God calls him: a remarkable type of Jesus in all this, and example for us.

Besides this spiritual perception, these moral suitabilities; the greater part of this history sets before us the way in which God makes everything tend towards the accomplishment of His purposes (in spite of all the motives and intentions of men) in order to place David, through patience and the energy of faith, in the position He had prepared for him.

Nevertheless David needs the intervention and the safeguard of God. Having quitted Keilah (chap. 23), in consequence of God's warning, he goes into the wilderness. There he is surrounded by Saul's men. But at the moment when Saul would have taken him, the Philistines invade the land, and Saul is obliged to return.

"And David went up and dwelt in the strongholds of Engedi. Saul pursues him thither, after following the Philistines, more occupied with his jealousy of the king whom God had chosen than with the enemies of his people. But this expedition is not to his honor. An opportunity to kill his persecutor presents itself to David; but the fear of God rules him, and even Saul's heart is touched for the moment by a preservation which proved that David respected him in a way he had not imagined. He sees clearly what the result will be, and engages David to protect his posterity; but David does not return to Saul. The relationship was broken.

At length Samuel dies. This forms an epoch, because he who was the true link between the people and God was gone. Israel acknowledged him when dead, although they had despised him while living.

And now David's position changes, and Abigail is brought in. Jonathan never separated from the system in which he stood, never united himself to David, although loving him, and never shared his sufferings. But Abigail identifies herself with him; existing relationships do not prevent her acknowledging David; and she is united to him after her husband's death.

Jonathan prefigures the remnant in the character of the remnant of Israel, who acknowledge the future king, and adhere to him, but go no farther. As regards old Israel they come to nothing with it; they will be blessed as reigned over in the kingdom, but not be associated with Christ on the throne. Jonathan does not suffer with David, and does not reign with him. He remains with Saul, and, as to that position, his career ends with Saul. Abigail, and even the malcontents who joined David, shared his sufferings. Abigail separates herself completely from the spirit of her husband; and it is on account of her faith and wisdom that David spares Nabal's life. God judges the latter, and then Abigail becomes the wife of David.

Historically David had nearly failed in his high standing. In fact it is on account of the faithful remnant, the Abigail of the foolish nation, that Israel itself has been spared; and the Lord's connection with the assembly is in the character of pure grace, not in that of the avenger (as hereafter with Israel). At this time it is that David, during his rejection, surrounds himself with those who will be the companions and the retinue of his glory in the kingdom. But he also takes a wife.

Abigail speaks of Saul as a man. Jehovah, she says, will make a sure house to David. This is the intelligence of faith. * It is the truth of God's counsels (2 Samuel 7:11), and in its fullness, as to this. She was forming for herself, without knowing it, the position of the assembly, in the future she was preparing for herself. **

[* In fact, when the priesthood had been judged, nothing remained for faith, which apprehended the mind of God, except the prophet Samuel and the king given by God, David. Abigail understands this. The assembly should think as God Himself thinks, in spite of existing circumstances. Abigail thinks nothing of Saul. Samuel is dead; David is now everything to her. "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it." Where were the high priests and all their company? Nevertheless the Lord submitted to them as to an ordinance, as David did to Saul.]

[** She takes a much more humble place than Jonathan did, and one which, even at the time, acknowledged David much more fully. It is not a friend like Jonathan; it is a submissive soul which, in spirit, gives David his place according to God, taking her own place before him. It is exactly that which distinguishes the spirit of the assembly — of the true Christian. In Jonathan we see the remnant under the Jewish aspect. But Abigail enters into the spirit of God's purposes respecting David, although he was now in distress; and David, who, while thoroughly submissive, can act according to the faith that owns him, hears her voice, and accepts her person. Let us mark the features of Abigail's faith. All rests upon her appreciation of David (it is this which forms a Christian's judgment — in every respect he appreciates Christ); his title as owned of God; his personal perfection; and that which belonged to him according to the counsels of God. She thinks of him

according to all the good which God has spoken of him; she sees him fighting God's battles, where others only see a rebel against Saul; and all this from her heart. She judges Nabal, and looks upon him as already judged of God on account of this, for with her everything is judged according to its connection with David is. 26); a judgment which God accomplishes ten days later, although Nabal was at peace in his own house, and David an exile and outcast Nevertheless the relation of Abigail to Nabal is recognized until God executes judgment. She judges Saul. He is but a man, because, to her faith, David is king. All her desire is that David may remember her Jonathan says, when he goes out to David, "I shall be next unto thee" and David abides in the wood, while Jonathan returns to his house In the order of things which God had judged (a judgment that faith recognized) he remains with his family and shares its ruin. This is important to a Christian. For instance, he respects, in so far as based on Gods authority, official Christianity — which, in the world, is the religion of God while God bears with it — and does not stand up against it. As to faith and personal walk, this Christianity is nothing at all just as Saul was only a man to Abigail's faith.]

Alas! Saul is unchanged; instigated by the Ziphites, he seeks David anew, but it is only to fall again, and more publicly, into David's hands. Observe that David now appeals more directly to the Lord to judge between him and Saul. The separation is more complete. Saul was incorrigible. This appeal to God was becoming. It is not becoming, it is not according to the way of the Spirit, to accustom ourselves to evil. Righteous Father," said the Lord at length, "the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me."

That which characterized David in everything is, that he puts himself entirely into Jehovah's hands; it is the spirit of Christ in the Psalms.

But David, after all, is only a man; and immediately after this testimony that God was with him (a testimony that even Saul acknowledged), his faith fails, and he passes over into the midst of the enemies of God's people. God, no doubt, makes use of this means to remove David from peril. But at the same time, he is tried and chastened, and is exposed to the dreadful necessity of appearing ready to fight against Israel. There is but One whose perfection and wisdom were His safeguard in every trial.

We may remark that it was immediately after an evident interposition of God (chap. 26:12) that David's faith fails. It is the same with Elijah (1 Kings 19). One would say that, in our hearts, faith exhausts itself by an unusual effort. Faith may carry us through the crisis; but the heart, which was the vessel of faith, is terrified by it; whilst in Jesus we find an equability of perfection altogether divine.

David removes to a distance from the royal city. In the land of the Philistines he gains their king's favor, not by faith, but by a prudence

inconsistent with truth. It is an unhappy position; nevertheless, God does not forsake him. He chastises him, and in a painful manner, but He spares and preserves him. We have seen similar ways of the Lord in the case of the fugitive Jacob.

Achish, who knows David, wishes to employ him in his service, and David cannot refuse; for when he who possesses the energy which the Spirit of God imparts by faith, has placed himself in a false position through unfaithfulness, he has no power against the one under whose authority he has placed himself; and if he does not use the energy with which he is endowed in favor of his protector, he very naturally excites his jealousy. He would have avoided all this by going to Ziklag, but he could not. God in His mercy preserved David, but he was now in a sad and false position.

Saul, as well as Israel at present, was in a still worse position, having succor neither from God nor from the enemy. Saul is forsaken of God. Samuel is dead; so that Israel is no longer in connection with God through him.

David, who at least made head against the Philistines, was, through Saul's own doings, in their midst. The outward zeal of the king had put down all those who had the spirit of witchcraft. He seeks direction from God, but obtains no answer. He has now neither conscience nor faith. The case is urgent; and he throws himself, not into outward service to God, as formerly (he has the sad and solemn conviction that it belongs to him no more), but into those things which he had condemned and cut off as evil when he maintained a religious character — things which he still knew were evil. But the Philistines were there, and his heart greatly trembles. He seeks out a woman who had a familiar spirit. God meets him here. Samuel ascends, but in such a manner as to terrify the woman. She recognizes the presence of a power superior to her enchantments. Samuel declares to Saul, without reserve and without any sympathy (for this was no longer possible), the solemn judgment of God.

In **CHAPTER** 29 God, in His loving-kindness, brings David out of his difficulty by means of the jealousy of the lords of the Philistines. Nevertheless, to maintain his credit with Achish, David falls still lower, it seems to me, and protests that he is quite ready to fight against the enemies of the Philistine king, that is to say, against the people of God. This appears to me the most wretched part of David's life — at any rate, before he was king. God makes him sensible of it; for while he is there, the Amalekites strip him of everything and burn Ziklag, and his followers are ready to stone him.

All this is grievous; but the grace of God raises him up again, and the effect of this chastisement is to bring him back to God, for he was ever true to

Him in heart. David encouraged himself in Jehovah his God, and inquires of Him what he shall do. What patience, what kindness in God! What care He takes of His people, even while they are turning away from Him!

David is truly brought back to God, and rescued from his false position, and he walks and acts with God. God was, unknown to him, preparing a very different position for him, and was purifying and preparing him for it. How dreadful would it have been, had David been with the Philistines, and taken part in the defeat of God's people, and in the death of him whose life he had often spared so touchingly! How far the child of God may go astray when he puts himself under the protection of unbelievers, instead of relying on the help of God in all the difficulties which beset the path of faith! It is through these very difficulties that every grace is developed.

And observe the danger the believer is in — if his faith be not simple, but fails ever so little — of being thrown into the arms of God's enemies through the persecution of professors. Nature grows weary, and seeks comfort afar from the narrow path which leads through the briars. This happens whenever the people of God, following their own will, confide their interests to those who seek nothing but their own advantage in a less difficult position, which is neither that of God nor that of faith. And the more glorious a work there is for faith, the more nature grows weary, if faith becomes weak. Ziklag is taken during David's absence, but he pursues the spoilers, and recovers all the booty.

David, upright and generous, found, in the difficulty which arose from the selfishness of his people, an opportunity to institute that which was conformable to the will of God; and instead of seeking to enrich himself through his share of the spoil, he uses it to maintain kindly relations with the elders of his people, and to prove to them that Jehovah is still with him.

**CHAPTER** 31 recounts the solemn death of Saul and of Jonathan also, closing, with the total discomfiture of Israel, this touching history. The whole account of Saul and his family, as raised up to withstand the Philistines, is ended: Saul and his sons fall into their hands; they are beheaded, their armor sent in triumph to the house of the Philistines' idols, and their bodies hung upon the walls of Beth-shan. Sad end, as that of the flesh will ever be in the battle of Jehovah!

Let us briefly retrace the history of David. Simplicity of faith keeps him in the place of duty, and contented there, without desire to leave it, because the approbation of God suffices him. Consequently he can there reckon upon the help of God, as thoroughly secured to him; he acts in the strength of God. The lion and the bear fall under his youthful hand. Why not, if God was with him? He follows Saul with equal simplicity, and then returns to

the care of his sheep with the same satisfaction. There, in secret, he had understood by faith that Jehovah was with Israel; he had understood the nature and force of this relationship. He sees, in the condition of Israel, something which does not answer to this; but, as for himself, his faith rests upon the faithfulness of God. An uncircumcised Philistine falls like the lion. He serves Saul as musician with the same simplicity as before; and, whether with him, or when Saul sends him out as captain of a thousand, gives proof of his valor. He obeys the king's commands.

At length the king drives him away; but he is still in the place of faith. There is little now of military achievement, but there is the discernment of that which became him, when the spiritual power was in him, but the outward divine authority was in other hands. It was the same position as that of Jesus in Israel. David does not fail in this position, its difficulties only the better bringing out all the beauty of God's grace and the fruits of the Spirit's work, while very peculiarly developing spiritual affections and intimate relationship with God, his only refuge. It is especially this which gave rise to the Psalms. Faith suffices to bring him through all the difficulties of his position, in which it displays all its beauty and all its grace. The nobleness of character which faith imparts to man, and which is the reflection of God's character, produces in the most hardened hearts, even in those who, having forsaken God, are forsaken of Him (a state in which sin, selfishness, and despair, combine to harden), feelings of natural affection, the remorse of a nature which awakens under the influence of something superior to its malice — something which sheds its light (painful, because momentary and powerless) upon the darkness which encompasses the unhappy sinner who rejects God. It is because faith dwells so near God as to be above evil, that it withdraws nature itself from the power of evil, although nature has no power of self-mastery. But God is with faith; and faith respects that which God respects, and invests one who bears something from God with the honor due to that which belongs to God, and which recalls God to the heart with all the affection that faith entertains for Him, and all that pertains to Him. This is always seen in Jesus, and wherever His Spirit is; and it is this that gives such beauty, such elevation, to faith, which ennobles itself with the nobility of God, by recognising that which is noble in His sight, and on account of its relationship to Him, in spite of the iniquity or abasement of those who are invested with it. Faith acts on God's behalf, and reveals Him in the midst of circumstances, instead of being governed by them. Its superiority over that which surrounds it is evident. What repose, to witness this amid the mire of this poor world!

But, although faith, in the place it gives us in this world, suffices for all that we meet with in it, yet alas! communion with God is not perfect in us.

Instead of doing our duty whatever it be without weariness, because God is with us, and when we have slain the lion, being ready to slay the bear, and through this, more ready still to slay Goliath — instead of faith being strengthened by victory, nature grows weary of the conflict; we lose the normal position of faith, we debase and dishonor ourselves. What a difference between David, who, by the fruit of grace, draws tears from the heart of Saul, re-opening (at least for the moment) the channel of his affections, and David, unable to raise his hand against the Philistines whom he had so often defeated, and boasting himself ready to fight against Israel and the king whose life he had spared!

My brethren, let us abide in the place of faith, apparently a more difficult one, yet the place where God is found, and where grace — the only precious thing in this world — flourishes, and binds the heart to God by a thousand links of affection and gratitude, as to One who has known us, and who has stooped to meet our need and the desires of our hearts. Faith gives energy; faith gives patience; and it is often thus that the most precious affections are developed — affections which, if the energy of faith makes us servants on earth, render heaven itself happy, because He who is the object of faith is there, and fills it in the presence of the Father.

Nature makes us impatient with circumstances, because we do not sufficiently realise God, and draws us into situations where it is impossible to glorify Him. On the other hand, it is well to observe, that it is when man had thoroughly failed, when even David’s faith had been found wanting, and — departing from Israel — he had thrown himself among the Philistines, it was then that God gave him the kingdom. Grace is above all failure: God must glorify Himself in His people.

# 2 SAMUEL

The Second Book of Samuel sets before us the definitive establishment of David in the kingdom; and afterwards, the miseries of his house, when prosperity had opened the door to self-will.

The path of faith and its difficulties, is that in which we walk with God, and in which we celebrate the triumph which His presence secures to us. A state of prosperity makes it evident how little man is able to enjoy it without its becoming a snare to him. Prosperity not being the path of faith, that is to say, of strength, the evil of the heart comes out in the walk. Compare 2 Samuel 22 (the psalm by which David closes the path of difficulty) with chapter 23, which contains his last words, after his experience of the enjoyment of the prosperity and glory in which faith had placed him.

Nevertheless piety, and pious (and hence generous) sentiments, were genuine in David. He did not pretend to feel for Saul's misfortunes, and then seize upon the kingdom without regret as soon as Saul had ceased to exist. David's heart was really melted when he heard of Saul's death. Woe to the hard-hearted man who, impelled by the hope of reward, thought to be the bearer of good tidings in announcing it to him. Whatever Saul's misfortunes, he was the king of Israel to David. Whatever his faults, he was an unfortunate king. David had been beloved by him, and had dwelt in his house, where the king's affliction manifested itself, and commanded the respect of all around him And if Saul had unjustly persecuted David, at this moment it was readily forgotten. Now that he has fallen, David will only remember that which can do him honor; and, above all, that it is Jehovah's anointed, and Jehovah's people, who have fallen before their enemies.

David causes the man to be put to death who, deluded by selfishness, accused himself of lacking all fear of Jehovah, all good and generous feeling. For David fears God; and Jehovah's anointed is precious in his sight. He then pours out his heart before God in the touching accents of a grief which, in solemn and affecting language, recalls whatever would exalt Saul, and expresses the tender and affectionate recollections which his heart suggests. Beautiful exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit of God! David is in no wise discouraged, for his faith is in action. If this misfortune grieves him, it gives him also the opportunity of guarding against a similar calamity. He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, by which weapon Saul was slain. David, still humble, goes on well. He asks Jehovah if he should go up to Judah, and to which place; and Jehovah

directs him. David testifies also to the men of Jabesh-gilead his satisfaction at their conduct with respect to Saul.

Nevertheless war has not yet ceased; if not against enemies from without, it is carried on against those from within. That which was linked with Saul's fleshly importance cannot support David. All is however now changed, for Ishbosheth was not Jehovah's anointed, and to make him king was in fact to rebel against God. David makes war upon him by his captains.

Alas! the history of this period plunges us into the ways of man. It is no longer merely David walking in the path of faith. It is Joab, a clever, ambitious, bloody-minded, and heartless man. It is Abner, a man morally superior to Joab, but who fights on fleshly principles as a party man against the king whom God has chosen. Abner is related to Ishbosheth as Joab is to David. When his pride has been wounded, he throws himself into David's interests, and Joab kills him as much from jealousy as to avenge his brother's death. And wherein is the prowess and valor of the chiefs of Benjamin and Judah now manifested in this "field of strong men"? In slaying each other. The Philistines were forgotten. But the family of Saul were entirely in the wrong. It was nature which, with its pretended rights, would not submit to God and to His will.

As David now begins to do, so will Christ, the King of Judah, bring all around into subjection to Himself after He has taken the throne.

It is well however to observe, that David does not appear in all this. Joab is the actor; and it appears to me, from the details given, that evil had already begun. I do not see that David had sought counsel of Jehovah; and Joab had certainly not done so, for he was nothing more than an ungodly man, who understood that it was more prudent to honor God, and not to depart too far from Him merely to gratify one's passions; but this did not preserve him from being at length ensnared in his own calculations. And, after all, it is not the energy of Joab which puts the kingdom into David's hands but the wounded pride of Abner, the chief of Ishbosheth's party, who ends by reaping from men that which he had sown. But all this is very sad.

By providential means God accomplishes His purposes, and David is successful. Generally also, in his combats at this period, and in his exaltation, he typifies the Lord Jesus. And I doubt not that the establishment of Christ's kingdom will be accomplished in detail after His appearing; the prophecies of Zechariah and Micah 5 prove this; but, as a history, we are, as I have said, in the midst of men. In the matter of Ishbosheth's death David maintains his integrity; and with respect to Abner's assassination he manifests the sentiments which become a man of God. Nevertheless

chapter 2 Samuel 3:39 exhibits the weakness of man as the instrument of God's government. David appeals to the God of judgment.

The election of one in whom God's counsels are accomplished must necessarily take place before his establishment in the place which Jehovah had appointed. It is still more evident that this election precedes the rest of the chosen one, and this is true as to Christ Himself; only He came down into it in grace.

David, the king of Judah in Hebron for seven years and a half, becomes the king of all Israel upon Ishbosheth's death And now David is no longer the man of faith who, himself the head of the armies of Israel walking in dependence upon God, guided the enterprises which the circumstances of Israel required of faith; but he is a king who can exalt whom he will The man very soon appears, the energetic man, but not the man of God. "Whosoever getteth up to the gutter," the king said should be rewarded; "he shall be chief and captain" (chap. 2 Samuel 5:8). Joab goes up, and he has natural claims upon David. *

> [* Joab was evidently clever and enterprising: but it is remarkable that he is not named among those who distinguished themselves by brilliant exploits, when individual faith had to fight for God's glory When it is a question of being chief and captain, a place which David had held till then, Joab immediately comes forward.]

Nevertheless, in the main David is guided by God, and he takes the city which God had chosen for His throne upon the earth. It was on this account he could say of those who had it in possession, "they are hated of David's soul"; for in fact they who possess the true seat of God's power, the place which He loves, and who, trusting to their natural strength, resist and scoff at the king whom God has chosen, are more hateful than any people, and are hated by those who have the Spirit of the Lord who establishes His throne upon the earth.

It is well to remark here, that David is a type of Christ in rejection, and of Christ making war in power for the establishment of the millennium; as Solomon is of Christ reigning in millennial peace. David's wars with the Philistines are subsequent to the taking of Jerusalem, and to the entire subjugation of Israel to David. It is not David, neither is it Christ reigning over the earth, who takes Jerusalem. Christ will descend from heaven for the destruction of Antichrist; but He destroys the enemies of Israel by means of His own people, after having established His throne in Zion (compare Zechariah 9 and 10). I do not enlarge upon this; I merely point out the grand features which the word supplies on this subject.

David establishes himself in Zion; he is acknowledged by some friendly Gentiles; he is conscious too that it was God who made him king. But the natural heart soon shows itself. Strengthened in his kingdom by Jehovah, he does what he likes, he follows his own will (compare 5177Deuteronomy 17:17).

Nevertheless the consolidation of his power does not overthrow the hopes of his former enemies; * it excites their jealousy. They neither know the arm of his strength, nor the purpose of Jehovah who exalted him. They rush on to destruction. And now, with the danger that awakens him, we find again the man of God, the type of the Lord Jesus, inquiring of Jehovah, and obedient to His word. He gains signal victories under the express guidance of God, whose strength goes before him and puts his enemies to flight. Accordingly he gives God the glory.

> [* It is evident, from many Old Testament prophecies, that it will be the same when Christ returns to the earth. And yet at that period, if man exalts himself, it will be but for sudden destruction.]

Although God has established a king in power, who is at the same time the victorious leader of His people, yet the bonds of the covenant are not yet restored. The ark is still in the place where individual piety had sheltered it when God was obliged to be the guardian of His own glory. David would bring it to the place where his throne is now established. He desires that the Jehovah of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim, should be honored, and that He should be at the same time the glory of the king of Israel’s throne. They are bound together in his mind. Now the kingdom of Melchisedec was not yet in exercise, not even in type. For Melchisedec is king of Salem (this is, king of peace). God was still maintaining His own glory. He could bless David, the elected and anointed king; but that order of things which united all together under the king’s authority was not yet in force. It was to be set up later under Solomon.

Israel should have acknowledged God’s order. But even while seeking to honor God, David thinks of himself, and there is definitively but a faulty imitation of that which the Philistine priests had done when acted upon by the terror of Jehovah. The result was unhappy. What man had done, man seeks to sustain; but in doing this he touches the glory of Jehovah and falls before His majesty. Jehovah vindicates His glory. He dwells not yet in the midst of His people.

At once pained and alarmed — pained because his heart truly sought Jehovah’s glory, although he did not understand its height, and had forgotten the majesty of Him whom his heart desired to have nearer to him — David leaves the ark in the house of Obed-edom; and there Jehovah

shows that it is His nature to bless, whenever His majesty is not so forgotten that men deal with Him as they think proper. If we detract from His glory, He maintains it; as also He manifests what He is by the blessing He bestows. The heart and affections of David are restored; he causes the ark to be carried from Obed-edom's house, and places it in the tabernacle he had pitched for it. Here we only see David, and we see him clothed with the ephod He is the head of his people, when he re-establishes the relationship * between them and his God, and it is with joy, with offerings, and songs of triumph. It is he also who blesses the people, being in all this a remarkable type of Jesus, and of that which He will perform in Israel in the last days.

> [* I say "relationship," because, in fact, the ark of the covenant was the outward link, the sign of the formal relationship between God and Israel. This gives much importance to the circumstance we are considering. The loss of the ark had been, on the contrary, the Ichabod of the people.]

All this however was not building the temple, which was a work reserved for the Prince of Peace. It was the king, by faith head of the people, acting up to a certain point for faith as priest, on the principle of Melchisedec, although the order and the blessing belonging to that title were not yet established. The king offers sacrifices, he blesses the people. As their sole head, he had united all Israel, he had beaten his enemies.

But after all it was a transitional period. The ark of the covenant abode still in a tent; David had triumphed, but the peace he enjoyed was but transitory. The establishment of the ark on the hill of Zion formed however an epoch; for mount Zion was the seat of royal grace, where the king who had suffered — and as having suffered — had established his throne in power and grace with respect to Israel. This is the key to Revelation 14a book in which the Lamb is always (as it appears to me) the Messiah who has suffered, but who is seated on the throne of God while waiting for the manifestation of His glory; seated there in this character, although as such He had accomplished things far otherwise important (for salvation and the assembly are far more excellent than the kingdom); but it is evidently the kingdom that we have to do with here. I doubt not that the hundred and forty-four thousand who are with the Lamb on mount Zion, are those who have suffered for Messiah's sake in the spirit of His own sufferings in the midst of Israel. They are with Him in His kingly position in Zion, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth. They are morally near enough to heaven to learn its song, which none other on earth can learn. They are the firstfruits of the earth. They are not in heaven.

This explains Hebrews 12:22 also; in which we find Zion in contrast with Sinai, where the people had been placed under their own responsibility, the law having the sanction which the terror of Jehovah's presence gave it.

But in the passage referred to, Zion is clearly distinguished from the heavenly Jerusalem. *

> [* The construction of the sentence (Hebrews 12:22) makes it more easy to distinguish the different parts of which it is composed. The word “and” separates them: Zion — the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem — the angels, the general assembly — the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven — God the judge of all, etc.]

I doubt not that at the end a similar relation will exist between Christ and the remnant of His people who have waited for Him. It is a period during which Jesus is fully triumphant, and acts in power and as a king, but does not yet rule in peace; and during which He forms, develops, and establishes, the relationship of His people with Himself on the earth in His triumphs and in His kingdom, according to the rights of which He will subject His enemies to Himself. The Psalms also open this part of Christ’s reign to us prophetically and in type (see Psalm 110). After having seated David’s Lord at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the Spirit says, “Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning the morning of His glory, the dawn of day]; thou shalt have the dew of thy youth of the young men who follow Him].” The whole of this psalm unfolds the same idea, the warlike kingdom of Christ, having Zion chosen of God for its seat, and the place whence His power shall go forth during the triumphant wars of the Messiah.

Let us pursue this latter point.

After having described the ruin of Israel, Psalm 78 shows us Jehovah awaking; but it sets aside all rights of inheritance, and testimony to His former dealings with Israel; for (1 Chronicles 5) the birthright was Joseph’s — “He CHOSE the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. He CHOSE David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds,” etc. This psalm mentions indeed His sanctuary, but the mountain on which it was built is never represented as the object of God’s election. This psalm reaches farther than our present history; but it applies election to David and to Zion.

**PSALM** 132 sets before us precisely the sentiments with which the Spirit inspired David when he placed the ark upon mount Zion. It is but a tabernacle, but it is that of the mighty God of Jacob on the earth. And Jehovah has chosen Zion. There the horn of David shall bud.

Observe here, that Jehovah’s answer goes each time beyond the request and desire of David — a beautiful testimony to the rich goodness of God.

Jehovah's rest is in the midst of His people. He will enjoy this rest here in the midst of His own, although He establishes His glory in the temple; and it is there that every one speaks of it. In the wilderness this glory had not had a place of rest. Israel was on a journey, and Jehovah, who dwelt among the people, went before them to search out a resting-place for them (Numbers 10:33). Neither was it the case at Shiloh, when His rest among them depended on their faithfulness. "He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered his strength into the enemy's hand" (Psalm 78:61, 62). Election and grace alone — by means of "one chosen out of the people"(Psalm 89:19)establish the rest of God among His people.

There is yet a remark to make on the subject of Psalm 132. We have seen that God maintains His majesty in His government, and does not allow any one to touch His ark. He gives David time to learn that God is a God of blessing and of grace; but, however good the intentions of His people may be, it is necessary that truth, that what He is, should be clearly demonstrated in His public dealings. If it were otherwise, if His government were not stable, all would go to ruin; the levity of man would constantly lead him into the paths of self-will. It is true that God is full of patience, and that after having formed the relationship between His people and Himself, He continues to act according to this relationship as long as possible, although forced to chasten at the same time; but judgment comes at length.

In the case we are considering, God had broken this relationship as originally established by His sitting between the cherubim; He had delivered His strength into captivity, His glory into the enemy's hand. David, as victor, restores to Him His place, but on a new principle, that of grace and power. Nevertheless, in examining Psalm 132, we discover much deeper sentiments, a heart which desires to have God glorified among His people in a much more developed and much more intimate manner than was indicated by that which the outward pomp and train, in which Israel could take part, represented; sentiments to which God responded in a very different way than by the death of Uzzah. This psalm, it is true, was written after the touching communications which are revealed in 2 Samuel 7, as verses 11, 12 prove. It teaches us however in what spirit David went to fetch the ark, the ardent desire of his heart to find a habitation for Jehovah, * which, as we have seen, Christ will accomplish. Now it appears to me, that it was the consciousness of this desire that led to David's failure. Alas for man! In the consciousness of it he seeks to put it into execution, and he a little forgets the supreme glory of God, the sin which had caused God's departure from His people, and the majesty proper to Him. When God acts according to the requirements of His glory, and smites the man who lent David his assistance in accomplishing the desire of his heart, David is

displeased. The death of Uzzah was the result of David's conduct, and he is angry with Jehovah when this result takes place. This was truly the flesh. God made David sensible of that which was becoming to the service of the God of Israel (see 1 Chronicles 15:12, 13), ** and He restored his soul by showing him that He was the true source of blessing, and that the leaving the ark aside was leaving blessing aside too.

[* We may compare Exodus 15:2 in the English Version, though the translation is questionable. But see Exodus 29:46.]

[** This is not mentioned in Samuel; because it is David as the type of the Lord, whom the Spirit sets before us here.]

Moreover the position of David, zealously maintaining a sense of Jehovah's glory in the midst of his exaltation, as portrayed in the psalm, is of the highest moral beauty, and has a very peculiar aspect in reference to the divine economies. The place which Solomon occupies at the dedication of the temple presents, no doubt, a more striking picture. The Melchisedec priesthood is there in its simplicity and its fullness, but this was the fruit of the accomplishment of blessing; and the moral condition of those who took part in it was much less the result of deep exercise of heart, and of the close communion with God which is its consequence; it was, therefore, much less connected with the intelligent expectation of Christ. Solomon enjoyed the present realization of the glory upon which, in its true accomplishment in Christ, David relied by faith; Solomon does not go to a higher source than David's faith, and the responsibility of the people which flowed from it. The temple is the scene of this. David rises higher. He lays hold of God's purpose, as to the seat of Jehovah's kingdom; and at a time when this required faith, he becomes, as far as possible, the royal priest, and consequently ascends to God Himself, who is the source of this priesthood. Taught of God, he has understood the election of Zion, the seat of Christ's kingly glory; and in this sense his moral position, when dancing before the ark as an obscure man, and to his shame before the world, appears to be a much higher one than that of Solomon upon his brazen scaffold.

The ark is also the sign of the re-establishment of God's power in the midst of His people by this moral link; but this re-establishment takes place, by what was in type the victory and the energy of Christ who prevails over His enemies, as will be the case, and not merely in the enjoyment of the glory.

In all this part of the history David (though as to himself with individual failure) is more personally a type of Christ. It is while difficulty exists, before the reign of peace when power will have removed every obstacle to the full enjoyment of it, that he restores the people's connection with God, and blesses and feeds them as Melchisedec. Blessing flows from his person

in the presence of all that still opposes it, and in spite of every difficulty. The position which David still takes is that of servant, the immediate servant of God, by grace. He is not a priest upon his throne; but the king makes himself a priest, and this while still performing service.

Samuel, as given to Jehovah, was clothed with a linen ephod. It was the priestly garment, and he was not a priest after the order of Aaron. He served in the tabernacle, by grace and by the Spirit, as one chosen and set apart for God. He was in his right place, but on God's part it was in grace, when the gloomy night of Ichabod already threatened the people with its darkness. Here it is the king who, taking this place, puts on the priestly ephod; not the garments which God had given the priests for glory and for beauty, but those which distinguished the priest considered as the type of Christ as priest, * and which belonged to the essence of his functions, ** and in fact he took the place rather of a Levite, that is, of one set apart to serve before the ark, before Jehovah. The leading idea connected with the ephod is that he who wears it presents himself to God. But, even though making request, Melchisedec rather presents himself to the people; although he is before God for the people, as king and priest upon his throne.

[* For the high priest (after the strange fire offered on the day of their consecration) it seems, never wore the garments of glory and beauty in the most holy place He only went in — in white garments on the day of atonement.]

[** This priesthood He (Christ) exercises now. The glorious garments He will come out in. He is personally already crowned with glory and honor, but the all things are not put under Him; nor has He taken His Melchisedec throne, which indeed will be on earth. He is on His Father's throne, while His fellow heirs are being gathered.]

Having offered his sacrifices, the king blesses the people. There were yet the Philistines, the Syrians, and other nations, to be subdued; but the connection of the people with God was established and maintained in security by the king in Zion, although the ark on which this connection rested was still within curtains. Blessing was also secured through the king himself, who had brought the sign of the covenant and the elect king together in the place which God had chosen, and who was still the servant for this. The ephod did not pertain to Melchisedec; but, in honoring Jehovah who had preserved the people, he who wore it maintained as priest the blessing of the people before God. Michal, who in the spirit of Saul her father only dreamt of earthly glory, cannot participate in this. Abasement before Jehovah was incomprehensible to her. She neither understood nor tasted His glory or the joy of knowing Him as the heart's sole master. That which belongs to Saul can have no share in David's kingdom, nor can it suffer with a despised and rejected one. In short, we have a king devoted to

Jehovah and to the people, who secures and communicates blessing to the latter; and not as yet a king characterized above all by the enjoyment of established blessing, which is Solomon's condition.

Now the first of these two conditions appears to me to represent Christ, such as He has always been in principle and in right, and especially such as He will be after the destruction of Antichrist, and before the destruction of those enemies who will still oppose themselves to the establishment of His kingdom in peace. His people, all Israel, will be united under Him. The rod of His strength will go out of Zion, and He will rule in the midst of His enemies (<19001>Psalm 110); but it will not yet be the fulfillment of <19720>Psalm 72 or of <38625>Zechariah 6:12, 13. Compare also <19002>Psalm 2, in which Christ is looked upon as the Son of God born upon earth, and in which His universal rights to the possession of the earth, which flow from this, are set forth, acknowledged by God and proclaimed to the kings of the earth.

In <19001>Psalm 110 Christ is seated at the right hand of God, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool.

In <19008>Psalm 8 He is the Son of man, and all things are put under Him.

Under Solomon all Israel rejoices in all the good things which Jehovah had bestowed upon Solomon, as well as upon David. Here David in his own person provides that which is necessary to feed the people, and deals to every one a "good piece." * He returns to bless his house, for David has his own house to which he returns after having blessed Israel; it is something nearer to him than Israel. Michal, we have seen, could not really belong to it. David finds it a joyful thing to humble himself before Jehovah, and he reproves her. How overwhelming was the reply he made to her!

> [* Psalm 2 shows us the King set upon the holy hill of Zion, the Son of God begotten in time (a distinct thing from His relationship as Son, one with the Father before the world was — a doctrine taught in John 1, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, and elsewhere — yet I do not believe one could be without the other, though the "therefore" of <42035>Luke 1:35 shows it to be a distinct thing, and His Sonship in this place is also a truth of the greatest importance), owned as such by Jehovah, and the kings of the earth charged to submit to Him. Psalm 8 speaks of Him as the Son of man to whom all things are subjected according to the eternal purposes of God. In Psalm 110 He who had been despised and rejected, being seated at the right hand of God, is to rule in the midst of His enemies. Compare Psalms 24 and 102. In the first, He is acknowledged as Jehovah of hosts, the King of glory, after having conquered His enemies: in the second, as the Creator Himself.]

Ardently desiring Jehovah's glory, David is troubled at dwelling in a house of cedar, while Jehovah dwelt within curtains. He wishes to build Him a house — a good desire, yet one which God could not grant. The work of

building the temple belonged to the Prince of Peace. David represented Christ as suffering and conquering, and, consequently, not as enjoying the earthly kingdom by undisputed right, and opening to all nations the gates of the temple in which the Lord of righteousness was to be worshipped. He returns then, so to say, into his own personal position, in which God blessed him in a very peculiar manner. David was more than a type; he was truly the stock of that family from which Christ Himself should spring. This is taught in the beautiful seventh chapter. An elect vessel to maintain the cause of Jehovah's people in suffering, and to re-establish among them the glory of the Lord's name (vers. 8, 9), Jehovah had been with him; and David, most especially honored in this, was also in his faithfulness a vessel of promise of the future peace and prosperity destined for Israel in the counsels of God. But these were yet future things. The perpetuity of the kingdom over Israel is established in his family, which God will chasten if needful, but not cut off. His son shall build the house. Already, at the time of the exodus, the man in whom was the Spirit, desired to prepare a habitation for Jehovah (2 Exodus 15:2). * But the Messiah was needed for this. Till then Israel was a wanderer, and God with him.

[* The translation is very questionable; it was however God's thought. See Exodus 29:46.]

The following are the chief subjects of the revelation made to David, and of his reply: the sovereign call of God; that which God had done for David; the certainty of future rest for Israel; the establishment, on God's part, of David's house; his son shall be the Son of God, shall build the house; the throne of his Son shall be established for ever.

David's first thought — and it is always so when the Spirit of God works — was not to rejoice, but to bless God. These are the striking features of the prayer of thankfulness: he is in peace and freedom before God; he goes in and sits before Him; he acknowledges at the same time his own nothingness, and how unworthy he was of all that God had already done. Yet this was but a small thing in the sight of God, who had declared to him the future glories of his house. It was God, and not the manner of man. What could he say more? God knew him; there lay his confidence and his joy. He acknowledged that God did it in truth and "of his own heart." It was grace to make His servant know it. The effect of all this was to make David recognize the excellency of Jehovah. There was none beside Him, and none upon the earth therefore to be compared to His elect people, whom He went to redeem for a people to Himself, and whom He had now confirmed to Himself, that Israel might be His people for ever, and that He Himself might be their God. The highest kind of prayer is that which does not spring from a sense of need, but from the desires and the intelligence

which the revelation of God's purposes produces — purposes which He will fulfill in love to His people and for the glory of Christ. Finally he asks that his house may be the place of God's own blessing. In a word, he desires that the purposes of God, which had awakened all his affections, may be accomplished by Jehovah Himself, who had revealed them unto His servant.

Being entirely delivered from the insurrections of the people, * David exercises his power in bringing his enemies into subjection. The Philistines, who dwelt within the land of Israel, are subjugated. Metheg-ammah signifies "bridle of the capital." David held the key of power. Moab is subdued and made tributary. At length the outward enemies, the Syrians, also, are either conquered or submit themselves. The Edomites become David's servants, and Jehovah preserves David whithersoever he goes.

> [* Compare <19B43>Psalm 18:43, where the righteous suffering Christ (under the figure of David) is the source of all blessings for Israel from Egypt to the end.]

In all this we have again the man of faith and the type of the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, who is victorious over the enemies of Israel, and puts Israel in possession of the promised land (<01518>Genesis 15:18) as far as the Euphrates. He dedicates the spoil to Jehovah. He reigns over all Israel, and executes judgment and justice unto all his people. The companions of his pilgrimage participate in the glory of his kingdom — a type, in all this, of the kingdom of Christ.

He acts in grace also towards the humble remnant of Saul's house; and if Mephibosheth is not associated with the glory of his kingdom, he enjoys the privilege of the king's table, who shows him kindness; although Mephibosheth belongs to the family of his enemy and persecutor, but at the same time to that little remnant which favored the king whom God had chosen (being itself, on that account, hated by those in power). He enjoys also the whole of his family's inheritance.

This touching and beautiful testimony to David's kindness and faithfulness through grace, appears to me to give us a picture of Christ's relations to the remnant of Israel, or at least that of the spirit of these relations. It was "the kindness of God" which sought out the family of Saul, the enemy of David's crown — and which rests upon the representative of Jonathan, whose history we have read, and who typifies those that will attach themselves to Christ in prospect of the kingdom, to which their thoughts are limited. The remnant enjoys the effect of the establishment of the kingdom, but does not rank among those that surround the throne after having shared the sufferings of the despised and rejected king.

**CHAPTER** 10, the details of which we pass over, sets before us the general principle of the king's rule in Zion. When grace is despised by those to whom it is manifested, the king's judgment follows. Opposition and rebellion only serve to establish his authority in the very place where resistance is attempted. It is useless to strive against the power of God's chosen king.

The history of David and the wife of Uriah follows. David is no longer acting by faith in God's service. When the time comes at which kings go forth to war, he stays at home at his ease, and sends others in his place to fight Jehovah's battles. At ease and in indolence he falls readily into sin, as was the case when he sought for rest among the Philistines. He was no longer standing by faith.

The nearer David was to God, the more ineffectual were his attempts to conceal his sin. Given up to himself for the time in chastisement, he adds a second transgression to the first; he completes it, and enjoys its fruit, now that the removal of every obstacle gives a semblance of lawfulness to his course. What a sad history! What unworthiness! He forgets his position as king, and a king from God. Was it reigning in righteousness to take advantage of his royal power to oppress Uriah? He makes himself a slave to the wretched Joab by rendering him accessory to his crime. How degrading! How much happier was he, when, though hunted like a partridge in the mountains, he had a living faith and a good conscience! But who can shun the eye of God? Accordingly God, who knows and loves him, fails not to visit his sin.

This was a very great sin: David committed it in secret; God punishes it in the sight of all Israel. If David knew not how to glorify God, nor — while reigning in His name — to maintain a true testimony as to the nature of God's kingdom; if he had on the contrary falsified its character, God Himself will know how, in the sight of all men, to retrace its features through the chastisement He will send upon the man who has thus dishonored Him, and who had taken away the only witness to His government which God had set up before men.

This history shows us how far sin can blind the heart, even while the moral judgment continues sound; it shows also the power of the faithful word of God. God manifests at the same time the sovereignty of His grace; for although He chastened David by the child's death, it is another son of Bathsheba who was the elect of God, who became king and the head of the royal family, the man of peace and blessing, the beloved of Jehovah. David submits himself under the hand of God; his heart bows under it in the depth of its affections. He understands it better than his servants do, although

more guilty than they. He acts becomingly according to spiritual intelligence. There was confidence in God and intimacy with Him; and therefore David can lay open the tenderest part of his heart to God, the part in which God had wounded him; but when the will of God is manifest, he submits entirely.

We see here the evident work of the Spirit. It is the same Spirit who wrought in Jesus at Gethsemane, although both the occasion and the extent of the suffering were not only different, but far otherwise important; but the heart is opened to God completely and the submission complete when God's will is known.

The sin of David has been extremely great; but we can plainly see in him the precious work of the Spirit. Confounded by the simple faithfulness of Uriah, he cannot escape the hand of God! David is pardoned, for he confesses his sin; but as to His government, God shows Himself to be inflexible, and while sparing the king — for he deserved death — He announces to him that the sword shall never depart out of his house. We have seen a similar case in Jacob's unfaithfulness. David's punishment also answers to his sins (compare vers. 10, 12 with the history of Absalom). As to David's affections, the chastisement was in the death of his child, a chastisement which he deeply felt; and the public government of God was manifested in that which was done, according to His word, before all Israel and before the sun.

It is possible that the children of Ammon deserved severe judgment, and that this period was the time of their judgment; they were the insolent enemies of the king whom God had set up, and who had given proof of his kind feeling towards them. But as to his personal condition, I know not whether David would have treated his enemies in this manner when he was walking in the narrow path of faith. As a type, this judgment brings to mind the righteous judgment of the Messiah, and the dreadful consequences of having despised and insulted Him even in His glory. We learn from it also, that when a people are ripe for judgment, God will bring it upon them, even although others may seek to act in grace.

When David had shown that he had forgotten God, and had failed in his entire dependence upon Him, the evils in his house soon broke out. He had added to the number of his wives. The root of bitterness buds and brings forth bitter fruits.

Although in the main David's heart was upright before God and deeply acknowledged Him, yet, when once out of that path of humble dependence which is produced by faith and the sense of God's presence, he embittered the remainder of his days through following his own will in the midst of his

blessings. There is sin in his house, wrath on account of the sin, vacillation through partiality for Absalom. Joab appears on the scene, as is the case every time that these matters of intrigue and wickedness recur in the history. This is all that need be said of the sorrowful story of Amnon and Absalom.

David's partiality for Absalom had yet other and more painful results, and heavy chastisements. It is painful to see the conqueror of Goliath driven from his home and his throne by his beloved son, and that under God's hand. For if God had not allowed it, who could have driven God's elect from the royal seat in which Jehovah had placed him? The sword was in his house; the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword. How just is Jehovah! But whom He loves He chastens. Accordingly, whilst all this is a manifestation of the righteous rule of God, it is to David an occasion of deep heart-exercise, and of a more real and more intimate knowledge of God; for his heart was truly and eternally bound to God, so that all his sorrows bore fruit, although they were occasioned by his faults.

In this respect also, although the cause of his grief was so widely different from that of the Lord's grief, he becomes the type of Christ in suffering, and the vessel of the expression of His sympathy for His people. This is even so much more the case, because with a faithful heart, and in a certain sense with perfect integrity towards God, the king's faults and transgressions gave rise to those confessions and to that humiliation which the Spirit of Christ will produce in the remnant of Israel; so that on the one hand he speaks of his integrity, while on the other he confesses his faults. Now that is what Christ causes His people to say, and what He says for them.

Nevertheless we must remember it is not David himself, as a godly man, who speaks in the Psalms; it is by the inspiration of the Spirit he utters them; and it is a very precious thing for us that, in circumstances where faith might fail and the heart be discouraged, the word supplies us with language suitable to faith, and to faith in one who has perhaps been unfaithful: a precious testimony that, even in this condition, God does not cast us off, and that Christ sympathizes with us, since He furnishes us with expressions and sentiments adapted to such a condition.

The Psalms supply this, and in especial suitability to the remnant of Israel in the last days. They are characterized by integrity of heart and confession of sin. The Spirit of Christ gives the sentiments, and assures of His sympathy. [1960] Psalm 16 gives us very strikingly this position of Christ. His goodness extends not to God. It is not His divine place, "equal with God," which He is taking. He calls Jehovah His Lord; but of the saints on earth He says, "in whom is all my delight." By His baptism, which was the expression of

this, He connected Himself, not with Israel in their sin, but with the first movement of the Spirit responding in the remnant to the condemnation of the people as such. This is the principle of the Psalms — the upright and faithful man in the midst of the perverse nation, the object of the counsels and purposes of God. The book opens with this distinction drawn by God; it next presents us with the King in Zion according to the decree of God, rejected by the nation and hated by the heathen who oppress the people. All this develops itself through a variety of circumstances, and all the relationships of the remnant are there depicted, as well as all affections of the heart. All connected with it is gone over by the hand and the pen of God, and according to the Spirit and the sympathies of Christ.

**CHAPTER** 20 ends this part of David's history, and his history in general. He is re-established on his throne, and has overcome the efforts of his enemies and the rebellion of his own people. The order of his court and officers is restored in peace. Sundry details are added by the Spirit of God.

And, first of all, the government of God, who forgets nothing, and with whom everything has its results, is recalled to David and to his people by means of the Gibeonites. It is no longer necessary for the establishment of God's economy that David should pursue the house of Saul. There is a righteous judgment, a moral principle of God, which is above all economies.

Saul in his formal and fleshly zeal, although it was for God, had not acted in the fear of God. It is this which especially distinguishes a godly zeal from a zeal for the outward interests of His kingdom. Saul forgets the oaths which Israel made to the Gibeonites. God remembers it, and does not despise the poor Gibeonites. David also recognizes its obligation; after having inquired of Jehovah on account of the thrice repeated chastening upon Israel, he submits to the demand of the Gibeonites. * The whole house of Saul perishes, except the little remnant attached to David. With respect to the latter, the circumstances of Rizpah's touching and faithful affection awaken in David's heart the remembrance of brighter moments in poor Saul's career, and he pays the last honors to his memory. After this God was entreated for the land.

[* However, in yielding to the Gibeonites, David did not consult Jehovah as to what he should do. We see the government of God as to Saul's house, and Saul's act towards those he had wronged; but though in its general character righteous and upright, had he consulted Jehovah, some happier way of being righteous might have been found.]

If with a sling and a stone faith can overthrow its enemies, the flesh is at fault before their attacks. David, when king, as we have clearly seen, gave himself up more to his lusts and to his own will than David suffering.

Nevertheless it is beautiful to see that, where faith has acted amid the people's ruin, it has stirred up many other instruments, who — animated and encouraged by its success — act fearlessly with the same power as that which wrought the first deliverance. It is well however to observe, that to conquer valiant foes, when all Israel was flushed with success and strengthened the hands of the mighty men, is a very different thing from the faith which reckons upon God, when strength and success are on the enemy's side and the people are fleeing before him. The latter was David's case with Goliath; the former, that of the men who slew the other giants.

The songs that follow contain instruction of deep interest. In chapter 22 David comes forth from his sufferings and his affliction with a song of triumph and of praise. He had learnt what God was in his sufferings. He celebrates all that God had been for him, all that he had found Him to be in his necessities and dangers, the effect of God's power on his behalf, and the glorious and blessed result of this power. All this is given in a song, the expression of which will only be fully accomplished in Christ Himself.

In **CHAPTER** 23 he celebrates his prosperity. But what a difference! He declares, it is true, what Christ will be when He reigns; and he does so in language of most attractive beauty, a beauty which ravishes the mind and transports it into the reign of Christ, that blessed "world to come of which we speak." But then this sorrowful thought presents itself — "My house is not so with God."

In the first of these two songs there is something more of profound interest. David speaks as a prophet; and, as he had done in so many other instances, he personifies the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus in connection with Israel. This song then sets before us the sufferings of Christ (as the representative of Israel, and often speaking of the nation as though it were Himself), sufferings which obtained also other deliverance of far surpassing excellence, as the cause of the deliverance out of Egypt and of all Israel's blessings, until the establishment of Messiah's glory in the age to come. He surrounds the agony of Christ with the whole history of Israel in salvation and in blessing, from Pithom and Rameses unto the destruction of the violent man at the end of days, and the submission of the nations to Messiah's sceptre; and he gives a voice to their distress in Egypt.

In **CHAPTER** 23 the covenant is, "all his salvation and all his desire," although at that time "he made it not to grow." Judgment must be executed ere the full blessing he expected could be brought in; and these thorns of

iniquity must be “utterly burned in the same place.” This will take place at the coming of Christ.

If God honors and glorifies David, He does not forget those whom the energy of David’s faith had brought around him. The Holy Ghost enumerates the mighty men of David, and recounts their deeds of valor and devotedness — deeds which obtain a name and a place for them when God writes up the people (Psalm 87). Joab is not among them.

**CHAPTER** 24 leads us into a subject which requires particular notice. The wrath of God is kindled again against Israel. It is not in the mind of the Spirit to inform us on what occasion this took place, but to lay open God’s dealings both in government and grace. In the preceding chapter God “writeth up” the mighty men who prefigure the companions of the true David in glory. Here it is His grace in staying His anger and bringing in His blessing.

God punishes the pride and rebellion of Israel by leaving them to the consequences of the impulse of David’s natural heart. Joab’s habitual cleverness and good sense made him perceive its folly. The flesh, when it is in another, is easily discerned. Joab felt that it was not worth while to despise God when nothing was to be gained by it; for in this way the flesh fears God. But the thing was of Jehovah, and Satan gains his point.

When in truth can man’s good sense avail in opposition to the will of God in chastening, and to Satan’s malice? It is an awful thing to be given up to his power. Nine months of sin on David’s part, and of patience on God’s part, show us the fatal influence of the enemy; but the sin accomplished only awakens David’s conscience. The enjoyment of the fruit of our sin undeceives us. It is the pursuit of it which allures our hearts. When Satan has succeeded in inducing the children of God to commit the evil to which he tempts them, he cares no longer to conceal from them its emptiness and folly. Happily, where there is life, conscience resumes its power in such a case.

Nevertheless chastening must follow sin which has been carried out in spite of so much long-suffering. But God, who reaches His servant’s conscience, brings into play the sincere affections of his heart, in order to bring about His own sovereign purpose. David exhibits that never-failing token of a heart that knows the Lord — confidence in God above all, and at whatever cost. “Let me fall into the hand of Jehovah.” Sweet and precious thought of what the Lord is unto His people! and well He knows how to fill the heart with the certainty that He deserves its confidence. Even while chastening, God is more loving, more faithful, more worthy of confidence than any other. The plague breaks out; but in the midst of judgment Jehovah

remembers mercy, and commands the destroying angel, when he had reached Jerusalem, to stay his hand. It is Jerusalem, the city of His affections, that attracts His attention. God chooses it for the place where His altar shall be built, and His grace shown forth — His appointed mercy-seat. It is there that His wrath, justly kindled against Israel, ceases; and sin gives occasion to the establishment of the place and of the work in which He and His people shall meet, according to that grace which has put away the sin. This characterizes the cross of Christ; this will stay the plague in Israel, and introduce the reign of the true Prince of Peace. David stands in the breach to deliver the people; and at his own cost (ver. 17), and, typically according to the counsels of God, he offers the sacrifice of appeasement.

The thoughts on the First Book of Chronicles will contain a fuller examination into this latter part of David's history. But it is a striking close to this book, after all the governmental history of David, that it closes with the atoning sacrifice which stops the wrath through grace, and lays the foundation of the meeting-place of God with Israel and the place of their worship.

# 1 KINGS

The Books of Kings show us the kingly power established in all its glory; its fall, and God's testimony in the midst of the ruin; with details concerning Judah after the rejection of Israel, until Lo-ammi had been pronounced upon the whole nation. In a word, it is the trial of kingly power placed in the hands of men, not absolute, as in Nebuchadnezzar, but kingly power having the law for its rule; as there had been a trial of the people set in relationship with God by means of priesthood. Out of Christ nothing stands.

Although the kingly power had been placed under the responsibility of its faithfulness to Jehovah; and although it had to be smitten and punished whenever it failed in this, it was yet at this time established by the counsels and the will of God. It was neither a David, type of Christ in his patience, who, through difficulties, obstacles, and sufferings, made himself a way to the throne; nor a king who, although exalted to the throne and always victorious, had to be a man of war to the end of his life; a type in this, I doubt not, of what Christ will be in the midst of the Jews at His return, when He will commence the coming age by subjecting the Gentiles to Himself, having been already delivered from the strivings of the people (<19Psalm 18:43, 44). It was the king according to the promises and the counsels of God, the king established in peace, head over God's people to rule them in righteousness, son of David according to the promise, and type of that true Son of David, who shall be a priest upon His throne, who shall build the temple of Jehovah, and between whom and Jehovah there shall be the counsel of peace (<38Zechariah 6:13).

Let us examine a little the position of this kingly power according to the word; for responsibility and election met in it, as well as the foreshadowing of the kingdom of Christ.

In **CHAPTER** 7 of the Second Book of Samuel we have seen the promise of a son whom God would raise up to David, and who should reign after him, to whom God would be a father, and who should be His son, who should build the temple of Jehovah, and the throne of whose kingdom God would establish for ever. This was the promise: a promise which, as David himself understood, will be fully accomplished only in the Person of Christ (<13171 Chronicles 17:17). Here is the responsibility: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men" (<10714 2 Samuel 7:14); which David well understood also (<13281 Chronicles 28:9).

The book which we are considering shows us that this responsibility was fully declared to Solomon (chap. 1 Kings 9:4-9),

**Psalm** 89:28-37 sets the two things also before us very plainly, namely, the certainty of God's counsels, His fixed purpose, and the exercise of His government in view of man's responsibility.

In the Book of Chronicles we have only what relates to the promises (1 Chronicles 17:11-14), for reasons of which we will speak when we examine that book.

From all these passages, we perceive that the royalty of David's family was established according to the counsels of God and the election of grace; that the perpetuity of this royalty, dependent on the faithfulness of God, was consequently infallible; but that at the same time the family of David, in the person of Solomon, was in fact placed upon the throne at that time under the condition of obedience and faithfulness to Jehovah. * If himself or his posterity were to fail in faithfulness, God's judgment would be executed; a judgment which nevertheless would not prevent God's fulfilling that which His grace had assured to David.

> [* This is the universal order of God's ways: to set up blessing first under the responsibility of man, to be accomplished afterwards according to His counsels by His power and grace. And it is to be noted that the first thing man has always done is to fail. Thus Adam, thus Noah, thus under law, thus the priesthood, thus as here the royalty under law, so Nebuchadnezzar where it was absolute, so, I add, the church. Already in the apostles' days all sought their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. God continues His own dealings in grace in spite of this, all through, besides His government according to responsibility in the public body in this world, but a government full of patience and grace.]

The Books of Kings contain the history of the establishment of the kingdom in Israel under this responsibility, that of its fall, of the long-suffering of God, of God's testimony amid the ruin which flowed from the unfaithfulness of the first king, and finally that of the execution of the judgment, a longer delay of which would but have falsified God's own character, and the testimony that should be given to the holiness of that character. Such delay would have born a false testimony with respect to that which God is.

We shall see that, after Solomon's reign, the greater part of the narrative refers to the testimony given by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the midst of Israel, and in general to that kingdom which had entirely departed from God. Little is said of Judah before the complete ruin of Israel. After this the

ruin of Judah, brought on by the iniquity of their kings, is not long delayed, although there were moments of restoration.

Before David's death the iniquity and ambition of a son whom he "had not displeased at any time "led to the solemn proclamation of Solomon, to whom God had destined, and David promised, the throne. In this circumstance Joab, long restrained by prudence in David's lifetime, shows himself as he is. He makes himself necessary to Adonijah, as he had been to David. Abiathar, long under the sentence of God, takes the same course. Solomon, the elect of God, who held his rights from God, did not suit them. But after all, man's prudence fails before the judgment of God. God arranges events in such a manner as, sooner or later, to exhibit the most prudent in their true light. Apparently all goes on well. The elder and beloved son of the king, the captain of the host whom David himself could not resist, and the priest who had always accompanied David, are there, as well as all the king's sons, excepting the elect of God; but the thought of God, or His will, had no place there. The companions of David, who had truly served with him for the glory of God, were not there either.

The prophet of God, the witness to His will, is employed in the fulfillment of that will, and Solomon is proclaimed king, and inaugurated before the eyes of David himself.

David's faith, if it had not energy enough to give each one his place in judgment, had at least full intelligence of what was proper. He communicates his judgment to Solomon, who is to execute it according to his word. * Solomon at first shows clemency to Adonijah; but the still restless will of the latter, who desired the deceased king's wife, awakens the righteous judgment destined for those who had failed in integrity, and who had risen up against God's anointed. It is the first character attached to the king reigning in glory. He executes righteous judgment in the earth. There is no escaping the vigilance of this judgment. This is seen in the case of Shimei.

> [* It is to David also, and not to Solomon, that God communicated the plan of the temple. Solomon, in glory, performs these things, and possesses the requisite discernment for executing justice and judgment, but it is in David that intelligence displays itself. In fact if Christ, reigning in glory, exercises just judgment, He is already wisdom, and, indeed, it is in His connection with the assembly in the present time of grace, that the communication of the purposes of God, and the intelligence of His ways, are found.]

We find at the same time the fulfillment of the word given to Samuel, namely, the humiliation of the priest. Solomon, Jehovah's anointed, sends Abiathar away, and puts Zadok in his place.

But there is another element in the history of the king of glory, in which he oversteps the limits of the king of Israel's legitimate position; he allies himself with the Gentiles, and marries Pharaoh's daughter. Neither the house of Solomon, nor that of Jehovah, was yet built; but the daughter of Pharaoh, whom the king espouses in grace, dwells in the place where the suffering and victorious king had provisionally placed the ark of the covenant, which secures blessing to the people, and which, when placed in the temple, will form the source of blessing for Israel. This ark was not a covenant made with Pharaoh's daughter; but she dwelt where the symbol of the covenant was hidden, and she was placed under the safeguard, and sheltered by the power, of Him who had made this covenant, and who could not break it, whatever might be the unfaithfulness of a people who ought always to have enjoyed its benefits.

I doubt not, that hereafter a remnant of the Jews will find themselves through sovereign grace in the same position * (before the glory of the kingdom, and of the house of God, is established) under shelter of the covenant attached to the city of David, the seat of royal grace, but the provisional seat in anticipation of the full and entire result of the king's power. But we confine ourselves here to recognising the principle of the bringing in of the Gentiles, manifested in the reception of Pharaohs daughter as Solomon's bride.

It is well to remark, that the passage we are considering does not introduce the light and intelligence of the heavenly places, but only, in connection with the kingdom, the principle through which the position of those who enjoy that grace is established. And therefore, while admitting the Gentiles, the principle applies to this Jewish remnant of the latter days, who are intelligent and faithful according to their intelligence, a remnant which will be admitted according to the same principles of grace.

[* Consider here Revelation 14:1, and Hebrews 12:22.]

The people in general do not enter into this thought. The kingdom itself even, and the blessing of the kingdom, are not established on that footing. All doubtless will be founded on the new covenant, and that by the presence of the Mediator of this covenant. Still, even then, the connection of the people with God, as an earthly people, will not be established on the efficacy of a faith which enters into the enjoyment of the grace of the covenant while the mediator of it is hidden, and which anticipates the public establishment of it as made with Judah and Israel, but on the positive enjoyment of its results, when the king shall have settled everything by his power. The brazen altar was not in the sanctuary but in the court, marking indeed a rejected one lifted up from the earth (and on this the future

blessings of Israel depend), but not gone into heaven and hidden, save to faith, there. It is by that the people will approach God. It is the earth which is the scene of the development of their religious affections and the knowledge of God manifested on the earth. The efficacy of the cross, as the means of approaching God on the earth, will be known to them. Without it they could not approach Him. They will mourn when they shall see Him whom they have pierced, but see Him as manifested down here to those below. Blessing, pardon, new life, will be brought them down here. They will not enter into the power of these things as hidden within the veil. Being established on the earth, it would not even be suitable for them to do so.

To return to our history: if the ark is on Mount Zion, there are two ways of approaching God — before the ark, and at the altar which in fact is confounded with the high places. Until the temple is built, the people are on the high places, earthly and carnal even when approaching the true God. * God bears with it. Solomon himself goes thither, and God hears him there. The temple is not built. If it had been, it ought to have been the only center of service and worship. That God bears with a thing, until power shall act, is quite another thing from sanctioning it after power has acted. We must remember that, if Solomon went to Gibeon, it is because the tabernacle and the brazen altar were there; and it was there that, according to the law, the priests performed their functions (1 Chronicles 16:36-40). The ark of the covenant was not there. David had placed it in a tent in the city of David. These latter points are more developed in the Chronicles (and I refer the reader to that which will be said in the examination of that book); but the passage we are considering would hardly have been understood without some anticipation of what is found there.

[* The position of Solomon is morally worthy of attention He loves Jehovah; he walks in the statutes of David; but he does not cleave to the ark which David had placed in Zion; he offers sacrifices in the high places. How often Christians, who do not walk outwardly in sin, do not seek in Christ the secret of His will according to the revelation He has made of Himself while hidden! For us the temple is not built. We may draw nigh to the ark — Christ rejected and gone up on high; or to the brazen altar and the high places, for this altar is confounded with them.]

As to the responsibility of the moment, the state of the people in this respect appears to me to be set before us as a sorrowful state; and Solomon himself is but on a level with the existing state of things — a state born with indeed by God in grace, but not after His heart. The king thought neither of the ark nor of the hidden blessing of the covenant, as that from which all his thoughts and actions should spring, * and as the only means of his connection with Jehovah. He loved Jehovah. It was given him to accomplish all that was requisite for the manifestation of His glory; but his

heart rose not to the height of that faith which reckoned upon the secret of God's love, when the glory was not manifested, and which discerned it through all the existing things, even while God still bore with them. It was this which formed the strength of David personally. The ark of the covenant in the city of David was the symbol of this and for the time its expression.

> [* He drew nigh to it, under the influence of granted blessings, to render thanks to God (ver. 15).]

Solomon walked no doubt in the statutes of David, and he loved Jehovah; but he approached Him without rising above the level of the people. Only our chapter says that he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. This continued until Hezekiah. The luster of a great blessing often keeps out of sight something which God bears with, as we have said, but which produces disastrous effects when the energy which gave rise to the blessing has disappeared. Better to be little and despised at the ark, than to possess the glory of the kingdom and to worship on high places.

Moreover, although loving Jehovah, if we are not by faith in the secret of the covenant at the ark, we shall always let in something which is not according to integrity even in our own path. Before we are in the glory, we are never on a level with the position we hold, while we have only this position to sustain us. We must look above our path to be able to walk in it. A Jew, who had the secret of Jehovah and who waited for the Messiah, was pious and faithful according to the law. A Jew, who had only the law, assuredly did not keep it. A Christian, who has heaven before him and a Savior in glory as the object of his affections, will walk well upon the earth; he who has only the earthly path for his rule will fail in the intelligence and motives needed to walk in it; he will become a prey to worldliness, and his Christian walk in the world will be more or less on a level with the world in which he walks. The eyes upward on Jesus will keep the heart and the steps in a path conformable to Jesus, and which consequently will glorify Him and make Him known in the world. Seeing what we are, we must have a motive above our path to be able to walk in it. This does not prevent our needing also for our path the fear of the Lord to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, knowing that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Solomon goes to Gibeon to offer burnt-offerings. Jehovah appears to him there in a dream. Solomon is conscious that he needs the help of Jehovah to fulfill the duties before him; and, through the grace of God, he manifests a state of heart with respect to this, which is pleasing to Jehovah. The sense of the difficulty of performing the duties of his position, towards a people who belong to Jehovah, makes him feel his own littleness; and the desire of not

failing in the task entrusted to him of God is uppermost in his heart, and leads him to ask for the wisdom requisite to accomplish it. The genuineness of this sentiment is so much the more evident, from its being in a dream that he replies to God. God adds glory and riches to the fulfillment of this prayer. The sense of God's goodness and the joy of his heart, bring him before the ark of His covenant who had thus revealed Himself to him beyond his expectation. God's answer places the king immediately under the condition of obedience. The wisdom he had asked for is manifested in the judgment he gives, and the people acknowledge that it comes from God.

Strict justice in vengeance had cut off the wicked at the beginning; now it is the justice which maintains order and blessing among the people of Jehovah. Thus will it be also with Jesus.

**CHAPTER** 4 contains an enumeration of the officers who served Solomon, and upheld the glory of his throne; and then, the manner in which the whole country provided for the maintenance of his household, Judah and Israel being multiplied and full of joy The king's authority extends as far as the Euphrates. Peace reigns all around. The wisdom and understanding which God had given him surpassed all that was known in the world; so that from the ends of the earth they came to hear the wisdom of his lips.

His proverbs, his songs, and his knowledge, bore testimony to the excellent spirit with which God had endowed the king His throne is established, and the glory of the son of David abounds. The Gentiles now — the king of Tyre, emblematic of the world and its desirable things — are at Solomon's disposal, and apply themselves joyfully to the fulfillment of the king of Israel's projects, and to his service in building the house of Jehovah. The house may be looked at in two ways — as a type of the Father's house, and as in fact the habitation of God on the earth when Jesus reigns. In the latter aspect I only look for the grand thoughts and character of the government revealed in it. In the former, as a typical house, two circumstances give it its character. It is, first of all, God's house, His dwelling; and then there are chambers all around it. * God surrounded Himself with dwellings, in the very place where He had fixed His habitation.

> [* It is to this, I doubt not, that the Lord alludes, when He says, "In my Father's house are many dwellings" — at any rate, to the fact that other priests besides the high priest dwell there.]

As the dwelling-place of God at that time in the midst of His people, the presence of God in the temple depended on the faithfulness of Solomon.

That which characterized the house in general is that nothing except gold was to be seen in it. All was bright with the glory of divine righteousness

that distinguished the throne of God which was placed there. But it is not transparent as glass. Beauty and holiness are not what characterize the earthly throne, but righteousness and judgment. Nor are there seraphim.

In the Revelation we have the seraphic character added to the cherubim, and the gold is transparent as glass. Emblems, as we have seen, of judicial power, the cherubim had a new position (those belonging to the ark remained the same); the wing of one of these new cherubim touched the wall of the house on one side, and on the other the wing of the other cherub. Their wings extended from one side of the house to the other. They looked not towards the ark, but outwards. * At this time, righteousness reigning and being established, these symbols of God's power can look outwards in blessing, instead of having their eyes fixed on the covenant alone. During the time that there was nothing but the covenant, they gazed upon it; but when God has established His throne in righteousness, He can turn towards the world to bless it according to that righteousness.

[* The word in Hebrew is "towards the house," which is used as a preposition for inwards; but here, being at the bottom of the most holy place, "towards the house "was outwards. I anticipate the Chronicles here a little. This circumstance of their looking outwards, which is not brought in here by the Holy Ghost, refers to the aspect of this history given in the Chronicles, that is, to the glorious reign of the Son of David. Here, the typical character of the heavenly house and glory being the object, the veil is not seen, nor the circumstance as to the cherubim which gave its character to the governmental blessing of the earth. Both are in Chronicles. Here, while the veil is not mentioned, in its place are folding doors. I make this allusion to that which is written in the Chronicles, in order to give a general idea of the whole, and to link the two accounts together. I will give here something more definite, as to the contents of chapters 6 and 7 of the book that occupies us. There are three parts in this description: the temple itself; the different houses of cedar; and, lastly, the brazen vessels. 1 The temple. The idea which it presents has been already pointed out. It is the dwelling-place, the house of God: there are chambers all around; but it is the house of God. Within, all is gold. Nothing is said about the veil. Dwelling, not drawing near, is the idea. But there are folding doors which open. 2. After this comes the royal connection of Solomon and Pharaohs daughter with the world without, but with a view to the glory and elevation of this position. It is not the dwelling-place of God, but the royal position of the king, the judge, and of his bride. It is Christ in His glorious administration. All is solidity, magnificence, and grandeur, within and without. 3. Then comes the manifestation, according to the power of the Spirit of God, and in a glorious manner, of all that belonged to His reign here below. All was of brass, the pillars and the sea. Nothing is said of the altar, because drawing near to God is not the question; but the manifestation of God in Christ who reigns in sight of the world — divine righteousness in respect of man's responsibility, not of approach to God Himself. Thus we behold the dwelling-place of God where all is gold, the glory of divine righteousness; the house as the dwelling of the

king, and the porch of judgment: the house of his bride. It is the sovereign glory of Christ in manifestation according to the dispensation of glory; and then the development, in this world, by the power of the Spirit, of what Christ is, of what God Himself is. There is no mention of silver — the type of the immutable steadfastness of God's purposes and ways in the wilderness. It is gold; the house of cedar; brass. In the description given by the Book of Chronicles there are an altar and a veil, because there the positive administration of the things and circumstances of the true Solomon's reign is much more the question; the state of things which will in fact exist upon earth, rather than the abstract idea, and the type of that which is manifested of God Himself, as well as of the king's glory; and this, whether in the dwelling-place of God, or on the earth, as the sphere where He will unfold that which He is according to the Spirit.]

It is rather, to my mind, the house of Solomon that prefigures the church, as such, in connection with Christ; the temple, the Father's house on high, where we are brought to dwell. "We are his house"; as the house of the forest of Lebanon prefigures His glory among the Gentiles. The porch of judgment characterizes this glorious reign. The glory was not all on the outside. The inner court was equally beautiful. The glory was not hidden either. The outer court, as well as the inner, exhibited His royal glory who built the whole.

It was the same thing also towards the great outer court. Thus even the great court, as well as the inner court of the house of Jehovah, was built with costly stones and with cedar. The house itself had its peculiar glory. Everything manifested the glory, the riches, and the power of the great king. With respect to this outward glory, Pharaoh's daughter had a house similar to the king's. This outward glory of the walls, of the courts of Jehovah, of the king's house, and of all the others, exhibits the connection between these things in Christ in the day of His manifested glory.

The vessels of Jehovah's house were made on a much larger scale then those of the tabernacle; but they were the same, although greater in number. The only new things were the pillars, Jachin and Boaz; that is to say, "He will establish," and, "in Him is strength" (names which make the meaning of these pillars evident). I doubt not that the passage in Revelation 3:12 alludes to these pillars.

We find here also the union of Jews and Gentiles recognized; and the latter employed in the work for the temple of Jehovah.

The ark is not altered. It was put in the temple, which was but a house for its reception, as the seat of His presence who dwelt between the cherubim. As to the token of God's presence, and of the establishment of His throne on the earth, the ark had entered into its rest, as well as Jehovah whose seat it was (compare Psalm 132:8).

The circumstances which revealed the character of this rest were remarkable. The staves, with which the priests had born the ark, were now the memorial of their journeys with God, who, in His faithfulness, had led and preserved them, and brought them into the rest which He had prepared for them. But that which, in the passage through the wilderness, had been the token of their means of grace, was no longer in it: nothing but the law remained there. Aaron's rod and the pot of manna would not have been in harmony with the glorious reign and the rest of Canaan. The law was there; it was the basis of the administration of the kingdom, and the rule of that righteousness which was to be exercised in it.

The ark of the covenant once set in its place of rest, Jehovah comes and seals it with His presence, and fills the house with His glory. As the rod, the emblem of the priestly grace which had led the people, and the manna, which had fed them in the wilderness, were no longer there, so did the priesthood no longer exercise its ministry on account of the presence of the glory. For the moment Solomon fully assumes the character of priest. It is he who stands before Jehovah, as well as between Jehovah and the people — a remarkable type, as to his position, of what Christ as King will be for Israel in the day of His glory. He has built a house for Jehovah to dwell in a fixed habitation — that He may dwell in it for ever.

Remark here also that all refers to the deliverance out of Egypt, to Horeb, to the law, and not to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. It was doubtless, up to a certain point (and fully so, typically), the fulfillment of the promises made to them; but Solomon does not refer to them as to his present position. This is seen in verse 56.

In examining the blessing pronounced by the king (which, like almost all that is termed blessing, consisted of thanksgiving), and his prayer, we shall again find the same principles that we pointed out at first — the fulfillment of the promises made to David as present blessing (vers. 20-24); but the enjoyment of this blessing granted under condition of obedience (vers. 23-25). The prayer sets the people under the terms of a righteous government, abounding indeed in kindness and forgiveness, yet one which will not hold the guilty to be innocent; and it presents God as the people's resource, when the consequences of their sin fall upon them according to the principles laid down by Moses in Deuteronomy and elsewhere. Moreover, while confessing that the heaven of heavens could not contain Jehovah, the king entreats Him to grant every prayer that should be addressed to Him in this house — a petition which was granted (chap. 9:3), so that the house was established as the throne of the God of heaven upon earth — the place in which He revealed Himself, and in which He had put His name.

This fact has a very wide bearing. It was the establishment of Jehovah's government upon the earth in the midst of His people — a government entrusted to a man, the son of David; so that it is said that Solomon sat upon the throne of Jehovah.

This enables us to understand the importance of the events which took place under Nebuchadnezzar, by whom this throne was cast down, according to the judgment pronounced by God Himself. The house was not elect; but, built under God's own direction, it was hallowed by Himself, that His name might dwell there for ever. The close of chapter 8 gives a very lively figure of Israel's millennial blessing.

The answer which God gives establishes the house as the place in which He has set His name for ever. His eyes and His heart shall be there perpetually; but, at the same time, for the enjoyment of the granted blessing, the dynasty of Solomon, the people of Israel, and even the house itself, are subjected to the condition of faithfulness to Jehovah on the part of Solomon and his children. If he, or his posterity, should turn away to serve other gods, Israel should be cut off; and the house should become a testimony of the judgment of God to every one that passed by. We see here to what an extent the fate of Israel hung upon their king.

The king of Tyre also was dependent on the king of Israel; and the queen of Sheba comes from the far south to delight herself in the wisdom of the head of God's people, and to be filled with wonder at the sight of his glory, and to praise Jehovah who had raised him so high, and who had blessed the people in giving him to be their king. She also came with gifts; for the king's renown had spread into distant lands. Nevertheless, although it was a true report that she had heard, the sight of his glory went far beyond all that had been said of it.

Till now we have had the beautiful picture of God's blessing resting upon the son of David, whose only desire it had been to possess wisdom from God, that he might know how to govern His people. Jehovah had in addition given him riches, magnificence, and glory. The reverse of this picture, painful to the heart, serves nevertheless to instruct us in the righteous dealings of God.

In the event, foreseen by God, of Israel's having a king, he was forbidden to multiply his wives or his riches, and to go down into Egypt to multiply horses (Deuteronomy 17:16, 17). Now with whatever blessings we may be surrounded, we can never forsake the law of God with impunity, nor the walk appointed in the word for His children. God had bestowed the abundance of riches and honor on Solomon, who had only asked for wisdom; but the study of the law, which was prescribed to the king

(5179Deuteronomy 17:19, 20), should have prevented his using the means he did in acquiring his riches. These chapters teach us that he did precisely that which the law forbade his doing. He multiplied silver and gold, he multiplied the number of his wives, and had a great number of horses brought from Egypt.

God's promise was fulfilled. Solomon was rich and glorious above all the kings of his day; but the means he used to enrich himself showed a heart at a distance from God, and led to his ruin according to the just judgment and sure word of God.

How perfect His ways, how sure His testimony! Holiness becometh His house. His judgments are unchangeable.

Solomon enjoys the sure promises of God. He sins in the means by which he seeks to satisfy his own lusts; and although the result was the accomplishment of the promise, yet he bears the consequences of so doing. Outwardly only the fulfillment of the promise was seen; in fact there was something else. Without sending for horses from Egypt, and gold from Ophir, Solomon would have been rich and glorious, for God had promised it. By doing this he enriched himself, but he departs from God and from His word. Having given himself up to his desires after riches and glory, he had multiplied the number of his wives, and in his old age they turned away his heart. This neglect of the word, which at first appeared to have no bad effect (for he grew rich, as though it had been but the fulfillment of God's promise), soon led to a departure more serious in its nature and in its consequences, to influence more powerful and more immediately opposed to the commands of God's word, and at last to flagrant disobedience of its most positive and essential requirements. The slippery path of sin is always trodden with accelerated steps, because the first sin tends to weaken in the soul the authority and power of that which alone can prevent our committing still greater sins — that is, the word of God, as well as the consciousness of His presence, which imparts to the word all its practical power over us.

God brings chastening and trouble upon Solomon during his life, and takes from his family the rule over the greater part of the tribes, declaring that He will afflict the posterity of David, but not for ever.

According to the king's lamentation (2102Ecclesiastes 2:19), he to whom Solomon left all the fruit of his labor was not wise. His folly brought the consequences upon him which, in God's counsels, were attached to his father's sin. Under the guidance of Jeroboam ten tribes shook off the authority of the house of David. Looked at with an eye to its responsibility, the house of David has entirely and for ever lost its glory.

We have to follow the history of the two kingdoms, and yet more particularly that of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which retained the name of Israel, although God still caused the lamp of David to shine at Jerusalem.

Now, the moral fall of the new king — of Jeroboam — was not long delayed. Judging by human wisdom and forgetting the fear of Jehovah, he made two golden calves, in order that the powerful links of a worship in common might be broken, and no longer attach his subjects to Judah and Jerusalem. A new priesthood had to be set up; everything, with respect to worship, was devised of his own heart. Israel's sin was an established rule, and the phrase, "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," became the sad designation of their first king.

But the testimony and the judgment of God tarried not according to the mercy of God towards His people. Prophecy immediately re-appears; for the faithful love of God to His people never grows weary. His mercy endureth for ever. The testimony of His word — prophecy — that is to say, the intervention of God in testimony, when the people go astray and the ordinary connections between God and His people are broken, does not fail. Rehoboam himself is forbidden, by prophecy, to carry out his intention of fighting against Israel, to bring them again under his dominion; but, in the case of Jeroboam, Jehovah vindicates the rights of His glory against the king himself and against his altar. The altar is rent, the ashes poured out, the king's arm — put forth against the prophet — is dried up, and only restored through the prophet's intercession.

Here too Jehovah makes known that He has not forgotten the house of David in the midst of all this evil. From his house shall proceed the repairer of the breach, and the judge of that iniquity which caused the breach; for Judah is still recognized as the place of His throne.

The prophet, charged with such a testimony as this, is forbidden even to drink water among a people who call themselves Israel, but who are rebellious and defiled. No participation in such guilty confusion is allowed; and the prophet himself suffers the consequences of God's just judgment upon his disobedience. Such was the severity of God with respect to an action that countenanced a state of unfaithfulness, which the light He had given was sufficient to judge.

The details of this case deserve some notice.

By the word of God the prophet had knowledge of the judgment of God. His heart should have recognized, morally as well as prophetically, the dreadful evil of Israel's position; and the moral sense of this evil should have given the prophetic testimony its full power over his own heart. At any

rate the word of God was imperative: he was neither to eat nor to drink there. He knew it, and he remembered it; but there was in appearance another testimony, a motive for neglecting the Lord's command. The old prophet (and he was a prophet) told him that Jehovah had said unto him, "Bring him back into thine house that he may eat bread"; so the prophet from Judah went back with him. It was very desirable for the unfaithful old prophet, that a man whom God was using for testimony (and whose testimony he himself also believed) should sanction his unfaithfulness by association with it. Outwardly he appeared to honor the testimony of God, and the man who bore it. In fact the prophet from Judah, by returning with the old prophet, destroyed the power of his own testimony. The old prophetal — though truly such — bore with the evil around him. The testimony of God, on the contrary, declared that the evil was not to be born with. It was with this testimony that the other prophet was charged; and the refusal to eat or drink in the place was the moral and personal testimony of his own faithfulness, of his conviction, and of his obedience. This refusal was the testimony that, in this matter, he took God's part. But, by returning with the old prophet, he nullified his testimony, and countenanced the old prophet in his unfaithfulness. God did not reverse His word, if the prophet was disobedient to it. The old prophet was punished, in that God made use of his mouth to announce the consequences of his fault to the prophet from Judah. It is also a lesson which teaches us, that, whenever God has made His will known to us, we are not to allow any after influence whatever to call it in question, even although the latter may take the form of the word of God. If we were morally nearer to the Lord, we should feel that the only true and right position is to follow that which He told us at first.

In every case our part is to obey what He has said. His word will put us in a true position — in position apart from evil, and from the power of evil, even when we have not spiritual intelligence to appreciate it. If we fail in this obedience, we lose our sense of the falseness of our position, because the moral sentiment is weakened. At best there is uneasiness, but no liberty. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Unfaithfulness to the simple and primary testimony of God's word never sets us at liberty, whatever may be the reasons which apparently justify our putting it aside.

In spite of this testimony, Jeroboam perseveres in his sin. The only one of his sons in whom any piety is seen dies; and the judgment of God is pronounced upon his house.

Judah having walked in all sorts of iniquity also, during the reign of Rehoboam, Jerusalem is taken, and all the riches which Solomon had amassed became the prey of the Egyptians. Abijam, his son, follows no better course. There was constant war between the two kingdoms — the sad

story, so often renewed, of man placed in the enjoyment of God's blessing, and the effect of his fall. In what a condition do we see the kingdom of God's people, and the house of David itself, recently so glorious!

Asa, pious himself and faithful to Jehovah, pressed by the power of Baasha, king of Israel, who had dethroned the house of Jeroboam, seeks that help from the Syrians which he did not know how to find in God. The family of Baasha falls, as that of Jeroboam had done, and the chief captains contend together for the throne, which remains at last in the hands of Ahab's father. Ahab added to the sin of his predecessors the worship of Baal, the God of his idolatrous wife; and, in the enormity of his transgressions against Jehovah, he went beyond all the kings of Israel that were before him.

But in the midst of all this moral ruin, the word of God reaches those who violate it; and Joshua's prophetic judgment upon whosoever should rebuild Jericho is fulfilled in the family of Hiel, the Bethelite. Not only are the ways and government of God manifested in full vigor, however great His patience with a rebellious people, but the energy of the king's iniquity, in the presence of God's long-suffering, gives occasion for a testimony remarkable in proportion to the evil which made it necessary.

The reign of Ahab was the occasion of the testimony of the prophet Elijah. Israel, at that time, was hastening to its doom. But, whatever their iniquity may be, God does not smite a people who have forsaken His ways, until He has sent them a testimony. He may chastise them previously, but will not definitively execute His judgment upon them.

The character of the testimony deserves particular attention here.

In Judah the prophets, who bore testimony in the midst of an order of things which God Himself had established, performed no miracles. They dwell upon the people's sin, and put them in mind of the law of Jehovah, His ordinances, and the obedience due to Him. They proclaim the advent of the Messiah, and the future blessing of Israel; but, the system in the midst of which they give this testimony being still owned of God, they perform no miracles.

Elijah and Elisha, on the contrary (witnesses for God in the midst of a people that according to grace God still recognized as His own, but who had openly forsaken God and worshipped golden calves), perform striking miracles in proof of their divine mission.

They maintain the power and the rights of Jehovah in the midst of a people who disavow His title; while the prophets of Judah, standing amid those

who publicly profess to own Jehovah's authority, insist upon the consequences of this position. God sent indeed to Israel by the mouth of His prophets — such as Hosea and Amos — threatenings similar to those addressed to Judah; but it does not appear that miracles were wrought in Judah by the prophets who bore witness there.

Elisha's miracles, of which we will speak farther on, have a different character from those of Elijah. The latter have a character which none but the miracles of Moses share with them. They are judicial miracles with respect to the people among whom the prophet dwelt. Accordingly God preserved His servant in a miraculous manner. I only speak now of what Elijah did in testimony in the very midst of the people.

Elijah's miracles are few in number, and of striking character. He shuts up the heavens * over a rebellious and apostate people, so that there should be no rain. He brings down fire from heaven upon the captains sent by the king to take him prisoner. At length he proves that Jehovah is God, and (in spite of all that had happened) the God of all the tribes of Israel, according to immutable rights which depend upon His counsels, and upon what He is in Himself. When the people confess this, by executing judgment themselves upon the priests of Baal, Jehovah grants His blessing anew, and the heavens give rain. ** The import of these signs is evident.

[* Let us remark here that this book gives us, as a solemn and positive declaration of the prophet's, that which we know from James's testimony to have been an answer to the prayer of a man like ourselves. This is the history of all true spiritual energy. It appears to man as a simple action, accompanied with more or less demonstration on God's part, and as a proof of the authority and spiritual power of the man who performs it; and so it is. But at the same time, in fact, all these things flow from the energy of divine life, and from communion with God; they are its expression and its fruit, but in power exercised on God's part. Compare Christ's words. at the tomb of Lazarus. — It is profitable to examine such cases when presented to us in the word. — There are others also which have two aspects. Historically the mission of the spies was according to the will of God; it was nevertheless, as to its origin, the fruit of the people's unbelief, an unbelief which soon manifested its effects. Paul's journey to Jerusalem, related in Acts 15, is apparently the same which he mentions in Galatians 2, but we find in the latter elements and motives which are not spoken of at all in the Acts.]

[** Elijah had said "but at my word," yet the rain is given when God is glorified; for Elijah was, as a witness, the witness of the government of Jehovah, of Jehovah the God of Israel, despised by Israel. Hence the truth and reality of Jehovah's authority and the principles of His government were both displayed.]

Moses was in a different position. The people of God were in captivity, not in rebellion, and the judgment falls on their oppressors. It is neither the

heaven become brass closed over the people, nor heaven the source of judgment which falls from thence. The earth, given to the children of men, and possessed by those who will not acknowledge that Jehovah is its God, or that He has any rights over its inhabitants, is smitten with all kinds of plagues. The earth, the water, the fruits of the earth, the cattle, the air, and, finally, man himself in his firstborn, all is smitten by the rod of God, according to the powerful word of God's witness. The Egyptians, enjoying the providential bounties of the gracious Creator, have not judgment inflicted upon them until they have refused to let go the people of God and to recognize His rights, who claims them for His own. After having refused to hear, they are first of all smitten in the enjoyment of the earthly blessings which they hold from Him, and afterwards the people themselves are smitten in the persons of their firstborn.

We may remark here, that the power of the two witnesses in the Apocalypse manifests itself in these two kinds of signs. They shut heaven that it rain not, they bring down fire from heaven: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. That is Elijah. They smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. That is Moses. Their testimony also will, no doubt, be given in the midst of a people who bear the double character of a rebellious people, and of a people in captivity, oppressed by the world who will not hear the God of the earth whose rights their testimony proclaims.

If, in the case of Elijah, God shut heaven over His rebellious people, He takes care of the remnant according to grace, overstepping even in this grace the limits of the covenant of law. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah the prophet, but unto none of them was he sent, save unto a widow of Sarepta in Sidon, a widow who hearkened to the voice of God's testimony, and by faith acted on that testimony in a case that required self-denial; and her life is preserved. The grace — a hard thing to the hearts of Jews — which is a revelation of His heart, whom they knew not, reveals itself in power equal to the need; and the dead is restored to life. The poor widow receives her son by a power which is that of resurrection, and her faith is fully established in the word of God. *

[* This reference to the sovereign rights and exercise of power of God in grace, out of the limits of Israel, is frequent and full of interest; and here, as followed by the renewed blessing of Israel, looked at as composed of the whole twelve tribes, is very striking. It will be remembered that Jesus refers to it in the Gospel of Luke, which is the witness of this great principle, and causes thereby the anger of the Jews. Pride sinks the lowest and worst when it clothes itself with a religious form.]

Afterwards God blesses Israel again, when they are brought back to the confession of His name by a striking manifestation of His power which confounds the priests of Baal. These are all slain by the people, now convinced of the folly of idolatry and made the instrument of God's judgment. It is here that — looked upon as the general expression of the mind of God — Elijah's mission closes, although his ministry was prolonged for some time.

Until now the prophet had stood before Jehovah (chaps. 1 Kings 17:1; 1 Kings 18:15) and had spoken in His name; but now, terrified by the threats of Jezebel, he flees from the dangers of the place into which his testimony had brought him.

Just as we have seen in Moses at Meribah, Elijah's faith * does not rise to the height of Jehovah's grace and patience, who is full of goodness and mercy to His people. It is this failure which puts an end to Elijah's testimony, as it had shut Moses out of Canaan; for who can equal Jehovah in goodness? Elijah does not look to God; he thinks of himself, and takes flight; but God has His eye upon him. He who had not God's strength amid the evil had no refuge but the wilderness. There was a heart true to God, but not faith equal to meet Satan's hostile power in the place of testimony to the end. He must either be a witness for God amongst His rebellious people, or be entirely apart from them.

> [* We see here how far the energy of the outward life of faith may continue to exist, while the inward life grows weak. It was at the moment of the most striking testimony to the presence of God in the midst of the rebellious people, and when Elijah had just caused all the prophets of Baal amongst them to be slain by the people's own hands, that his faith entirely fails at a mere threat from Jezebel. His life was not inwardly sustained by this faith in proportion to the outward testimony. His testimony excites the enemy in a way for which his personal faith was not prepared. This is a solemn lesson. The still small voice (which, unknown to him, was still heard among the people) had not perhaps its due influence upon his own heart, where the fire and manifestations had held too much place. Thus he did not know himself the grace which was still in exercise towards the people; he could not love them for the sake of the seven thousand faithful ones as God loved them, nor hope as charity hopes. Alas! what are we, even when so near God! And his complaint when he came to God, for a person so blessed, has a sad deal of self in it. I have been zealous, he says, and they have cast down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets; just when he had cast down Baal's and killed all his prophets; and then, I am left alone. It is a humbling testimony.]

The heart of Elijah and the hand of God led the prophet into the wilderness, where, overwhelmed perhaps, yet precious in Jehovah's sight, he will be alone with God. Elijah's forty days' journey in the wilderness has only a partial resemblance to the forty days which Moses spent with God, in the

same Horeb to which the prophet was going, or to those which Jesus spent in the wilderness for conflict with the enemy of God and man. In the two latter cases nature was set aside. Neither Moses nor the Lord ate or drank. As for Elijah, the goodness of God sustains the weakness of tried nature, makes manifest that He considers it with all tenderness and thoughtfulness, and gives the strength needed for such a journey. This should have touched him, and made him feel what he ought to be in the midst of the people, since he had to do with such a God. His heart was far from such a state. Impossible, when we think of ourselves, to be witnesses to others of what God is! Our poor hearts are too far from such a position.

Elijah goes on till he reaches Horeb. But coming before God to speak well of himself and ill of Israel is a very different thing from forgetting self through the power of the Lord's presence, and setting Him before the people in His power which is patient in mercy in spite of all their evil. * People sometimes come before God because they have forgotten Him in the place where they ought to have stood and born testimony for Him. And thus God asks Elijah, "What doest thou here, Elijah? "Terrible question! like those addressed to Adam, to Cain, and now to the world with respect to Jesus. The answer does but betray (as is always the case) the sad and fatal position of one who has forgotten God. The voice was not a voice of thunder, but one that made Elijah feel it was the voice which he had forgotten. Wind, fire, earthquake, these heralds to man of the power of God, would have suited the angry heart of Elijah as instruments of divine power against Israel; but these manifestations of His power were not God Himself. The still small voice reveals His presence to Elijah. That which would have satisfied his will, and that which would perhaps have been just towards others, did not awaken his own conscience. But the still small voice by which God reveals Himself penetrates Elijah's heart, and he hides his face before the presence of Jehovah. Nevertheless the pride of his embittered heart is not yet subdued. He repeats his complaints, unsuitable as they were at the time when he had himself just destroyed all the prophets of Baal, and proving that his faith had not been able to find, by the light of his testimony, all that God saw of good in Israel.

[* It was different too from Moses who, with God, interceded for the people, setting himself aside.]

God's answer, although just, is sorrowful to the heart. Vengeance shall be executed, and Elijah is commissioned to prepare its instruments — a sad mission for the prophet, if he loved the people. As to Elijah, he should be succeeded by Elisha in his prophetic office. But if the deserved vengeance was to be executed in his time, and if the saddened prophet was to announce it, God has still seven thousand souls who had not bowed the knee to Baal,

although Elijah had not been able to discover them. Oh! when will the heart of man, even in thought, rise to the height of God's grace and patience? If Elijah had leant more upon God, he would have known some of these seven thousand. He would at any rate have known Him who knew them, and who raised up his testimony to strengthen and comfort them.

But the time was not ripe for the fulfillment of God's purposes; and God will not give up the patience of His grace towards His people to satisfy the prophet's impatience. Elisha is anointed; but, Ahab having humbled himself when God threatened him on account of his iniquity, the judgments are withheld even during the life-time of Ahab and of his son. This displays another feature in God's government, namely, that judgment upon the evil-doer may not only have been pronounced in the counsels of God, but may be already marked out in His dealings, and be even ready to be executed a long time before it is really poured out. The prophet, or the spiritual man, will know or will understand in spirit that it is so, and will have to wait for the moment that suits this perfect patience, which itself waits upon the slowness of our hearts and the filling up of the iniquity of the wicked, or at least for their refusal to repent.

According to the outward history of Israel, that which follows the revelations made to Elijah in Horeb looks like a time of restoration and blessing; and outwardly it was so. Benhadad is overcome and Israel delivered from his power; but Ahab has no knowledge at all of the mind of God, and he lets the man whom God had condemned escape. There are cases in which levity only proves that the honor of God and His thoughts have no influence over the heart. It was not for Ahab to be on brotherly terms with a king whose constant aim was the oppression of God's people. It was putting himself on a level with a Gentile king, forgetting the position both of Israel and of Israel's king, with respect to God. In such a case as this, severity of conduct is the suitable accompaniment of the sense of God's perfect grace towards His people. He who, from love to God's people, desired in Mount Horeb to be blotted out of the book of Jehovah, is also he who said, in the presence of evil, "Consecrate yourselves today unto Jehovah, every man upon his brother, his companion, and his neighbor"; but the weakness, which despisal of God produces in one who holds the place of God's servant, assumes the character of kindness towards men.

At Jezebel's instigation, Ahab adds sin to sin, and a piece of flagrant injustice fills up the apostasy of the king of Israel. He enjoys the fruit of a crime which he had not courage to commit himself. His enjoyment was short-lived. Sent by God to meet the king, Elijah goes before him into the vineyard, which Ahab went down to possess. The king's heart bows before the word of Jehovah, and the fulfillment of the judgment is put off until the

days of his son: a new proof of the long-suffering of a God ever ready to accept and respond to any movement of man's heart towards Himself.

The reign of Ahab, looked at historically, was in general prosperous and glorious. Moab was tributary. Syria subject and quiet. The king had an ivory palace, and built fresh cities: a new motive to own Jehovah, a snare to one who worshipped Baal. God did not regard all this prosperity. In a moral point of view, this reign stamps its character upon the kingdom of Israel. It is apostasy and iniquity, but at the same time the testimony of a faithful and patient God.

The last chapter presents another element of this history, namely, the guilty alliances which were formed between the royal families of Israel and Judah. Both of them prosperous at this period, they seek the establishment and increase of their power by peace and mutual alliances. On Jehoshaphat's side it was nothing but unfaithfulness and forgetfulness of God. And, if God did not forsake him, Jehoshaphat saw the commencement of chastisements, the results of which were deeply disastrous to his house.

We see also the false prophets in power: Ahab had four hundred of them. We may remark also, that they made use of Jehovah's name, and no longer, as it appears, of Baal's. * Nor was Elijah, as we see, the only prophet of Jehovah. The intermixture continues. Outwardly the state of things is less offensive; but the heart of Ahab is unchanged. At the request of Jehoshaphat, who is uneasy in this false position, Ahab sends for the prophet of Jehovah; but he does not hearken to him and has to meet the consequences.

[* Nevertheless the worship of Baal had not ceased.]

We learn also here in what manner a lying spirit deceives and leads the wicked to ruin, fulfilling the purposes and judgments of Jehovah.

During all this time Elisha constantly accompanies Elijah and, led to this intimacy by grace, he is morally imbued with his spirit before he is clothed with it in power. He seems identified with him.

## 1 KINGS — CONCLUSION

Before passing on to the Second Book of Kings, I will add some general remarks, which apply equally to the two books.

That which is here in question is the government of God Now the principles of this government are laid open to us in the revelation made to Moses, when he went up the second time to Mount Sinai (Exodus 33). There was, first of all, goodness and mercy; then the declaration that the guilty shall not

be held innocent; and, thirdly, a principle of public government, which caused the effects of misconduct to be felt, namely, that their children should bear its consequences (a principle which could not be applied where the soul is in question); but this principle important and salutary in the outward government of the world is verified daily in that of providence. This government of God was in exercise in the case of the kings; but the condition of Israel depended on the conduct of the kings.

We have already seen that the fall of the priesthood and the demand for a king had placed the people in this position — a position which will be one of blessing when Christ shall be their King; but, meantime, God had set up prophecy, a more intimate and real connection between the counsels of God and His people. The existence of a king placed the people under the effect of their governor's responsibility.

The prophet was there on the part of God Himself in testimony and in grace. He recalled to the people the duties attached to this responsibility; but he was himself a proof of those counsels which assured them of future blessing, and of the interest which God took in their enjoying it both then and at all times. He supplied the key also to God's dealings, which were difficult to be understood without this.

We, Christians, have both these things. God will have us act by faith upon our own responsibility; but close communion with Him reveals to us the cause of many things, as also the perfection of His ways. Thus, in His public government, God could well bless Israel after the events related in chapter 18. They strengthened the faith of His own people. Chapter 19 shows us the secret judgment of God upon the real state of things; and it was speedily manifested. Ahab knows not how to profit by the blessing; he spares Benhadad; and the affair of Naboth shows that Jezebel's influence is as strong as ever.

But to what a degree are the patience and mercy of God manifested in all this, according to Exodus 33! Ahab, rebuked by Elijah, humbles himself, and the evil comes to pass neither in the days of Ahab, nor in those of Ahaziah, but in the days of Jehoram, who was also his son, and that according to the principle already laid down. Personally Jehoram was less wicked than his father and his brother. He did not worship Baal. Israel, however, who had been led into the worship of this idol, still bows down to it.

Observe the difference between the judgment of God and the appearance of things. The judgment of God was pronounced against the king and against Israel (chap. 19); yet prosperity and peace generally marked this reign, as we have seen. Syria is subdued, Moab tributary; and Judah in

unaccustomed prosperity leagues itself with Israel. The king of Judah was as Ahab, his people as Ahab's people, and his horses as Ahab's. It was even proposed to send to Ophir for gold, as in the days of Solomon. Nevertheless judgment was only suspended, and its suspension was revealed to none but Elijah.

But what was morally the character of this alliance? It is Jehoshaphat who comes to Ahab, and not Ahab to Jehoshaphat. The latter asks, as a favor, that Jehovah may be consulted. After this request the false prophets make use of Jehovah's name to announce the success of the enterprise. This was natural enough; for the Syrians having been overcome, and having failed in performing the conditions of peace laid upon them, Ahab was going to assert his rights with the help of the king of Judah.

In short Jehovah's name is in the mouth of the false prophets. Micaiah (for the king of Judah was uneasy)Micaiah, being come, announces misfortune. But Ahab's mind was made up; and the king of Judah was bound by his engagement. It was no longer time to consult Jehovah: to inquire after the truth, in such a position as this, was but to learn a judgment which they had resolved to contemn. Ahab was more consistent than Jehoshaphat. The conscience of the latter only made every one uncomfortable, and proved his own folly. To please Jehoshaphat by speaking to him of Jehovah was no more than decency required; but it was all that Ahab did for Jehoshaphat, except that he unwillingly sent for Micaiah. Jehoshaphat helped Ahab against Syria; he helped Jehoram against Moab; but neither Ahab nor his son helped Jehoshaphat in any one thing, except to be unfaithful to Jehovah. Ahaziah was willing indeed to go with him, but it was in order to obtain gold from Ophir. It would rather appear that this alliance was the cause of that between Moab, Ammon, and Seir against Jehoshaphat. Happily it was no question then of succoring Israel.

Such is the history of the alliances of believers, not only with unbelievers, but with the unfaithful. The latter are very willing that we should go with them; but to walk in the ways of truth is another thing. This is not the question with them; if they so walked, they would cease to be unfaithful. A true union would necessarily have made Jerusalem the center and capital of the land: for Jehovah and His temple were there. The alliance took it for granted that Jehoshaphat had given up all such idea, since it showed that he recognized Ahab in his position. There is no equality in an alliance between truth and error; since, by this very alliance, truth ceases to be truth, and error does not thereby become truth. The only thing lost is the authority and obligation of the truth.

I have anticipated some of the events related in the Second Book of Kings, in which we find the greater part of Jehoshaphat's history. Let us now proceed to examine the contents of this Second Book.

# 2 KINGS

If God has shown that He took notice of His servant's fault, and did not pass it lightly over, He did not fail towards him in either tenderness or faithfulness. He acted towards him as towards a beloved and faithful servant, even at the moment in which He made him sensible of his failure in the energy of faith; for He did not make others aware of it, although He has communicated it to us for our instruction.

I said failure in the energy of faith; for, with respect to the mass of the people, Elijah's judgment was just. God reveals His thoughts and His intentions to him, and even points out to him the agents He will employ; and, while definitely replacing the prophet by Elisha, God nevertheless makes him publicly re-enter His service, by commanding him to call Elisha to accompany him in his work. Thus Elijah resumes his ministry in the midst of Israel.

Now Ahaziah walked in the way of his father, and openly confessed Baal to be his God by sending to consult Baal-zebub at Ekron. Sent to meet the king's messengers, Elijah pronounces his sentence from the Lord. Incensed at being opposed in his iniquity, Ahaziah sends men of his army to take him.

We find again here the same judicial character in Elijah's miracles which was spoken of before — a character pointed out by Jehovah Himself. He calls down fire from heaven to consume these men. The last of those sent by the king, owning the authority and power of Elijah, has his life spared. Elijah goes down with him to the king, to declare again to him in person Jehovah's judgment which awaited him.

And now we reach the end of the troubles and afflictions of this precious and faithful servant of God. And, if we do not find in his case the calmness of the ascension of Jesus, who, while blessing His disciples, ascends to His eternal and familiar home; if this peculiar characteristic became His departure alone, who — perfect in Himself and in His human life, in which nothing had been found out of harmony with the heaven He was re-entering — went back to His Father, from whom He came; if in Elijah's rapture we find not the elevation of One who, having come forth from the Father and come into the world, again left the world and returned to His Father, without having for one moment departed from this word" — The Son of man which is in heaven," and who had so much the more right and title to be there, that He had perfectly glorified the Father here below; if, in a word;

he who goes up is not the God-man ascending after having finished the work committed to Him, at least the presence of God is felt throughout the whole scene in the most solemn manner — a God whose presence alone can abrogate the laws of His government, and set aside, in His servant's behalf, that which is appointed unto men.

Moreover it is not surprising that such an event should have been accompanied with the mysterious solemnity which in fact surrounds it, and that those who were present should feel that something was about to happen which was beyond the common track of human joy and sorrow.

Elijah, taken away by the power of God, quits the earth without passing through death. We find in the fact itself a marvelous testimony to the sovereign goodness of God, and to the approbation He bestowed upon His faithful servant.

The details are worthy of all attention.

If the prophet's translation to heaven is the great object presented to faith, we find also that he goes to every place that had a voice with respect to God's relationship to Israel. Elijah maintained, in spite of the king, the relationship between God and Israel, according to God's faithfulness, and as a prophet upon the earth. * He did not maintain it by the king, which, since David, was the normal state of the people. This earthly relationship was impossible, and was to close by an act of judgment. It is this which took place, with respect even to Judah, in the rejection of Christ.

> [* This consideration makes Elijah's position pretty evident. We have seen that prophecy was the means of maintaining God's relationship with Israel, in a sovereign manner, when the ark had been taken and the priesthood was fallen. Prophecy still holds this place in the presence of royalty in a state of failure, which, instead of maintaining the people in relationship with God, causes them to depart from Him. While presenting their true King to the people according to Zechariah's prophecy, Christ filled also this prophetic office according to the word of Moses, only in a manner quite peculiar. It must be remembered that, in comparing Elijah and Elisha with the Lord, Christ is looked at in this character. This gives a very important position to the function of prophecy. (Compare <sup>28</sup>Hosea 12:13).]

Nevertheless the counsels of God change not; they will be fulfilled in heavenly power.

Elisha, is, so to say, the link between these two things as to prophecy. He does not return to Horeb, to announce the uselessness of an earthly ministry, and, in some sort, to place the broken law again in His hands who gave it, but who was really acting in grace. * The starting-point of his ministry is the ascended man, evidently quite a new starting-point in God's

messages to Israel. Up to this point he constantly attached himself to Elijah. The latter had thrown his prophetic mantle over him (1 Kings 19); Elisha thenceforth was as if identified with him.

[* It is this grace, which Elijah had not properly understood; that was the only means by which God could maintain His relationship with the people; so that a return to Horeb could only put an end to the relation itself as standing on Sinai ground, and especially to the ministry of Elijah which took no higher position. Nevertheless God wrought for the revelation of all this.]

At the present moment, when Elijah is under the extraordinary power which is to snatch him away from Elisha, will the faith of Elisha maintain this position? Yes: the power of God upholds him, and he accompanies Elijah until the chariots of God Himself separate them, and in such a way that he may see Elijah ascending to heaven upon them. Through grace the whole heart of Elisha was in the prophet's ministry, and by faith he walked in the height of God's thoughts in this respect.

Let us trace their path upon the earth. It is no longer the weakness of man, as when he went to Horeb, but the power of God; and Elijah traverses all that in type had to do with God's relationship with Israel, even death itself (and that dry-shod), up to heaven. Gilgal * is his starting-point — the consecration of man to God by death applied to the flesh — the place where Israel was cleansed from all remembrance of Egypt, where the people were set apart for God, where their camp was fixed for their victories under Joshua; in a word, it was the place where, by circumcision, ** Israel was definitively separated unto God. Elijah repairs thither, and acknowledges it thus according to God, although it was now only a place of sin to the people. + He attains the mind of God with respect to the people, as separated from evil and consecrated to God. He sets out with this. He thinks with God: this is faith.

[* Reflection will show us that all this is a moral history of the life of Christ, save that Christ is what He makes us to be. But this is everywhere true. Still it was experimentally realized in Him. He had not to be circumcised; still it was the circumcision of Christ. See following note. So the high priest was washed as well as the priests. Though absolutely obedient in nature and will, He learned obedience.]

[** This, as we have seen in the Book of Joshua, was in Canaan after the passage of Jordan, as the circumcision of Christ (that is, His separation from evil which, always true in His Person, was externally made good in His death) has a true heavenly character, and to us is by being risen, and in heavenly places.]

[+ See Amos 4:4, Hosea 9:15, and many other passages in the prophets. This is a very striking fact, just as the cross now is a matter of

constant idolatry. The memorial of good, of the denial and death of flesh too, is to flesh the power of evil. Oh, what is man!]

Elisha will not leave him; and they go away to Bethel; that is to say, Elijah places himself in the testimony of God's unchangeable faithfulness. to His people. * He acknowledges it; he takes his place in it; and Elisha is with him.

[* See Genesis 28:13-15. Here too one of the calves was set up; the place of special blessing again made the place of idolatry.]

These were the two main branches of faith — of the faith of God's people: the setting apart of the people, of man, unto God; and the unchangeable and perpetual faithfulness of God to His people, whatever their circumstances may be.

Israel (what a triumph to Satan!) had set their false gods, their golden calf, in Bethel. Elijah (and this is faith) links himself with the mind of God there in spite of this. These two things compose the life of Jesus on earth in the midst of Israel.

Elijah cannot stay there. What will he find in going farther? The scene changes: he is still with God. But if transgression is multiplied at Gilgal, and if false gods are worshipped at Bethel, as "the king's chapel and the king's court," the curse will meet him (for Israel has placed itself under it). He goes to Jericho. It was there that formerly the power of the enemy barred the whole land against Israel, and God had smitten Jericho and pronounced a curse against it. Man had rebuilt it to his own destruction (1 Kings 16:34). Pleasant as its situation was, the curse of God still rested on it. Elijah goes thither, and Elisha accompanies him, and refuses to leave him.

But he does not remain there either; he is still under the mighty hand of God, Elisha following him. The sons of the prophets give their testimony to that which shall take place (but they only look on from afar, when the two prophets draw nigh to Jordan); Elisha knows it too, and puts an end to a discourse which, adding nothing to his knowledge of the mind of God, and disturbing the concentration of his thoughts, tended rather to weaken the union of his soul with Elijah.

Elijah comes at length to Jordan, the type of death, which should carry him out of the land of earthly promise, and break the links of God Himself with Israel on that footing. He crossed it indeed dry-shod. We know that he ascended without having tasted death, but typically he passed through it. (It is not a question here of expiation, but of passing through death). And now,

beyond the borders of Israel — the land of law, forsaken of God — he can freely propose blessing to Elisha according to his desire.

As Jesus said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” In every detail death is the path of liberty.

Elisha, attached by the power of God to the prophet — to the same ministry which Elijah had just left — asks for a double portion of his spirit; and, although now separated from him, yet associated by faith with Elijah, gone up on high (testified by his having seen him in his heavenly condition), his request is granted. He again receives Elijah’s mantle; but it is that of the ascended Elijah.

As we have said, the starting-point of his ministry is not Sinai. It is heaven beyond the borders of Canaan, the other side of Jordan, which is the type of death. For, the law having been broken, and prophecy — which set before the people their relation to God on earth, and His blessing on that earth — having been proved powerless for restoration, the faithful prophet, forsaking a land which had rejected him, had taken his place outside a blind and ungrateful people, and had been taken up to Him who had sent him (hidden, so to speak, in God; although that expression, in its fullness, is true of the precious Savior alone).

Up to Jordan Elijah demanded, by his ministry, that the righteous claims of God upon His people should be satisfied. He sets these claims before them. He must withdraw, and God takes him away from a people who did not know Him.

At Sinai he acted in human weakness, although God had revealed Himself. Why retire to Horeb, where the law dwelt which the people had broken? This could be only to demand the execution of justice. While manifesting that He could in His own time exercise justice, God reserved to Himself His sovereign rights of grace. But in effect it is fitting that it should be exercised in a sovereign manner beyond the limits of man’s responsibility. The relationship of Christ with Israel, with man, clearly explains this. Therefore God first shows that grace has reserved the perfect number who were known of God in Israel; then, having sent Elijah to fill up the long-suffering of the will of God in grace towards the people, instead of cutting Israel off, He places ministry in a position with respect to Israel, in which He can act sovereignly in grace towards every one who has faith to avail himself of it.

After Elijah had passed the Jordan, we have seen that all was changed. Until then Elisha is on probation; after that, grace acts. In principle it is the

position of Christ towards the assembly * or at least towards men in grace; that is to say, it is sovereign grace, to the actings of which death has given free course, justice having nothing more to say, and no longer resting on the responsibility of man who had undertaken to obey, and from whom obedience was due. Justice now consists in God's having His rights, in His glorifying Himself, as is just, by being consistent with His entire being, love, justice, sovereignty, majesty, truth, and every attribute which forms a part of His perfection. He does so according to His sovereignty; and He does it by the Christ who has glorified Him on the earth in all these respects, in every part of His being, so indeed as to make Him known. The testimony of it is that He has exalted Christ as man to His right hand.

[* And of course towards Israel also.]

It must be remembered here that the application of this regards Israel, so that the rejection of the people is considered to have taken place by the very fact of Elijah's rapture. God has ceased to maintain His relationship with them. In His sovereign counsels God never withdraws His love from Israel; but, on the ground of the people's responsibility, God has judged them. He has stretched out His hands all the day to a rebellious and gainsaying people. Therefore Elisha says to the king of Israel, "Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee."

Elisha nevertheless returns to Israel in grace. His ministry has then this distinctive character, that it is a testimony to the rejection of all that belonged to the condition of responsibility in which the people had been placed; but at the same time it is a testimony to grace by faith, according to election and the sovereignty of God, in order to maintain the people in blessing; and that through the righteous execution of the judgment which their sin had brought upon them.

This is what the return of Christ will be for Israel, rather than what it will be for the assembly, notwithstanding that fundamentally the principle is the same.

Elisha, in the power of resurrection, re-enters the scene of Elijah's labors, who had sought in vain — as He also had done who was more excellent than Elijah — to gather Israel unto the God of their fathers (that is to say, to bring back man in the flesh to some faithfulness towards God). Jericho (pleasant in itself yet, as we have seen, an accursed place) ceases to be so; the curse is removed, and the spring of waters permanently healed, by means of salt brought in a new cruse: a type, I doubt not, of the purifying power of grace which separates man from evil, and which removes evil, as

contrary to the relationship of man with God; a moral power, which will take away the curse from the world, and especially from the Jews, who are the center of rebellion against God. Salt represents purifying power in the efficacy and the permanency that distinguish the work of God which heals the object of blessing; and it characterizes, according to the faithfulness of God, the source of blessing itself. The new vessel is an image of the renewed condition of all things through resurrection.

From Jericho Elisha goes up to Bethel, which, as we have seen, is a place commemorative of the unchangeable faithfulness of God * towards Israel; a faithfulness which can now bring forth all its fruits through death and resurrection.

> [* This is the reason why Paul (Acts 13:3, 5) quotes these words, "I will give you the sure mercies of David," in proof of the resurrection of Christ, "no more to return to corruption." Death rendered blessing possible with respect to a rebellious people, and resurrection gave complete stability to the conferred blessing; this was secured. Compare Isaiah 55 where grace towards Israel and the nations, through a risen Savior, is gloriously proclaimed.]

From Bethel he proceeds to Carmel, * that is to God's fruitful field, the place where judgment had been executed upon Baal, the prince of this world; a place typical of that condition of Israel which will be the fruit of the fulfillment of God's faithful promises. It will be seen that all this answers perfectly to the character of his ministry, as we have considered it, and answers to it in so much the more interesting a manner from being in contrast with Elijah's ministry; the path of each corresponding with the ministry which we have ascribed to them respectively.

> [* Compare Isaiah 32:15-18.404 From Carmel Elisha returns to Samaria, in connection with which his ordinary ministry is fulfilled.]

There remains another circumstance to be noticed in this history. Elisha curses the children who mock him. This action not only shows us the prophet's authority upheld by God; it characterizes his position. For although sovereign grace, in spite of Israel's fall, is in exercise towards the people, yet, together with grace, judgment shall be manifested with respect to those who despise the messenger of God. It will be well to remark that the judgment happens when he re-enters the land of Israel, before he takes his place in the unchangeable promises of God to His people. Thenceforth it is the Carmel of God which is presented to our faith.

We may observe also, in this chapter, how little man realizes and believes what he knows, if in spirit he is not identified with it. The sons of the

prophets knew that Elijah was to be taken away. Nevertheless they propose to search for him.

In the following chapter we enter into the historical part of Elisha's ministry. Jehoram goes to war; and, although less wicked than his father, the prophet no longer regards him. Jehoshaphat is still something to him: but the prophet seeks to abstract himself from the influence of the whole scene. He then proclaims blessing, and directs the counsels of the united kings. He is a savior of Israel. He provides (chap. 4) for the need of the poor of his people, and delivers them from their distress. He bestows the heart's desire upon faith, which recognizes and receives the prophet; and restores life to the dead, thus binding up the broken heart. He feeds the sons of the prophets during the famine, and multiplies the scant measure of bread. Death having been mingled with the food, he remedies the evil so that they eat with impunity.

Elisha goes also beyond the borders of Israel in dispensing the blessing of which he is the instrument; and, when the king of Israel is troubled at Naaman's coming, Elisha heals the leprosy of this Gentile, who is brought to acknowledge Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the only true God. The Lord Jesus points out the sovereign grace of God on this occasion, which, overstepping the narrow limits of Israel, and, owning no longer their rights, acts towards the Gentiles in the way of election.

As it has been frequently remarked, the means used were simple, and humbling to the flesh and to the pride of man, having their efficacy in full apprehension of, and full submission of heart and faith to, death, which is become life unto man, and that which heals him and cleanses him from sin. The man who was the most closely connected with Elisha, a prey to covetousness, suffers the painful consequences of a hardened heart; and that from which the Gentile had been freed comes irremediably upon him. Such is the position of Israel, outwardly nearer to Jehovah, but morally afar from Him.

The sons of the prophets must enlarge their dwelling-place, and Elisha, who consents to go with them, secures them from the results of their negligence by reversing the laws of nature.

I know not if we should seek here for anything beyond the general character of the miracle, or find a type in the fact that Jordan is in question. So far as Jordan has a typical meaning, that meaning is abiding. It means death. The house built with that which was taken thence, and the power of the stream overcome and destroyed by the piece of wood cast into it, by means of which that which was beyond hope and lost was rescued from it, easily

suggest a typical meaning. I dare not say positively that it is the mind of the Spirit; and we must not give way to imagination.

Elisha preserves Israel after this from the attacks of their powerful enemies. The king of Syria seeking to take Elisha prisoner, it is Elisha, on the contrary, who captures the whole host that came to seize him, thus teaching his blind servant, who had eyes and saw not, the unfailing care with which the Almighty constantly surrounds His own people.

After having taught the enemy the power of Israel's God, and the folly of attacking His people when the messenger of His covenant is with them, Elisha lets the Syrians go; and these men come no more into the land of Israel.

All these miracles sufficiently characterize Elisha's ministry. The poor comforted, the Gentiles healed, Israel delivered and protected, the election blessed, Israel and their unfaithful king set aside as regards the prophet's testimony — all this we find in it. These miracles are more numerous than Elijah's. The burden which weighed upon Elijah's heart had no place in Elisha's; and therefore he sought relief neither in judgment upon the evil, nor in withdrawing from a useless labor.

The iniquity of Israel plunges the nation again into distress; and Samaria is desolated by famine. The judgment produces indignation against Jehovah's testimony; for, although Jehoram did not worship Baal, his heart was unchanged. Then comes the despair which considers it useless to wait any longer upon Jehovah. * This is the result of professing Jehovah's name, when there is no faith in Him. It was so with Israel in the wilderness: "Wherefore hath Jehovah brought us up hither to destroy all this people?"

> [* It may be doubted whether what is said in verse 33 be not the words of Elisha.]

Elisha appears here again as savior, or, at least, as proclaiming Jehovah's salvation. The unbelief of the king's attendant, who considered this deliverance impossible, is punished at the moment when he sees the abundance. When all is impossible to man, Jehovah interposes; and in a moment the whole scene is changed.

The history of the woman, * whose son Elisha had raised to life again, gives us a little picture of all God's dealings with Israel. During long years, as determined by Jehovah, Israel is deprived of everything; but God has preserved all for them, and in the day of blessing all will be restored to them; and they shall receive double the fruit of their years of affliction. It is the son restored to life that brings blessing.

[* It seems to me that Gehazi stands here in a grievous position. Smitten by the hand of God, because his heart clung to earth, even in the presence of Jehovah's mighty and long-suffering testimony, he is now a parasite in the king's court, relating the wonderful things in which he no longer took part. This poor world grows weary enough of itself to lead it to take some pleasure in hearing anything spoken of that has reality and power. Provided that it does not reach the conscience, they will listen to it for their amusement, taking credit to themselves perhaps for an enlarged and a liberal mind, which is not enslaved by that which they can yet recognize philosophically in its place. But that is a sad position, which makes it evident that formerly we were connected with a testimony, whilst now we only relate its marvels at court. Nevertheless God makes use of it; and it does not follow that there was no truth in Gehazi. But to rise in the world, and entertain the world with the mighty works of God, is to fall very deeply.]

Nevertheless the judgments of God are being accomplished. Elisha goes to Damascus, and Hazael, the rod of Jehovah to chastise His people, is placed on the throne of Syria. On the other hand, Elisha is acknowledged by the Gentiles themselves.

The Spirit of God takes notice of the consequences of Judah's alliance with Israel; but with this exception, Judah for the time is out of sight.

In **CHAPTER** 9 the judgment on Ahab's house commences. He who executes it does not remove, in so doing, the rod which God had lifted up against Israel in the person of Hazael. By means of Jehu God judges the house of Ahab; but Israel was oppressed by the Syrians, and their land overrun by them during the whole of Jehu's reign. Going farther than Jehoram, Jehu destroyed Baal and his worship at the same time as the house of Ahab: but he did not return unto Jehovah. He saw the folly of idolatry: energetic and ambitious, his interest lay on the other side. When the prophet of the Lord announces to him the near possession of the throne, he hearkens unto him. Sincere perhaps in the conviction that Jehovah was God, he was quite ready to honor Him when his interest agreed with his convictions. He displayed all his energies in accomplishing a work to which he had devoted himself. Ahab's religion had no charm for him. He had felt in his conscience the power of Elijah's testimony; and he understood that it was madness to fight against Jehovah, whose part he had taken. What he did for Jehovah, he did well, according to his wonted energy. Nevertheless his vengeance is without the fear of Jehovah; it is carnal (see Hosea 1:4). At the same time the golden calves still existed, as the sanctuary of the kingdom, with whose origin they were connected, and of which they were the national religion. This Jehu did not care to touch. God recognizes a zeal which had judged evil uprightly; for the question here was His outward government, and not His judgment of the secrets of the heart; and in fact Jehu acted faithfully in destroying Baal root and branch. Thus he slays the

king of Judah, who was confederate with the evil, and the royal family of Judah, who had come to visit that of Israel. Everything falls before his avenging sword, and the words of Elijah, the servant of Jehovah, are fulfilled. Thus it is Elisha who performs the function of Elijah * in his stead, prophetically anointing Hazael and Jehu, although not with his own hands.

[* In this respect Elijah and Elisha form but one prophet, with the difference that has been pointed out. Elisha was a "prophet in his room," an expression not used with regard to prophets in general. In fact it is Christ risen who will execute, or cause to be executed judgments of God upon apostate Israel (see Psalms 20, 21).]

In **CHAPTER** 11, the judgment of God falls upon the family * which had corrupted Israel, and even Judah also. The daughter of the house of Ahab, the usurper of the throne of Judah, Athaliah, is cut off through the faithfulness of the high priest, whose wife had preserved one of the offspring of David.

[* During the time that Ahab, stirred up by Jezebel, as well as his family and sons are the instruments of Israel's apostasy and corruption God sends the testimony of Elijah and Elisha. This is, in the main (after Solomon), the subject of the two Books of Kings. The fall of the house of David, brought on by its alliance with Israel, or by the example of their kings, is related in the end of the book, where we find also the connections of the Assyrians with the people of God.]

Nevertheless there is not true zeal for Jehovah. The priests keep the money to themselves, which they had agreed to use for repairing the house of the Lord, until the king interposes to set things in order.

Walking in the steps of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the house of Jehu was no protection to Israel against Hazael. But the compassion of Jehovah raised up a deliverer. To His pitiful heart there was yet space for long-suffering towards His people. Elisha, at the point of death, puts the king in the way of deliverance; but his heart was unable to embrace it in its full extent. Still, in the reign of Jehoash, the Syrians were driven back into their own land; and Jeroboam, although walking in the evil ways of the son of Nebat, was able to recover all the original possessions of Judah; for God had pity on Israel, and had seen that their affliction was very bitter.

Alas! when it is not the faith of God's people that is the source of their strength, one enemy destroyed only makes room for another. The Assyrian soon appears on the scene. Elisha being dead, Israel — deprived of this last link with God — soon fall into anarchy and ruin. The Assyrian invades the land. Israel, leagued with the king of Syria, turn their last efforts against Judah. A sorrowful picture of the people of God! The alliance between

Syria and Israel brings out the king of Judah's unfaithfulness, and entangles him in the snares of the Assyrian.

Elisha, already dead, restores life to a corpse which was being hastily buried on account of an invasion of the Moabites. His history, unto the end, is stamped with the character of the power of life. *

> [* To understand all this part of the history which we are considering, the prophets Hosea and Amos must be read, and Isaiah 7 and 8 (compare <28105>Hosea 5:13; <28804>8:4; <28105>11:5; <30527>Amos 5:27; and also is, 26; <28130>Hosea 13:10, 11); but, to understand well God's dealings, the whole of these prophecies should be read. I have only quoted the passages which mark the connection with the history; but the internal condition of the people is much more seen in the prophets than even in the books which instruct us as to their public history.]

This resurrection, wrought by contact with the bones of Elisha, appears to me to give the comforting instruction, that, while apparently lost to Israel, the true prophet is still the vessel and guardian of all their hopes; and that when Israel is, as it were, dead and forgotten, He will, after all, restore them to life in a manner as unexpected as powerful.

We come now to the connection of Judah with the Assyrian, fruit of the inward demoralization of the former.

Ahaz plunged into the worst idolatry. Full of worldly wisdom, he seeks in the new power of Assyria a support against enemies nearer home, and he succeeds to his ruin. We see again here the nullity of the high priest in presence of the king. It appears that the people had lost their confidence in the house of David, as had the latter in the faithfulness and goodness of the Lord.

Hoshea, although less wicked than his predecessors, concludes the list of kings, whom the patience of God had born with in Israel. God thought of His people; and now there was no more hope of them. They were not even a vessel fit to contain the election of God, to whom He made Himself known. Brought under subjection to the king of Assyria, Hoshea had sought help from Egypt. After the king of Assyria had put him in prison, Samaria and all Israel could not long resist. The people of God are carried into captivity, and dispersed among the cities of Assyria and Media; and the land which belonged to Jehovah, and which had been given in possession to Israel, is peopled by strangers, sent thither by the king of Assyria.

In the prophecies of Hosea the two great principles of God's dealings may be seen, one of which has been set before us in Elisha (the connection between the resurrection of the man about to be buried, and the first verse I shall quote, is remarkable), namely, redemption from the power of death

(<sup>28</sup>Hosea 13:14); and the governmental dealings of God (<sup>28</sup>Hosea 14:9). But how the prophet labors to adapt his voice to the foolishness of Israel, and to make it reach the conscience of this erring people! He comes after Elisha's death. Elisha's presence among them, and the subsequent testimony of Hosea, bring out the marvelous patience and kindness of God towards them. Hosea gives us more than the internal history — he unfolds the causes of the judgments, although God may have sometimes interposed for restoration, and may have appeared to smite when the king was less wicked than ordinarily.

In the language of the prophets we find what the people really were in the sight of God. The promise of their restoration, and in principle even that of our present blessing, is found there also.

The history of that which happened after foreign nations were brought in shows the strange confusion which had taken place in Israel. It is one of the former priests of Jeroboam's system who comes to instruct them in the fear of Jehovah. Together with this they worship their own gods. A medley, hateful to the Lord, is the consequence. In the same way that, in spite of their unfaithfulness, Jehovah retained His sovereign rights over the people, we find Him also vindicating His claim to the land after the people were driven out. He maintains these rights for ever.

**CHAPTER** 18 brings us to a rather different subject, namely, the relations of Judah with the Assyrian, who had become their oppressor through their unfaithfulness; and also their relationship with Babylon.

In order to set His dealings with His people in their true light, God raises up a faithful king, distinguished by this, that he puts his trust in Jehovah as no king had done since David until this period, and as none did after him until the captivity. *

[* We shall see, farther on, that which characterized Josiah.]

That which happened with respect to the brazen serpent shows us the tendency of the heart to idolatry. And how many things, to which man continues attached in a carnal way, remain hidden in the midst of so many blessings and chastenings This teaches us also how near — with such hearts as ours — is the remembrance of blessing, to idolatry of the symbols of blessing. Faith gets rid of these things; for God had given the brazen serpent, not to be a token of the remembrance after the cure, but in order to cure. Man preserved it by a very natural feeling; but this is not of God, and it soon became the instrument of Satan.

Hezekiah smites the Philistines, those inward and perpetual enemies of God's people, and in a great measure subdues them.

It is after this that the king of Assyria comes up.

The king of Assyria had carried Israel away captive. His successor seeks to conquer Judah likewise. According to the prophet's expression, the waters of this river reached even to the neck. The power of the allied kings of Israel and Syria appears to have had some attraction for the people of Judah, who, on the other hand, despised the weakness of the house of David; for God was little in their thoughts. In this confederacy, favored apparently by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, they proposed to set aside the house of David in favor of the son of Tabeal. There was an apparently well-conceived plan on the one side, and an imminent danger on the other. But these were not God's thoughts. In His mercy He would not yet put out the lamp of David's house. He sends the promise of Emmanuel, and exhorts the remnant to put their trust in Jehovah Himself.

We shall examine this more in detail when we consider the prophecy of Isaiah. I only refer to it now, in order to elucidate the history and exhibit the condition of the people. Ahaz, who did not trust in Jehovah, was the instrument of fulfilling His purposes; but the Assyrian, in whose power he trusted, became through him the scourge of Judah.

But in order still to bless and preserve Jerusalem and Judah, God raises up Hezekiah, a godly and faithful king, who put his trust in Jehovah. Hezekiah is unable to repulse Sennacherib; so that the people are punished. He submits to Sennacherib, offering to pay whatever he demands; but whether the kings resources were insufficient, or that the king of Assyria, after having accepted the present which Hezekiah sent him, broke his engagement (compare Isaiah 33), Sennacherib, taking advantage of the king's apparent weakness, requires complete submission, both from the king and the kingdom, and invites the inhabitants of Jerusalem to come out of the city and place themselves under his command.

We see however, that even while blaspheming Jehovah, Sennacherib is conscious that he is in the presence of a principle and a power that he does not understand. The people, obedient to the king's commandment, make him no answer. Drawn elsewhere by tidings of the king of Ethiopia's attack, Sennacherib repeats in a letter his blasphemies and insults. Hezekiah lays all these things before Jehovah, and seeks His answer through the prophet Isaiah. The same night God smote the army of the Assyrians. Sennacherib returns to his own country, and dies there by the hand of his own sons.

Hezekiah is thus a type of the true Emmanuel, of Him before whom the Assyrian, the desolater of Israel, will fall. This is a very important history, as foreshadowing the events of the last days; but it will be studied more advantageously when examining the Book of Isaiah, which frequently applies it in this manner. It is but the general idea that needs to be touched upon here.

We find here again in a figure the principle with which Israel's deliverance, and that of all men, is connected — a principle pointed out in Elisha, and accomplished in Jesus. Hezekiah is raised as from the dead. He had been sick unto death; but Jehovah heard his prayer, and, on his humiliation, revokes the sentence which He had pronounced through Isaiah.

But man can scarcely bear exaltation. Blessed of Jehovah he boasts himself of that which he has received. After having displayed all his riches to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, who were sent to congratulate him on his recovery, he is warned that they shall all be carried away even to Babylon The king of Babylon felt, perhaps, some satisfaction in allying himself with one who had not yielded to the power of the king of Assyria; but the world's wisdom, which cultivates profitable connections with the people of God, is always a snare to them Hezekiah might have made known the source and giver of all this; but he acted as a man. Nevertheless he submits graciously and humbly to the word of Jehovah, which was spoken to him on this occasion.

But, at this period, the people had deeply corrupted themselves, and the impulse which God had given disappeared entirely with the man in whom it acted. The son of Hezekiah was a model of wickedness. God was about to transfer power to the Gentiles; and, even while making it manifest that certain blessing attended faithfulness and trust in Himself, He allowed the house of David to give themselves up to debasement.

When Hezekiah died at the age of fifty-four, his son was but twelve years old. Beguiled himself, Manasseh seduced the people, who were but too willing to commit greater iniquity than the nations who knew not God.

The particular events of Manasseh's life are not related here. The Holy Ghost, having given us the details, in that which precedes, of God's public government in Israel, until He had said, "Lo-ruhamah," then shows us God's dealings with Judah, governed by the conduct of their kings, until God has said, "Lo-ammi." This had been already announced on account of Manasseh's heinous sins; and Josiah's piety could not change the just judgment of God. There was yet for Judah some prolongation of tranquillity; but their repentance under Josiah was but outward, * and evil

regained the mastery immediately after his death. Amon did but follow the evil ways of his father Manasseh.

> [* See <2410>Jeremiah 3:10. This passage teaches us how seldom the heart, which is what God judges, corresponds with the semblance of zeal for Him and for His glory, which appears on the surface, when, moved by the Spirit of God, a man of faith presents himself to promote His glory. See also under Hezekiah's reign the condition of the people and God's judgment — <2320>Isaiah 22.]

Observe what grace raised up Hezekiah and Josiah, both of whom were born of fathers given up to idolatry, and followed by sons who were equally abandoned to it. But the sovereign grace of God towards Israel again raised up this testimony, and manifested that He was always ready to bless, even if Israel refused to be blessed, and chose their own ruin instead. Without God, what is the heart of man? In all this the patience of God's government was fully demonstrated; for, under Hezekiah, many things still existed which escaped the king's eye and judgment, through lack of watchfulness in the fear of the Lord.

That which distinguished Josiah was his carefulness to observe the law of Moses, the book of which had been discovered in the temple; trust in Jehovah had characterized Hezekiah; and in these respective characteristics they are both unequaled as to their walk.

The kingdom of Assyria was declining, and Josiah exercises his royal power through the whole extent of the country. The threat addressed to Jeroboam of old is fulfilled. All the high places of Israel are destroyed. Perhaps the heart of Josiah was lifted up. Be that as it may, God performed His promise, and took him away from the evil, the dreadful accomplishment of which was hastening onwards; for, whatever might be the sincerity of Josiah's piety, all hearts were corrupted. Compare with this <1407>2 Chronicles 30:17, etc. — the account of that which happened long before his reign.

The kings of Israel had been the fatal examples of a course which had led Judah and all Israel to their ruin (see chap. <1463>16:3). The pious Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab was the origin of all this, for evil bears fruit which continues long to reproduce itself. Alas! alas! what is man when he turns aside from Jehovah's ways, from the narrow and straight path of God's word and will, from the path of faith — the true path of an obedient spirit?

The history which we have been going over has given us an account of the Assyrian's connection with the people of God. He was a cedar of Lebanon; but he is cut down. Pharaoh thought, for a moment, of making the empire

his own; he sought to exalt himself that he might rule over the trees of the forest. Judah, brought out in former days with a high hand by the power of God from Pharaoh's country, is subject to him. But, whatever Pharaoh's pretensions may be, this is not the purpose of God. If God writes "Lo-ammi "on His people, it is Babylon which is to begin the times of the Gentiles. * Pharaoh returns into his own country, and Jehoiakim, powerless and without God, comes under the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar. ** We need not go into the details. His son, as wicked as himself, rebels against Nebuchadnezzar; for Judah, the son of the Most High, was little used to bondage; but this heifer also must bend its neck to the yoke (Hosea 10:11), and Jehoiachin is carried captive to Babylon. The kingdom and the temple still exist; but Zedekiah, having broken the oath which he had made in the name of Jehovah, + and, allowing himself to be governed by the princes, persists in his rebellion and is taken prisoner. His sons having been slain before his eyes, and himself deprived of sight, he is carried away to Babylon. The temple is burnt; the walls of Jerusalem are broken down; the seat of Jehovah's throne is trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Sorrowful result of His having entrusted His glory to men among whom He had placed His throne! Sorrowful, thrice sorrowful, conduct of man — of that generation whom God had so honored! On the other hand, God will take occasion from it to manifest that infinite goodness, which, in sovereign grace, will re-establish the very thing that man has cast under foot to the profane.

[* As a figure, this is an important principle; for Egypt is the state of nature, out of which the assembly is brought; Babylon is the corruption and worldliness into which she falls.]

[** How sorrowful is this part of the history, in which the only question is, whether Egypt or Babylon is to possess the land of God's people, the land of promise! It being no longer a doubtful point whether Israel shall continue to possess it, it must become a prey to one or the other of these hostile and unbelieving powers. — Alas! Israel was unbelieving with more light than the others, who did but take advantage of the position and the strength which the unbelief of Israel gave them, and acknowledged in them.]

[+ This filled up the measure of sin. We shall draw the reader's attention to this when considering the prophecy of Ezekiel, who dwells upon it. By making use of an oath in Jehovah's name in the hope of preventing revolt, Nebuchadnezzar showed more respect for that name than Zedekiah did, who despised such an oath. God permitted thus final evidence of iniquity. Zedekiah might have remained a spreading vine of low stature. One who was above all, alone knew how to render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.]

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel must be read to have the complete history, and the internal history of the spirit of the people, and that of the

king; the history at once of the condition which drew down the judgment, and of the patience of God, who, even until the very taking of the city, continued to. send them most affecting calls to repentance — alas! in vain; and the times of the Gentiles began.

The reader who would thoroughly understand the events of all this history, the marvelous patience of God, and the way in which He raised up faithful kings, in order that He might bless, should read the prophets Hosea, Amos, Jeremiah, and certain chapters of Isaiah, which speak to the people in the name of Jehovah and tell them of their true condition.

# 1 CHRONICLES

The Books of Kings have given us the general and public history of God's government in Israel; and, from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, the history of the kings of Israela history in which the result of the fall of the kingly power is manifested in presence of God's long-suffering. That which is said in these books respecting Judah only extends to the connection of Judah with the house of Israel during this period.

The Books of Chronicles give us the history of the same period under another aspect (that is, that of blessing and of the grace of God); and, more particularly, they give us the history of the house of David with respect to which this grace was manifested. We shall see this verified in a multitude of instances.

These Books, written or drawn up after the captivity (see 1 Chronicles 6:15), preserve God's history of His people, recorded by the Holy Ghost, as He loved to remember it, exhibiting only such faults as require to be known in order to understand the instructions of His grace.

He records at the same time the names of those who had gone through the trials mentioned in this history without being blotted out of the book. Here indeed it is but the outward figure of this blessed memorial of the people of His grace; but in fact this is what we find here. All Israel is not there; but all are not Israel who are of Israel. At the same time the Spirit of God goes farther back, and gives us the genealogy from Adam of the generation blessed by grace according to the sovereignty of God, with that which belonged to it outwardly, or after the flesh. He puts into relief, sufficiently to make it apparent, the part owned in grace, which stood externally in relationship with that which was merely outward and natural; putting always that which is natural first, as the apostle tells us.

Thus, beginning with Adam, we have the family of Seth down to Noah. Then comes the family of Japheth and of Ham, one of whose descendants began to be mighty on the earth; and finally that of Shem, whose God was Jehovah, and whose line is followed down to Abraham. Abraham, called out from among men, becomes, as it were, a fresh stock. His posterity after the flesh is first given us; then Isaac, the child of promise, a fresh stock, whose children after the flesh are exhibited, with their kings and their chiefs, before the child of election.

At length, in the second chapter, we find Israel, all of whose sons were more or less under the care of God who had loved Jacob.

Judah is then introduced to lead us to the royal race of David, the object also of the promises according to the election of God.

Besides this, we find a picture of the prosperity of Judah's family in general, and that of Caleb's family in particular, who was faithful to God in his generation. God has preserved the memorial of it in this place. * Thus also the way in which the land was peopled and its internal history are vividly presented to the reader.

> [* It is well to remark here, that in all these genealogies, when a family has been established in a place, the name of the place is often used for that of the family; that the descendants, through several generations, are named together as children of the head of the race (compare chap. 4:1 with the commencement of chap 2); and that, without having been named before, the eminent man of a family is taken to begin a genealogy anew (chap. 8:29, 33).]

The genealogy of David's family is next given us, as far as several generations after the return from the captivity; and then that of the tribes in succession; but in relationship with their position in Israel, and with the addition of certain notices of possessions acquired either by families or by an entire tribe. Dan and Zebulun are wanting; Judah is found (chap. 4:1). Simeon (chap. 4:24) had had his lot within the territory of Judah, but he had enlarged his domain; and some of this tribe, having gone beyond the borders of the land, had escaped the captivity. Reuben (chap. 5:1), Gad (chap. 5:11), and the half tribe of Manasseh (chap. 5:23), had remained eastward of Jordan. These tribes together had also much extended their territory, and had enriched themselves at the expense of their enemies.

These tribes come together, Judah as the royal tribe; Simeon is brought in with him, because his territory was within Judah's; then Reuben, the firstborn, and with him the tribes beyond Jordan as connected with him. Also they were carried away captive before the rest. The God of Israel brought judgment upon them. Levi came genealogically next; but I apprehend there was a stronger reason; that it was the priestly tribe, as Judah the royal.

In the genealogies of Levi (chap. 6) we see, first of all, the line of high priests until the captivity; and then the Levites, their services and their cities. After Levi come Issachar (chap. 7:1), Benjamin (chap. 7:6), Naphtali (chap. 7:13), few in number; the other half tribe of Manasseh (chap. 7:14), Ephraim (chap. 7:20), and Asher (chap. 7:30). Then we find Benjamin again (chap. 8), first of all with reference to Jerusalem, and afterwards in connection with the family of Saul.

But that which has been preserved here of the genealogies of the peoplean affecting remnant (through grace) of those who had fallen under the sorrowful condemnation of “Lo-ruhamah” and “Lo-ammi”reveals to us another circumstance, namely, that, wherever there has been faith, God has blessed His people individually. Jabez (chap. 1304:9, 10), the son of affliction, seeking blessing in the presence of the God of Israel, failed not to find it. Jehovah enlarged his borders, and so kept him from evil that it grieved him not. Simeon, although dispersed in Israel, was able to drive out the enemy and possess their land, even unto mount Seir. The two tribes and a half beyond Jordan enlarged their territories also, and possessed the gates of their enemies, “because they cried unto God.” Afterwards they were carried away captives, because they forsook God. Thus, although there was neither the power of the king nor the order of the kingdom, yet, wherever there was faith, God blessed those of His people who trusted in Him.

These genealogies were imperfect. The condition of Israel bore the impress of the ruin which had befalllen them; but also that of the goodness of God who had brought back a remnant, and who had preserved all that was needful to place those who formed it in the record of His people. If the needful proof to give them a title to this were wanting, such as were of the people ceased to enjoy their proper privileges, and the priests their sacerdotal position, until a priest stood up with Urim and with Thummim. For these genealogies served as a means to recognise the people. Happy he who had preserved his own, and who had so appreciated the heritage of Jehovah as to attach value to it! It was a proof of faith; for, it might have been said, Of what use are these genealogies in Babylon?

As to the Levitesfor it is good to serve the Lordtheir genealogies, their cities, and their services were known with sufficient certainty, even with respect to those that dwelt at Jerusalem. The mercy of God has not forgotten either to preserve a lamp in the house of Saul; for in judgment God remembers mercy. Chapter 9 teaches us the use which they made of their genealogies; for those mentioned in it are persons who had returned from the captivity, as may be seen in 1610Nehemiah 11. This portion of the book closes at chapter 1034 9:34. Verse 35 begins the narrative.

A brief recital of the ruin of Saul’s house introduces Jehovah’s establishment of the house of David. All that took place before the people gathered themselves to David at Hebron, and before the kingdom was established in his house over all Israel at Jerusalem, is passed over in silence.

After this we find, as a general subject, the order of the kingly power, and of the kingdom as established in the house of Davidthe kingdom, looked at

as ordained of God in blessing, rather than the historical account of all that took- place;excepting, so far as was necessary to furnish this picture. There is not perfection here; but there is the order which God appointed. The faults and the sufferings of David, whether before or after he was made king, are consequently passed over in silence.

After having mentioned the king himself, anointed by Samuel according to the word of Jehovah to rule over all Israel, the history begins with that which constituted the strength and glory of David's kingdom. The high priest no longer occupies the foreground. Jehovah's anointed is essentially a man of war, although it is not always to be so. Joab and the mighty men who had been David's companions in arms come immediately after the king.

The first place next to the king is his who delivered Zion out of the enemy's hands; * and this spot, chosen of Jehovah, becomes the city of David and the seat of royal power. We are then told how David's companions in arms successively joined him, though yet for a long time rejected and pursued by Saul, mean as yet in appearance, a fugitive and without power to resist.

> [* David having built the city from Millo round about, Joab repaired the rest of the city. We may observe that Shammah the Harorite is not mentioned here. Perhaps it is Shammah in chapter <1127>11:27: but this is doubtful (see <1025>2 Samuel 23:25). It may also be observed that the exploits of these mighty men consisted especially of victories over the Philistines, the enemies by whom Saul, who had been raised up for the purpose of destroying them, was overcome. Whatever may have been their subsequent achievements, it was there they learnt to conquer, and that they acquired the reputation which procured them a place in the archives of God.It is well that the reader should remember the connection between this whole history, and the establishment of the power of Christ, the Son of David, on the earth.]

The first who are pointed out as having come to hima proof that God and the knowledge of His will had more value in their eyes than parentage and the advantages which flow from thenceare from among the brethren of Saul (that is, of the tribe of Benjamin), and men of the greatest skill in handling the bow and the sling, the weapons with which Saul was slain in the battle in which he was overthrown.

There were some who came from beyond Jordan to David, while he was still concealed in the wilderness; for faith and the manifestation of God's power tend to bring into play the energy and strength of those who connect themselves with it. He with whom God is attracts those with whom God is working; and their energy develops itself in proportion to the manifestation of His presence and favor. Many of these had been with Saul, but when with him they were not mighty men; many also had never been with him.

Yet even in Saul's camp David had been able to slay the Philistines when all Israel was in terror. After that, similar achievements become almost common. At the beginning such things required immediate communion with God, so as to shut out the influence of all that surrounded the man who enjoyed this communion. Afterwards the surrounding influence was favorable, and, in this sense, faith propagates itself. These were but the chief of the mighty men whom David had. When God acts in power, He gives strength to the weak, and produces, by the energy of faith and of His Spirit, an army of heroes.

In those who came from Benjamin and Judah we see that there was this link of faith (chap. 1Ch 12:16). They knew that David's God helped him. David committed himself to God with respect to those who joined him, for he was in a very difficult position towards the end of his career of trial and affliction. Those to whom God had given energy and strength came to him in great numbers; for everything was ripe for his elevation to the throne of Israel, and for the transfer of Saul's kingdom to him.

There were various characteristics in this army of God: all famous for their valour, some among them had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, and, in this case, all their brethren were at David's command; others were armed for battle; others had all instruments for war, and were not of a double heart. And these things were according to the gift of God, and they all came with one heart to make David king; their brethren had prepared everything in abundance, for there was joy in Israel. It is always thus when Christ is really magnified by upright hearts who only seek His glory.

David immediately thinks of the ark (see Psa 132Psalm 132). He consults with the captains of the thousands of Israel in order to bring it back amongst them. Loving the people, and beloved by them, he acts with and for them: but his zeal was still too much connected with his warlike spirit; and, while giving himself up to joy, he did not sufficiently consider Jehovah's ways. He imitates no doubt the means by which God had glorified Himself, when the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. These were quite right in having nothing to do with it, and in leaving God to act, and to testify of Himself, that He was the God of all creation, exercising a power that overrules nature in His creatures. This was faith in the Philistines; but it was not faith in Uzza to touch the ark. Amongst God's people it is His word that must direct. God may act in sovereignty outside of all this; but here the word rules. Perez-Uzza is a witness that it cannot be neglected with impunity, and that the order of His house in the midst of His people is a thing which He will cause them to reverence. It was through having failed in this reverence that David's joy was turned into sorrow and fear; but the house of

Obed-edom was nevertheless a proof that the presence of God assuredly brings blessing.

The history of the royalty continues. David establishes himself at Jerusalem, and Jehovah confirms the kingdom in his hands, and it is lifted up on high because of His people. Having inquired of God and exactly followed His directions, David twice gains a complete victory over the Philistines. Being thus blessed of Jehovah, his fame goes out into all lands.

He makes himself houses in Jerusalem, and prepares a place for the ark of God, pitching a tent for it.

Warned by the calamity * which his neglect had brought upon Uzza, the first time he undertook to bring back the ark, David now gathers, not only all Israel together, but also the Levites and the children of Aaron. This gives occasion to the setting forth of the whole order of Levitical service as it had been appointed by David, and of the relation between the priesthood and royalty; that is, that the former is subordinated to the latter, the king being Jehovah's anointed, although the service of the sanctuary belonged to the priesthood.

> [* It is to be observed, that, although this had its origin in the guilty forgetfulness of David, it nevertheless gave occasion through grace to his being set in his true position for the regulation and appointment of all that concerned the Levites' service. It is always thus with regard to faith, for the purposes of God are fulfilled in favor of it. Man in his zeal may depart from the will of God, and God will chasten him, but only to bring him into more honor, by setting him more completely in the position which God has purposed, and in the understanding of His ways, according to which He will magnify His servant.]

As the head, David orders everything and appoints psalmody for the service of God. Then by the help of God, the ark is brought from the house of Obed-edom into the tent prepared for it in Zion, with offerings to God who helped the Levites by His power, and with joy and songs of triumph. David himself, clothed with a robe of fine linen and an ephod, dances and plays before the ark of Jehovah who was going up to His place in Zion. This actionunintelligible to the unbelieving Michal, to whom the king's behavior was therefore unintelligible alsowas of very great importance. It identified kingly power in Zion (that is to say, the kingly power of Christ, as deliverer in grace) with the token of Jehovah's covenant with Israela token established there in grace, when Israel had already failed entirely under the law, and even after their rejection of God as their King.

The Aaronic priesthood was not able to maintain the people's relationship with their God, and consequently the outward order had completely failed.

The altar at which the priests were to sacrifice was elsewhere (at Gibeon), and not before the tent which contained the ark. And the ark, which was the sign of the covenant and of the throne of Jehovah, was at a distance from the altar at which the priests ministered.

The covenant of Jehovah is connected with the kingly power, and that in Zionthe place which He had chosen for His rest. David himself assumes somewhat of the Melchisedec character, but only in testimony and by anticipation (chap. <1360>16:1-3). In these verses the priests do not appear.

In order to apprehend more clearly the import of the removal of the ark to Zion, it will be well to consider <1960>Psalm 78:60-72 and Psalm 132, and to compare verse 8 of the latter with what Moses said during Israel's journey in the wilderness (<0403>Numbers 10:35, 36). It is interesting to see that each petition in the earlier part of <1901>Psalm 132 is exceeded by its fulfilment at the close.

The circumstance of the ark not being taken to the tabernacle at Gibeon was also of deep significance. It was completely judging the whole system connected with this tabernacle. The tabernacle was still in being, as well as the altar, and the priests offered sacrifices there; but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah had been taken away from it. The king disposed of the latter by his authority, placing it elsewhere. Ever since the ruin of Shiloh this judgment had continued as a chastisement executed by the enemy; but, now that God interposes by means of David and acts in power, this power places the visible sign of His covenant with His people elsewhere. The kingly power is established at Jerusalem, and the sign of God's covenant is taken away from the tabernacle of the congregation to be placed on Mount Zion, the seat of the kingly power.

When the people were to journey, Moses said, * "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee." This was when the ark went before them to search out a resting-place for them. When it rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah, unto the ten thousand thousands of Israel." But, when God had up to a certain point given rest to Israel, they knew not how to enjoy it. They took the ark out of its place to carry it into the camp of Israel, when defeated on account of their unfaithfulness by their enemies; but this was not now the place for the ark. Neither the one nor the other of Moses's expressions was suitable to this transfer of the ark to the midst of the camp. The ark was taken, and, as we have seen elsewhere, Ichabod was pronounced upon the people. ** But the faithfulness of God is abiding; and, now that He has interposed in grace and power, and that the throne is established as the vessel of this power and grace, another word is given: "Arise, O Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the

ark of thy strength” (<19D208>Psalm 132:8). Israel, the camp, and the priesthood were no longer the rest of God.

> [* Thus in the wilderness, it was Israel journeying, who were seeking their rest, who were to find enemies on their way, and whose faith recognised these enemies as the enemies of Jehovah; or Israel carefully surrounding the token of the presence of their God, when He gave a temporary rest unto His people.]
>
> [** Expressed in these words, He has “delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy’s hand” (Psalm 78).]

Let us now consider the import of this establishment of the ark and of the throne in Zion, as set before us in the psalm which David wrote on this occasion.

It is true that, so far as it was entrusted to man, * the kingly power failed; but it is not, therefore, the less true that it has been placed in the house of David, according to the counsels, the gift, and the calling of God, and that all the promises connected with itthe sure mercies of Davidwill be fulfilled in Christ.

> [* Compare <19D211>Psalm 132:11, 12, the two principles already pointed out in the thoughts on the Books of Kings.]

In that which we read here (chap. 16) the throne is considered in the light of God’s thoughts, and of the blessing which, according to those thoughts, is linked with it. David, having offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and having blessed the people, deals to every one, both to man and woman, a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine; for God will “abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread.” Then David gives the Levites a psalm to sing praises unto Jehovah.

This Psalm is composed of a part of <19A501>Psalm 105, of Psalm 96 with some alterations, of the beginning of Psalms 106, 107, 118, and 136, which is an important form of words; and of <19A647>Psalm 106:47, 48.

The following are its subjects in the order which the psalm follows. First, Psalm 105 in which the deeds of Jehovah are celebrated, as well as His marvelous works, and the judgments of His mouth. Israel, as His people and the assembly of His chosen ones, are commanded to remember these things, for He is Jehovah their God, and His judgments are in all the earth. Israel is called to remember, not Moses and the conditional promises given to the people through him, but the covenant made with Abraham unconditionallyan everlasting covenant to give the land to his seed. Israel is reminded of the way in which God preserved those heirs of promise, when they went from nation to nation. The remainder of the psalm is omitted; it

speaks historically of the ways of God, with respect to the preservation of His people in Egypt, and of their deliverance thence, to be established in Canaan, that they might observe the statutes of Jehovah; and this part of the psalm would have been unsuitable here, where grace is celebrated in the establishment of the people in power after those statutes had been broken. The beginning of the psalm celebrates grace towards Israel according to the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, when the judgments of God are in all the earth. This is the first thing founded upon the presence of the ark, and the establishment of the throne in Zion.

The verses 23-33 are almost the words of Psalm 96. It is a call to the heathen to acknowledge Jehovah, whose glory should be declared among all nations. This psalm belongs to a series of psalms, which, from the first cry of the people until the universal joy of the nations, relate in order all that refers to the bringing again the Firstborn into the world. Only in Psalm 96 the words, “Say among the heathen that Jehovah reigneth,” have a place which gives them a more prophetic character. Here the joy of the heavens and the earth precedes this message to the heathen, and, instead of saying “his courts,” it is said “before him.” The words, “He shall judge the peoples with righteousness,” * are also omitted, as well as the second half of the last verse, which applies this judgment to the world. Apart from these alterations, which appear to me to give this psalm more of the character of a present joy, these verses correspond with Psalm 96.

[* “Peoples” (<19610>Psalm 96:10) is Ammim; habitually used in the Psalms I think for “peoples” (“people” A.V.), associated with “the people;” that is, Israel, <13166>1 Chronicles 16:36. See however <13166>1 Chronicles 16:26; at any rate, they are not treated as heathen. In “Judge the peoples” (<19610>Psalm 96:10) “judge” is deen (as in <19708>Psalm 7:8), referring to controversies and litigation. Shaphat “judge” (<19613>Psalm 96:13, twice) is more general judicial authority. “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth” comes before the heavens and earth rejoicing in Psalm 96, but after in 1 Chronicles 16.]

[* “Peoples” (<19610>Psalm 96:10) is ymi’ (‘ammim); habitually in the Psalms I think the peoples associated with;h; (ha’am). See however <13166>1 Chronicles 16:26; at any rate, they are not treated as heathen. In “Judge the peoples in uprightness” (<19610>Psalm 96:10) “judge” is yDi (deen), controversies and litigation: fp’v; (shaphat) is more general judicial authority. “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth” comes before the heavens and earth rejoicing in Psalm 96, but after in 1 Chronicles 16.This is the note as it appeared in a previous Morrish edition.]

The omission of the judgment of the peoples in righteousness is remarkable. It is because the subject here is joy, and the grace of deliverance in the establishment of power, with the subsequent government of the earth, and that the nations are called up to Jerusalem to present themselves there before Jehovah. This is the leading thought.

We have then in these two parts the fulfilment, in Israel's joy before Jehovah, of the covenant made with the fathers, following after His mighty works; and the call addressed to the nations to come up to the place of His glory. * We have next this form of words, "His mercy endureth for ever," declaring that in spite of all the faults, all the sins, and all the unfaithfulness of Israel, Jehovah's mercy has stood firm. It will be when the Lamb, the true ark of the covenant and the real David, shall be upon Mount Zion, even before He assumes the character of Solomon, that this will be fully demonstrated. Accordingly, since David, this has been sung (compare ver. 41; 2 Chronicles 5:13; Ezra 3:11; Jeremiah 33:11).

[* Psalm 100 could not have been used here, because before that Psalm Jehovah had already been celebrated as sitting between the cherubim (99:1); while the act of placing the ark in Zion was only an anticipation. It is Psalm 96, therefore, which is quoted. It is the presence of Christ on Mount Zion to fulfil the promises in power, before reigning in peace, which explains all these allusions, as well as some Psalms, which seem to speak of a return from captivity, and a rebuilding of Jerusalem, while praying at the same time for the accomplishment of this return. In some the celebration of the blessing is in spirit, and the cry for blessing the fact preceding the accomplishment of it.]

**PSALM** 106, which concludes the fourth book of Psalms, opens at length the proofs of this precious declaration, while the psalm we are considering, after giving the promises made to Abraham, passes over the whole history to the end (omitting the latter part of Psalm 105, from verse 16, which speaks of it, and places Israel under responsibility in Canaan), and goes on with the first verse of Psalm 106, which declares that the mercy of God has continued in spite of everything.

**PSALM** 107 treats the same subject, but in connection with the deliverance and the return of Israel at the end of the age.

**PSALM** 118 brings out this truth in connection with the Person of the Messiah, suffering with His people, but at last known and accepted in the day which Jehovah has made.

Finally, in Psalm 136, the same doxology is sung in connection with the full blessing of Israel and of all creation; beginning with the creation itself, and celebrating the proofs of this mercy throughout all things, until the blessing of the earth, resulting in the redemption of Israel.

Here we may remark, that from Psalm 132, which we have already noticed as celebrating the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion, the psalms are consecutive until Psalm 136. Only they go beyond our present subject and introduce us to the restored temple, although still speaking of Zion as the

place of blessing (compare Psalms 133, 134, 135, and finally 136, of which we are speaking, and which, as a chorus, concludes the series).

Finally we have the two concluding verses of Psalm 106, the first of which prays that God would gather Israel * from among the heathen, which will be the result of the throne of Jesus being set up in Zion, ** and the second of which concludes the psalm (as we find at the close of each book of Psalms) by blessing for ever Jehovah the God of Israel. This song of praise contains then every subject which the presence of Christ in Zion will give occasion to celebrate, when He shall already have appeared to establish there His power in grace, but before the effects of His presence have been felt all around.

> [* This petition proves the prophetic character of the psalm, and shows that it reaches onward to the latter times of Israel.]
>
> [** See Matthew 24:31 (although it is there in connection with His coming from heaven), and Psalm 126.]

At the close of chapter 16 we see that the king regulates everything that was to be done before the ark, and before the altar which was in the high place at Gibeon (that is to say, for the service of every day before the ark, and for the sacrifices upon the altar); and that he also appointed Levites to praise Jehovah, and to sing that “His mercy endureth for ever.”

It is touching to see, that the testimony to this precious faithfulness on God’s part is not only found in the place where power had set the ark, but there also where the heart of the people needed it meantime, namely, at the altar, which, although the place where the people drew nigh to God, had become after all a testimony to the fallen condition of the people, a tabernacle without the ark.

Faith, apprehending the counsels and the work of God, could see in the establishment of the ark in Zion (an act which, according to the old order, was thorough disorder), the progress of God’s power and intervention towards the peaceful and glorious reign of the Son of David. The sure mercies of David were as bright to the eye of faith as the dawn of day, in that the ark of the covenant had been set up by David the king in the mountain which God had chosen for His everlasting rest.

But all did not apprehend this intervention and these ways of God, so precious to those who understood them; and the condescending mercy of God stooped at Gibeon to the low estate of the people whom He loved, and He still spoke to them after His own heart there, at the altar where this people could draw near to God in an ignorance perhaps which saw no farther; but where, as far as this ignorance allowed, they were faithful to

Him who had brought them out of Egypt: there God spoke to them, telling them that His mercy endured for ever. This was in fact a touching proof of it. David returns to bless his house; always a distinct thing, for David as for Solomon, from the people, and from the glory connected with them.

But although David was to connect kingly power in Zion with the ark of the covenant, and thus to secure blessing by the power of the king whom God had chosen, yet the warrior king was not to build the Lord's house. The energy which was victorious over the enemies of God and of His people was not yet the peaceful and glorious power which would bring the people into the enjoyment of all God's blessing, when the enemy should be no more and all should yield implicit obedience to the throne of God upon the earth. Like Abraham, David was to be in his own person the depositary of the promises; but he was not himself to enjoy the result of the promises on the earth.

When the people had been redeemed, their first spiritual desire was to build a habitation in which God should dwell among them (Exodus 15:2), * and this desire was according to the mind of God (Exodus 29:44-46).

> [* This translation here is more than doubtful, but Exodus 29:46 is quite clear as to the purpose of God.]

But if God had accompanied His people in their wanderings; if He had born with their unfaithfulness, when He had entrusted to them His glory in the earth, which He had promised them; and if the song, "His mercy endureth for ever," echoed around His altar in the midst of the ruin; if, for the deliverance of His people, He had set up a king after His own heart, and placed the ark (rescued from the enemy) upon Mount Zion, the place which He had chosen for His rest; nevertheless it was still true that there remained a rest for the people of God. The victory which obtained it was not this rest, neither was the grace which bestowed the victory this rest. When God should give His people full and entire rest, then the house in which He would dwell among them should be built; for God comes into the midst of His people according to their condition and their need. *

> [* When Israel was a slave, God became his Redeemer; when he dwelt in tents, God abode in one also; when in conflict, God presented Himself as Captain of Jehovah's host; when settled in peace, God establishes Himself in the house of His glory. The interval was the probation of His people on earth. God abode in the tent, and even His ark is taken. He interposes in grace for deliverance.Christ also, since we were born of woman, is born of a woman; since His people were under the law, He is born under the law; now that He will have a heavenly people, He is on high for us; when He comes in glory, we shall come with Him, and reign when He reigns, but in these last we are with Him.]

But the holy desire to build it for the glory of God becomes the occasion of revealing to David all the counsels of God with respect to himself. Grace had chosen him when in a low estate, and had set him up to rule the people of God, who had Himself been with David wherever he went, who had cut off David's enemies, and who had exalted him. And this was not all. He had ordained a rest for His people, which should no more be disturbed, as it had been aforetime and during all the days of the judges.

Moreover God would subdue all his enemies, and would build him a house. It should no longer be saviors occasionally raised up to deliver a people from the miseries into which their unfaithfulness had plunged them; but the counsels of God on their behalf should be accomplished, and blessing established for evermore in the house and family of the king. The son of David should sit upon his throne; he should be a son unto Jehovah, and Jehovah should be his Father, and Jehovah's mercy should not be taken away from him. He should also be settled in the house, and in the kingdom of Jehovah for ever, and his throne should be established for evermore.

It will be remarked here, that all question of the responsibility of David's seed * is left out, and that the whole refers to the fulfilment of God's purposes in Christ, the true Son of David according to the promise. God takes the matter in hand. While His people are still deprived of rest, He is pleased to go with them from tent to tent, and desires not that they should build Him a house. At length He will Himself raise up the One who shall build up a house, and under whose reign the people, established in power for ever, shall enjoy the rest which God Himself shall have procured them. David, with overflowing heart, makes answer to Jehovah, ** who, for His servant's sake, and according to His own heart, had done all these great things, and had revealed them to make His servant know them. Whilst acknowledging Israel's glorious privilege, in being the people of such a Godthe only true God, he prays that the God of Israel will in fact be a God to Israel, and that He will fulfil all that He had spoken to him concerning his posterity.

[* The latter part of <1074>verse 14 in 2 Samuel 7 is omitted.]

[** It is beautiful to see, in this affecting prayer, how David's heart is full of that which God is in this matter. "There is none like thee"; and, if he speaks of the blessing upon His people, Israel is not that which the people are, but "the only nation in the earth whom God went to redeem to himself, that they might be his own people, to make himself a name of greatness and terribleness." "Let thy name be magnified for ever." This is the proper effect of faith.]

In chapters 18, 19 and 20 David, already delivered from all internal conflict in Israel, triumphs over the heathen, and spreads the glory of Israel and of

his reign on every side. These are the events which occasioned <1980>Psalm 18, although it has a more extended meaning (compare vers. 36-45).

It will also be remarked that all David's faults are passed over in silence. Faithfully recounted elsewhere, they have no place here, because it is the fulfilment of the ways and thoughts of God in the house of the elect king that is here depicted.

The children of the giant fall with the Philistines before the children of Israel.

But prosperity exposes David to the temptations of the enemy. Head over Israel, and conqueror of all his enemies, he wishes to know the strength of Israel, which was his glory, forgetting the strength of God, who had given him all this and had multiplied Israel. This sin, always a great one and still more so in David's case, did not fail to bring chastisement from Goda chastisement however, which was the occasion of a fresh development of His grace, and of the accomplishment of His purposes. David, in his heart, knew God although for a moment he had forgotten Him, and He commits himself to Him, choosing rather to fall into the hands of God than to hope anything from man; and the pestilence is sent by God. This, by the grace of God, gives occasion for another element of David's gloryfor the honor which God gave him of being the instrument to fix the spot, where the altar of God was to be the means of the daily connection between the people and Himself. Jerusalem was beloved of God. This election on His part is now manifested. The spot of ground in question was the threshing-floor of a stranger; the moment was one in which the people were suffering under the consequences of sin. But here all is grace; and God stays the angel's hand when stretched out to smite Jerusalem. Grace anticipates all movement in David's heart; * for it acts and has its source in the heart of God. Moved by this same grace, David on his part intercedes for the people, taking the sin on himself; and God hears his prayer, and sends His prophet to direct him in offering the atoning victim, which in fact formed the foundation of all subsequent relationship between the people and God. One cannot but feeldefective as the type is, ** in comparison with the realityhow much this calls Him to mind who took upon Himself, and even in behalf of this very people, the sin which was not His own.

[* It is interesting to see the order unfolded here in the establishment of the relations of sovereign grace: first of all, the heart of God and His sovereign grace in election, suspending the execution of the deserved and pronounced judgment (ver. 15); next, the revelation of this judgment, a revelation which produces humiliation before God and a full confession of sin before His face. David, and the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth, fall upon their faces, and David presents himself as the guilty one. Then, instruction comes from

God, as to that which must be done to cause the pestilence judicially and definitively to cease, namely, the sacrifice in Ornan's threshing-floor. God accepts the sacrifice, sending fire to consume it, and then He commands the angel to sheathe his sword. And sovereign grace, thus carried out in righteousness through sacrifice, becomes the means of Israel's approach to their God, and establishes the place of their access to Him. The tabernacle, a testimony to the conditions under which the people had failed, offered, as we have seen, no resource in such a case. On the contrary, it occasioned fear. He was afraid to go to Gibeon. Nothing would do but the definitive intervention of God according to His own grace (the circumstance of the sin, on the king's own part, leaving no room for any other means). The whole system and principle of the tabernacle as a legal institution is set aside, and the worship of Israel founded on grace, by sacrifice coming in where all, even the king as responsible, had failed. Such was Israel's position for him who understood it.]

[** And even historically quite opposed; for it is the king's own sin that has brought chastisement on the people. Christ, however, made the sin His own. Nevertheless, this shows us how everything depended now on the throne. It is not the priest who brings in the remedy. David intercedes and David offers. The fact that the king, in whom the promises were, had sinned, made sovereign grace necessary.]

David having offered the sacrifice according to God's ordinance, God marks His acceptance of it by sending fire from heaven; and at God's command the angel sheathes his sword.

Here all is evidently grace. It is not the kingly power which interposes to deliver Israel from their enemies, and gives them rest. The ark of the covenant being there through the energy of faith, out of its regular place which is now desolate in consequence of the people's sin, it is Israel's own sin * (for all depends upon the king) which is in question. God acts in grace, ordains and accepts the atoning sacrifice; David, in sackcloth with his elders, presenting himself before Him in intercession.

[* This difference between Israel's deliverance from their enemies, and the sense of their own sin before God, in the last day, is found in the psalms of degrees: see <19001>Psalm 130.]

In the place where God has heard his prayer, David offers his sacrifices; and of this place it is said, "This is the house of Jehovah-Elohim, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel." In the presence of the sin, God acts in grace, and institutes, by means of sacrifice, the regular order of the religious relationship between Himself and His people who are accepted in grace, and the place of His own habitation in which they were to draw nigh unto Him. * It was a new order of things. The former presented no resource against the judgment of God: on the contrary, David himself feared to go to the tabernacle; it was all over with it as a means of approach to God.

David's sin became the occasion of putting an end to it, by showing the impossibility of using it in such a case, and by being thus made the occasion of founding everything upon sovereign grace.

> [* Observe too here, how sin gives occasion to the bringing out of the counsels of God, though the responsibility was also met in what did so. So the cross. Compare <56102>Titus 1:2, 3, and <55009>2 Timothy 1:9, 10; <49301>Ephesians 3; <51001>Colossians 1.]

From this chapter to verses 28, 29 of chapter 26 all refers to the house which is to be built. We see the provision that David made of everything necessary for its construction, the order of the Levites' service who were appointed for song, of those among them who were porters, of the priests in their classes, all being ordered and arranged by David. How entirely all was dependent on the king is especially shown in this that, without any distinctive break, the other royal appointments of his house, his administration, his officers and guard, are then continuously introduced; finally, the chief among the people, the number of whom is mentioned.

As to the numbering of the people, it had not been finished because of the wrath of God. The thing of interest here is, that all is ordered and arranged by David, even for the doors of the house which was not yet built. Thus, in Christ, all is appointed before it is manifested in glory.

We see too that David had it always at heart, and what immense preparations he had made. For whatever the warfare may be, the glory of God in peace among His people is always in the heart which is in unison with the Spirit of Christ, in the heart of Christ Himself.

It is David who places Solomon on the throne, who commands the princes to aid him, and who appoints prophecy in inspired psalms. * He ordains the age at which the Levites' service should commencea different age from that ordained by Moses. **

> [* Heman himself, apparently, was inspired also. Several psalms are ascribed to him, as well as to Asaph.]

> [** At any rate the probably probationary period of four years is not mentioned David ordains the age by his own authority.]

It is the whole order of the house of God and of the king, which is appointed under his hand; a new system which is established, founded upon grace as its principle.

Solomon only puts in execution the order and plans of divine wisdom in David. Glory is but the fruit of grace. It is the Christ who has suffered, who is the wisdom and the power of God, unto whom all the order of the house

belongs. All the rest is glorious, but it is only a result. Only we have already seen that it is in peace, and by Christ, as Prince of peace, that this house must be built. It did not become the habitual manifestation of the glory of God, that there should be enemies to combat; neither was it suitable to the character of His people's joy. The character of such a state of things should be that of blessing -flowing without obstacle from God.

It is very important to observe how everything here is ruled by David. It is important, in the first place, morally. The intelligence, the right of ordering all things, the energy which grasps the whole thought of God, the fellowship with Him in His counsels, the germ and moral foundation of all these counsels, as well as the power of maintaining them, are connected with the sufferings which Christ underwent for the glory of His Father. This is true of us also in our measure. It is the humbled suffering Christ, who is morally on a level with all this glory. It is important, in the second place, as to intelligence in the ways of God; for I doubt not that Christ, at the commencement of His reign, will act in the character of David.

We may also remark here, that the extent of authority which David exercised was very great and of wide bearing. The whole religious order was reconstructed. Everything, even to the age of the Levites' service, depends on the authority and regulations of David, as formerly on those of Moses. All the pattern of the temple, and of its vessels, is given him by inspiration, as that of the tabernacle, and all belonging to it had been given to Moses. He also introduced singing, and divers musical instruments, which are even called "the musical instruments of God," and which, as well as the singing, had previously formed no part of the public service. With the exception of the ark, even the various vessels were different from those of the tabernacle; and for each thing the precise weight in gold or in silver was determined by David.

God would also associate the people with David in this willing service of the day of His power; and, even as they had been associated with him in his wars and conflicts, there are those who shall be so likewise in the liberality which he manifests towards the house of his God. They are at a great distance from him, it is true: it is, so to say, a superfluous thing. They have nothing to do with the wisdom that arranges and prepares, but they are allowed to share in the work. This favor is granted them, and their goodwill is acceptable to God, and it is also the fruit of His grace.

David here (chap. 1 Chron 29:18) again acknowledges God according to the promises made unto the fathers, and according to the memorial of God for ever; "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers"; he seeks that which will be accomplished under the new covenant, and directs the thanksgivings

of the whole assembly. Sacrifices of righteousness are offered, and they eat before Jehovah with great gladness.

Solomon is made king the second time (see chap. 1Chr 23:1). The first time was when grace was fully established in the altar built on the threshing-floor of Ornan, where the son of David, as the prince of peace, was to build the temple. Solomon is introduced as the head of all that was being established, and as holding the first and supreme place in the mind of Godthe one on whom all the rest depended, which could not even exist now without him. The house, the whole order of the house, and its government, all referred to Solomon; and thus his identification with David, in that both were on the throne at the same time, makes it much easier to understand the type of Christ in this. It is one person, whom His sufferings and victories place on the throne of glory and of peace. For at this moment, although the result of the glory was not yet manifested, God had given rest unto His people, that they might dwell at Jerusalem (chap. 1Chr 23:25).

David now disappears, although it is he who puts Solomon in this position. That which we see, as filling the whole scene of royal glory, is Solomon himself reigning in peace over a willing people, who can offer these sacrifices of righteousness. The son of David is seen in his own true character, and in this character alone, namely, that of Jehovah's anointed, the governor of the people; and Zadok, the faithful priest (not Abiathar), walks before the anointed one (all the counsel of God, according to Hannah's song, and the words of the man of God in 1 Samuel 2 being thus fulfilled). "And Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah"a remarkable expression: everything is subject to him.

The attentive reader cannot fail to observe the prominent place given to the counsels of God respecting Christ the Lord, and the contrast there is between this and the history of Adonijah in Kingsa history which, by the contrast it presents with the narrative in Chronicles, so fully proves that the thought and intention of the Spirit of God in this Book was to give us in type the expression of God's purposes with regard to the true Son of David, and the position He is to occupy, and to show what will be the character in those days of the throne at Jerusalem, when Christ shall be seated upon it. It will be the throne of Jehovah, and the royal majesty in Israel shall be such as has never yet been known. With reference to this the Book of Chronicles is full of instruction.

# 2 CHRONICLES

This Second Book of Chronicles unfolds the reign of the son of David and of the family of David. It does not commence with the faith of David at the ark, but with the tabernacle that Moses, the servant of Jehovah had set up, and the brazen altar, at which the king and the congregation worshipped. The kingly power is realised in connection with Israel, the people of God whom Moses brought out of Egypt. * It is the means by which the purposes of God with respect to them are accomplished; it is not yet assuredly a new covenant by a new power, but the object of blessing is Israel. If it is Boaz and Ruth who raise up the family, it is to Naomi that a son is born, that is, through sovereign grace, by a redeemer "in whom is strength": ** one who had no title (and Israel had no more any) is introduced into the enjoyment of the promises. Israel, long known as the "pleasant one" + of God, is the people which receives into its bosom the son that is born. To us, they say, a son is born (Isaiah 9:7). At the altar which was before Jehovah in the tabernacle of the congregation Solomon recognises his position. He is to judge the people of God. Hereafter all this shall take place in power.

[* But the connection is not with the ark in Zion He goes, historically, where the people are.]

[** Such is the meaning of the name of Boaz.]

[+ Naomi means "my pleasant one."]

This book presents us also with kingly power in connection with the earth and the government of the people on the earth. Glory and riches are added to that which Solomon requests. Neither enemies nor the energy of faith is in question. The king's position is the result of the victory which that faith had obtained. He reigns, and is established in glory and in riches. He begins to build the house. Hiram acknowledges Jehovah as the Creator of heaven and earth, and the strangers who dwell in Israel are the king's servants to do his work. In the temple the cherubim have their faces towards the house, that is, outwards. * The attributes of God do not now look only at the covenant to maintain it in spite of everything, but they also look outwards in order to bless. It is the time of the millennium; but the veil is here found again in the temple. Whatever may be the blessing of the true Solomon's reign, Israel and the earth have not immediate and direct access to Him who is hidden in the heavens. That is our portion, even to enter boldly now through the veil, and to find no veil in heaven: blessed be God! There is no temple there. Jehovah God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The

stability of a divine government is granted to the earth, ** and the blessing of a God whose face is turned towards it; but those who are blessed do not behold that face, do not draw nigh unto it. There is also an altar adapted for worship in a time of such blessing. The altar and the veil are not mentioned in the Book of Kings, where the structure of the temple is the figure of things not seen, and where, as a whole, it is presented to us as the dwelling-place and manifestation of God. We are told of a golden door, opening with two leaves, before the oracle, and nothing is said about the altar.

[* In the Authorised Version it is inwards. It is literally towards the house, which, generally, would mean inwards; but, as the cherubim were at the very bottom of the house, looking towards the house was really outwards.]

[** This stability consists, apparently, in two thingsGod shall establish it, and then in Him is strength. These are the two sources of the stability of Christ's kingdom. This is the meaning of the words Jachin and Boaz, the names of the pillars before the temple.]

In Chronicles the order is arranged also according to the state of things which this book sets before us, that is to say, according to the state of Christ's glorious kingdom. There is a court for the priests, and the large outer court with doors. All was arranged (chap. 4:9) for the relationship of which we speak.

So also, as to the manifestation of the glory, nothing is said in the Book of Kings of the public acceptance of the sacrifice; but it is simply stated that when the ark had been carried into the holy place, and the priests were gone out, and the staves of the ark had been drawn out, so that the dwelling of Jehovah was definitively established there, the glory of Jehovah filled the house. It is God's habitation, a figure of the heavenly dwelling-place which awaits us, our Father's house. On the other hand, that which is set before us in the Book of Chronicles is God's connection with His people Israel in the last days, prefigured by that which happened to Solomon. It was when the trumpeters and singers lifted up their voices with one accord to praise Jehovah, saying "His mercy endureth for ever," that the house was filled with a cloud. As we have seen, when all shall be accomplished for Israel, these words will celebrate the untiring mercy of which Israel's blessing will be the proof in that day. It is the deliverance and blessing of that people which demonstrate the truth of those words.

We have seen that there was a second part of grace, the acceptance of Israel as worshippers after their sinnot only the ark on Mount Zion, but the sacrifice and pardon and consequent worship of Mount Moriah, the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Thus Solomon having prayed, and entreated Jehovah that His eyes should be open, and His ears attent to the prayers that should be offered to Him in that place (quoting David's petition in Psalm 132, and using His mercies to David as a plea), the fire comes down and consumes the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah fills the house. And now, it is not only that the priests cannot enter, but the children of Israel behold the glory which rests upon the house; they fall upon their faces and worship. It is the public acceptance of the sacrifice which sets the people in public connection with God, and makes them confess that "Jehovah is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever" (compare <03B924>Leviticus 9:24). Only in this last passage the acknowledgment of God's unwearied mercy was not the point.

There is also another element in the scene we are considering, and that is the public and joyful assembly of the whole people, the feast of tabernacles, the great congregation (<19225>Psalm 22:25), and also the dedication of the altar.

These are the two things which mark Israel's participation in the blessing, namely, the altar, and the feast of tabernacles; worship subsequent to their fall and ruin, founded on the acceptance of the sacrifice, and the realised effect of the promises, the people being no longer in distress. *

> [* It does not appear however that they made booths with the branches of trees. Since Joshua, this had not been done until the days of Nehemiah. At the time which we are considering, joy and prosperity had made them a little neglectful of the word.]

We find again here the musical instruments of Jehovah, which David had made to praise Jehovah, "because his mercy endureth for ever"; when David himself "praised by their ministry" (<140706>7:6); blessed thought! for who is this David? (compare <19222>Psalm 22:22). The people saw themselves blessed and happy in all the goodness of Jehovah. After this the Lord sets before Solomon the conditions under which He places him, as well as the people, for the enjoyment, or for the recovery of these blessings. He had chosen this house of prayer. If there was chastening and the people humbled themselves, there was respite: the eyes and the heart of Jehovah should be there perpetually.

Then, with respect to Solomon and the seed of David generally, on their faithfulness the blessing of the whole people was to depend. If the house of David should turn away from God, Israel should be rooted out of the land; and the house, which had been sanctified by the worship of Jehovah, should become a by-word among all nations, and a witness to the just judgment of God.

**CHAPTER** 8 gives us a few more details of the state of Israela state which prefigures that of the last days. Solomon brings everything into subjection

that could have hindered the full enjoyment of the promised land in its whole extent, whether on the side of Tyre or of Syria. The strangers in the land continue to pay tribute, and the children of Israel are captains and men of war. Zion is entirely sanctified, and the worship of Jehovah maintained and honored by the king. The service of the house of God, the praises, and the whole order connected therewith, were appointed according to the ordinances of David. The king's commandment was the absolute rule for everything. Edom itself was his possession; and, as far as the Red Sea, all were the king's subjects. The king of Tyre, who represents the Gentile glory of the world, supplied all that he needed to accomplish his designs.

But it is not only within the borders of the land that the power and glory of Solomon are known. His fame spreads among the heathen, even to distant lands; and the queen of Sheba comes to bring him her tribute of admiration, and the precious things of the Gentiles, who thus contribute to the splendor and glory of the place chosen by God, whose light had come, and upon which the glory of Jehovah had risen (in type doubtless for the moment, but according to the principle of grace, and by the power that will fully accomplish it, according to the counsels of God). It is a glory, the report of which attracts the nations, but which, when seen, surpasses all that could be said of it; and which one must be near to appreciate. It is a glory that excels all that the world has seen, a wisdom never equalleda wisdom that attracted all the kings of the earth, who, each year, brought their offerings and their gifts to the king who sat upon the throne of Jehovah on earth.

Thus, ruling even to the farthest limits of the promised land, he causes all Israel to enjoy the abundance and the blessing, which God poured out upon His people.

But soon the picture changes.

Solomon's faults are not related here for reasons which we have already pointed out; but the history of Rehoboam shows us the immediate fall of the kingly power which God had established. The king's folly occasioned it, but it was only the fulfilment of the Lord's word by Ahijah.

The war which Rehoboam began against the revolted tribes was prevented. Rehoboam submits to the man of God's prohibition. He is blessed and fortifies himself in Judah. The Levites repair to Jerusalem as well as a great number of the faithful, who would not forsake the true worship of Jehovah to bow down before golden calves, to which His name had been attached. Thus Judah was strengthened; for, during three years, the king walked in the ways of David and Solomon. But soon he forsook the law of Jehovah, and, secure against revolted Israel, he is chastised by unexpected enemies,

and all the riches amassed by Solomon fall into their hands. Nevertheless he humbled himself, and the wrath of Jehovah was turned from him.

In the history which we are about to consider we shall find the ways of God more immediate and direct with those who were in direct and avowed relationship with Him, according to His grace towards David, and in connection with the house that had been dedicated to His name. When their kings were faithful, all went on well.

In his wars with Jeroboam, Abijah stands entirely upon this ground, and he is blessed.

Asa follows his steps; and, whether at peace, or while at war with the Ethiopians, Israel prospers in his reign. He takes away the strange gods; for we continually find them again. Energy is required to cast them out and prevent their return. Even the king's mother is deprived of her royal position, on account of her idolatry. Nevertheless "the high places were not taken away."

But, although Asa's faithfulness continued, his trust in God failed afterwards. Jealous of the Israelites resorting to Judah, Baasha builds a city to prevent it; and Asa, instead of looking to the Lord, allies himself with Syriaan alliance which produced the desired effect, but which stirred up Gentiles against Israel. And this was not all; alliance with the world prevents our overcoming the world. Had he not done this, the Syrians would have fallen into the hands of Asa; for "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." Solemn and precious word! Wounded in his self-love, and irritated at having thus missed so good an opportunity, Asa puts the seer who gave this testimony in prison; and he oppresses the people. He is chastened of God, and alas! he does not seek God in the chastening. Nevertheless, except in this instance, Asa continued faithful and was honored.

Jehoshaphat, his son succeeds him, and begins his reign by walking faithfully with God. He strengthened his kingdom against Israel, an enemy more dangerous by their example than by their strength. When anything pretends to be in connection with God and to acknowledge Him, there is no safety except in judging it with a spiritual judgmentwhich can only be formed through a just sense of God's honor-making no terms with that which pretends to be connected with Him, and treating it as an enemy. This is what Jehoshaphat did at first; and, as he did not walk in the ways of Israel, Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand. Blessed of Jehovah, he takes away the high places and the groves, and seeks with much faithfulness and zeal to instruct the people in the true knowledge of the

Lord; Jehovah preserves him from war, and some of the nations even become tributary to him on account of his power.

In many respects this is a more beautiful picture than anything we have yet read in the history of the kings. But this prosperity becomes a snare to him; and it bore most bitter fruits when his real piety was not present as a counterpoise.

The prosperity with which God had blessed him in consequence of his faithfulness made it worth while to seek alliance with him, and rendered it more difficult to attack him. Thus at ease, Jehoshaphat on his part joins affinity with Israel. His prosperity put him in a condition to do so in a manner which made the alliance honorable. The human heart, when it is not kept by God, can act generously with respect to the evil which it fears not; but this is not charity. Outwardly Jehoshaphat is faithful to Jehovah, but the wrath of Jehovah is upon him.

Nevertheless, when he had returned to his house, the king sets himself to bring back the people to the fear of Jehovah, and to cause judgment and righteousness to be executed in Israel. But war begins. He could no longer have the unmingled blessing of having to do with God alone without trial. The intervention of the enemy was now needful for his good, according to God's government, although in the trial through which he passes he may have full blessing. His piety was genuine; the trial proves it. He appeals to the relationship of God with Abraham and to His promises to Solomon, when the latter had built the house. Jehoshaphat understood also the relation in which the enemy stood to Israel, looked at in connection with God's dealings (chap. 20:10, 11). God answers him, and the king encourages the people by acknowledging the voice of the prophets, and by singing the praises of God before the blessing camesinging in faith that His mercy endureth for ever. God abundantly granted his prayer. Israel, whose enemies had slain each other, had only to carry away the spoil; and God gave rest to the king, and his realm was quiet.

Still, if Jehoshaphat no longer united himself with the king of Israel to make war, he joined him in a matter of commerce. But God put a stop to his undertakings.

In spite of some faults the character of Jehoshaphat is a fine one, and refreshes the heart. But soon the sorrowful fruits of his league with Ahab ripen and bring Judah into distress. Jehoram, his son, Ahab's son-in-law, walks in the ways of the kings of Israel. The Edomites revolt, and Libnah, a city of Judah, does the same. The king makes high places, and compels Judah to worship at them. The judgment of God is soon manifested. He whom God has raised up as a witness against the sins of the house of Ahab

has foreseen their fruits in Judah; and a writing of Elijah's is brought to the king, * threatening him with the terrible judgments of God. Judah also is attacked by their enemies, who pillage the land, laying waste even the king's house, and slaying all his sons excepting one. This was of Jehovah. It is His government which we see here; for He rules over those who are in covenant with Him, those who are His house.

[* Elijah had been taken up to heaven some time before the writing reached its destination. Being a prophecy, there is nothing which makes any difficulty in believing that this writing, like any other prophecy, was left by Elijah to be used at the suitable time. It was a function which, according to the ways of God, naturally belonged to him as a witness against the iniquity of Ahab.]

Finally, the king perishes, according to Elijah's prediction. Disaster upon disaster falls upon Judah in consequence of this connection with the house of Ahab. To connect oneself with that which claims to be of God, according to His religion, but which is not so, is intolerable to God. The only son that remained to Jehoram is slain by Jehu, as participating in the iniquity of Ahab's family; and Athaliah, who belonged to this family, takes possession of the throne, destroying all the seed royal, except one child that God in His grace took care of, who would not have the lamp of David put out at Jerusalem, although He chastened his family. The sister of Ahaziah, wife to the high priest, preserves the child, who is concealed in the house of God for six years.

Everything was in a very low state; and, to outward appearance, all was over with the house of David; but the faithfulness of God did not fail. And, although the power of the throne is absolutely destroyed, and the family of David set aside, God raises up a man of faith, in the person of the high priest, to restore the whole. The chastisement of God was complete. The entire order of the throne was subverted by His judgment. Nothing was left but the faithfulness of God. Man was judged. He had no longer any means of recovery. But all things are at God's disposal, the heart of Jehoshaphat and the faith of Jehoiada. The latter takes the needful steps, and the king is set upon his throne; and, after all, the same thing which we have seen before again takes place: the king appoints everything concerning the re-establishment of the order in the house of God.

How often the energy of faith may, so to say, establish a kingdom, yet fail at the same time in maintaining the ordinary duty of those who have to do with the service of God! Faithful at the commencement of his reign, Joash walks nevertheless more by Jehoiada's faith than by his own; and, after the death of the high priest, he leans on the princes of Judah, and serves idols, and even puts to death the son of Jehoiada, by whom the Holy Ghost had

testified against him. Joash, forsaken of God, is defeated by the Syrians. He falls into many diseases, and is at length slain by his own servants.

In this whole history we must observe that the immediate government of a God of judgment is in exercise, because those whom He judges were in close connection with Himself.

Amaziah, up to a certain point, walks with God, but in weakness and with an unsteady step. He leans upon an arm of flesh: but he hearkens to the prophet, and this saves him from being defeated. The cities of Judah, however, suffer the consequences of his false step, and are plundered by the army of Israel, which Amaziah had sent back. Lifted up by the victory that he had obtained over Edom, he takes the gods of Seir which could not deliver their own people, and bows himself down before them. He then turns a deaf ear to the prophet who rebukes him. But pride goes before confusion, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Amaziah, making war against Israel, is ignominiously defeated and made prisoner, and Jerusalem itself is laid waste.

We should remark in this part of the history the goodness of the Lord, who continually interposes by means of prophets.

Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, walks for a long time with Jehovah and prospers. The strength of Judah is increased, and all the king's undertakings are successful. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up"; he takes upon himself the priestly function, and is smitten with leprosy by the hand of God.

We enter now on a period in which Isaiah throws much light on the state of the people. This state was partly exhibited before, in the reign of Joash, who, as soon as he hearkens to the princes, falls into idolatry. But in reading the first two chapters of Isaiah, or the prophecy of Hosea, we shall see the terrible condition of the people, the greatness of God's patience, and the manner in which iniquity and idolatry multiplied on every side, when the king was not faithful and energetic. *

[* We find consequently, that Isaiah, after exposing the evil and the consequent judgment, immediately introduces the promises of latter-day blessing and of the Messiah. In the first chapters he sets forth the state of the people, as well as the blessing of the last days. The house of David is not judged till chapter 7, and it is there that the Messiah, the Son of the virgin, is brought in as the resource, and the means of deliverance and grace according to the counsels of God. The rest of this prophet's writings gives us the whole history of the people, according to the thoughts of God, and that of the nations, in connection with Israel, until the accomplishment, at the end of the age, of full blessing in Christ, with the judgment of Israel's sin in respect of Jehovah (Isaiah 40-48), and in respect of Christ (Isaiah 49-57).]

Jotham, the son of Uzziah, walks uprightly; and he avoids his father's fault; but the people are still corrupt. Nevertheless the faithfulness of Jotham procures him blessing and prosperity. For it is always the state of the king which is the object of God's judgment. As we have seen, the people as such had failed long before.

The reign of Ahaz forms an epoch. Entirely forsaking Jehovah, he gives himself up wholly to idolatry; and, the more he is smitten of God, the more he sins against Him. He is delivered into the hands of the Syrians, and into the hand of Pekah, the king of Israel. In the latter case, however, God interposes for the rescue at least of the captives. The Edomites, and afterwards the Philistines, invade Judah. All this distress induces Ahaz to seek help from the king of Assyria, who only brought him into still greater trouble (compare 2Chr 28:17Isaiah 7:17; see also Hos 5:13Hosea 5:13-15).

If piety is not transmitted from father to son, grace can work in the heart and direct the steps of one who had the most wicked father. This was the case with the son of Ahaz. The way in which Hezekiah sought the glory of his God shows remarkable faith and energy. In the better days of the kingdom, true piety and the work of righteousness were manifested in Jehoshaphat; great energy of faith is now displayed in Hezekiah; and we shall find in Josiah profound reverence for the scriptures, for the book of the law.

I recall here the great principle, the effects of which the reader has to remark in the book which occupies us, namely, the government of God, which visited every act with its immediate consequences, a government which always had reference to the king's conduct. But, in spite of some awakenings and some restorations wrought by grace, the people having entirely corrupted themselves, the kingly power which alone recalled them to their duties came short of the glory of God; and at length, the oath made in Jehovah's name being broken, the measure of sin was filled up, and the judgment of Israel, and the times of the Gentiles commenced.

Hezekiah acknowledges the sinful state of Israel, and he invites the people to cleanse themselves. A true worship, affecting in its character, is re-established (chap. 2Chr 29:25-29), and the service of Jehovah's house is set in order.

But Hezekiah's zeal embraces all Israel, and he sends letters which, although the greater part laughed them to scorn, brought up many serious souls to the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem. If everything is not re-established as a whole, yet, wherever faith is in action and a sincere heart seeks to glorify God, there is always cause for the faithful to rejoice in the dealings of God. God pardoned their failure in the purification necessary for

participation in the service of the sanctuary; the prayer for blessing came up to His holy dwelling-place and was granted.

Strengthened by this communion with Jehovah, all Israel that had been present went out and destroyed the groves and the images, not only in Judah, but also in Ephraim and Manasseh. The state of disorder in Israel gave an opportunity on God's part for the exercise of faithfulness and the manifestation of devotedness in His people. Abundance and blessing are found in Judah, and Jehovah's house is filled with proofs of His goodness brought in by grateful hearts according to the ordinances of the law; and even in the cities of the priests all is set in order according to the law, and everything prospers. *

> [* Observe here that, when God blesses and there is faithfulness, the instruments whom He employs in His service partake of the glory that is connected with the blessing. Their names are inscribed in the record of God's dealings.]

God fully answered the king's faith; but the iniquity of the people's heart was little changed, and the ways of God in judgment began to be manifested; and in such a manner as to make it evident that, in the midst of His judgments, and at the height of the enemy's power, the faithful seed of David should be the infallible resource of His people. This is the lesson of chapter 32. This man is the peace of the people when the Assyrian enters the land. See, in Isaiah 8, the Assyrian's entrance into the land already called the land of Immanuel through the prophetic revelation of the birth of the virgin's Sona revelation addressed to the unfaithful king, to Ahaz; see also, in the same chapter, the revelation of the terrible distress of the people, the law being sealed and entrusted to the remnant who would follow Christ as a prophet, until the people confess that a Son was born unto them. See also, in chapter 22 of the same prophet, the Spirit's judgment as to the moral condition of the people, on the occasion of those events which are recorded in 2 Chronicles 32. Hezekiah himself did not render again to Jehovah according to the benefit done unto him; but his heart was lifted up. Nevertheless, as he humbled himself, he was allowed to see the peace of Jerusalem all the days of his life.

Manasseh, his son, who gave himself up to iniquity in spite of the warnings of the prophets, brought desolation and ruin upon himself and afterwards upon Israel. Guilty of sins which God could not forget, his personal repentance in his captivity procured him personal restoration and peace through the mercy of God; and after his return to Jerusalem he acted faithfully and was jealous for the glory of God; for the time of Judah's judgment was not yet come. His son Amon followed him in his iniquity, but not in his repentance, and he dies by the hand of his own servants.

We find in Josiah a tender heart, subject to the word, and a conscience that respected the mind and will of God: only at last he had too much confidence in the effect of this to secure blessing from God, without the possession of that faith which gives intelligence in His ways to understand the position of God's people. God however makes use of this confidence to take Josiah away from the evil He was preparing in the judgments which were to fall upon Judah, the knowledge of which should have made Josiah walk more humbly. At the age of sixteen he began by the grace of God to seek Jehovah; and at twenty he had acquired the moral strength necessary for acting with energy against idolatry, which he destroyed even unto Naphtali. We see here how sovereign grace came in; for both Hezekiah and Josiah were the sons of extremely wicked fathers.

Having cleansed the land from idolatry, Josiah begins to repair the temple; and there the book of the law was found. The king's conscience, and his heart also, are bowed under the authority of the word of his God. He seeks for the prophetic testimony of God with respect to the state in which he sees Israel to be, and God makes known to him by Huldah the judgment about to fall upon Israel; but tells him at the same time that his eyes shall not see the evil. It was this communication which should have made him act with less precipitation, and with a more exercised heart than he manifested when he went up against the king of Egypt. The knowledge that their well-deserved judgment was soon to overwhelm Israel, and that there was no remedy for their sins (although Josiah himself was spared), ought to have prevented his going up against Pharaoh, when the latter did not attack him, and even warned him to forbear; but he would not hearken, and was lost through a hardihood which was not of God.

His death opened the sluices to the affliction of Judah and Jerusalem, which had been blessed through his means; for they had followed Jehovah all the days of Josiah, and had therefore been blessed; they had also mourned for his death. Jeremiah (that is to say, the Spirit of God by the prophet), in lamenting over the last king who would maintain the relations of God with His people, wept for the ruin and desolation which sin would bring upon the flock which Jehovah lovedthe vineyard that He had planted with the choicest vine.

However faithful Josiah had been, this had not changed the heart of the people (compare 2 Chronicles 35:25Jeremiah 3:10). Josiah's faith was in action, and overruled this state of things; and, as we have constantly seen, blessing depended on the conduct of the king, although the undercurrent was always tending to the ruin and rejection of the people.

It remains for us to notice the passover. Everything is set in order according to the ordinances of Moses and David, and that in a remarkable manner. It appears that even the ark had been removed from its place (chap. 1 Chronicles 35:3); but now, the ark being restored to its rest, the Levites occupy themselves diligently with their service, and even make ready for the priests, that they might keep the feast. They were all in their places according to the blessing of Israel in the rest they enjoyed under Solomon. Those who taught all Israel no longer bore the ark, but they ministered to God and to His people. The singers were there also, according to their order, so that there had not been such a passover since the days of Samuel. It was like the last glimmering of the lamp which God had lighted among His people in the house of David. It was soon extinguished in the darkness of the nation which knew not God, and those who had been His people came under the judgment expressed by the word Lo-ammi (Not-my-people); but this was only to give occasion afterwards to the manifestation of His infinite grace towards the one, and His unchangeable faithfulness to the others. Ezekiel dates his prophecy from the year of this passover, when he says "the thirtieth year." Why so, I cannot tell. Was it the year of the jubilee? or did the passover itself form an epoch?

Little need be said of the succeeding reigns. The king of Egypt took possession of the land, and the iniquity of Jehoiakim, whom he made king in Jerusalem, was far from leading to restoration on God's part. One more powerful than the king of Egypt, a king by whom God would commence the dominion of the Gentiles, comes up against Jerusalem, and binds Jehoiakim in fetters, yet leaves him after all to end his reign and his life at Jerusalem. Three years after he carried away his son to Babylon.

Zedekiah, whom this king had made to swear by Jehovahthus acknowledging the authority of that Name over his conscience,more sinful in this respect than Nebuchadnezzar, despises his oath and the name of Jehovah; and, after an interval of fruitless resistance, in which he perseveres in spite of Jeremiah's testimony, he falls into the hands of the king of Babylon, who utterly destroys the city and the sanctuary. For both people and priests were thoroughly corrupted; they dishonored Jehovah, and despised His prophets, till there was no remedy, and the land enjoyed her sabbaths.

Sad and solemn lesson of the sin and iniquity of man, and of the just judgment of God!

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But in His judgments God remembers mercy; and in the counsels of His grace He had already prepared, and even

proclaimed by His prophets (and that by name), an instrument to give His people some respite.

After the seventy years which Jeremiah had announced as the period of Judah's captivity, Jehovah put it into the heart of Cyrus to proclaim publicly that it was Jehovah the God of heaven, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and that He had charged him to build Him a house at Jerusalem. He invites the people of God to go thither, assuring them that Jehovah their God will be with them.

Thus it is by mercybut by a mercy which recognises that power has passed into the hands of the Gentilesthat the history of Israel's downfall concludes; the downfall of a people placed in the most favorable circumstances, so that God could say to them, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"of a people that had already been pardoned once; and who, after having allowed the ark of Jehovah to fall into the enemy's hands, and after God had forsaken Shiloh, habitation, had been re-established in blessing, but re-established in vain. The long-suffering of God, the restoration He had granted them, the establishment of the house of David in grace, all was fruitless. The vineyard (for they were men) brought forth wild grapes. Its walls were broken down; it had been laid waste. Jerusalem had ceased for the present to be the throne of Jehovah, and government and power in the earth have been entrusted to the Gentiles.

# EZRA

The events which we have been considering, at the close of Kings and Chronicles, were deeply significant. The throne of God was no longer at Jerusalem. God had fulfilled His threat of casting off the city which He had chosen. He had bestowed the throne of the earth upon the Gentiles (2023 Daniel 2:37). Not only had Israel failed under the old covenant, and rejected God (0007 1 Samuel 8:7), so that God was no longer their king; but even after grace had raised up the house of David to sustain the relations of the people with God, under the rule of that house everything was entirely corrupted by sin; so that there was no more remedy, and God had written Loammi (not my people), as it were, on the forehead of a people who had forsaken Him. The counsels of God cannot fail; but such was the sad state in which the relationship between this people and God stood, if it can be said that a judgment like this allowed any relationship still to exist. So far as it depended on Israel, on man, all was lost. The consequences of this, with respect to God's dealings, were of great importance; they were nothing less than His taking His throne from the earth, casting off His people for the time as to His earthly government, and transferring power to the Gentiles. Man, in probation under the law, had failed, and he was condemned. He had been sustained in the way of grace through means which God had granted, in the family of David, for his continuance in the enjoyment of the blessings granted him, and he had failed again. Kingly power was in the hands of the Gentiles, and the people were under condemnation according to the old covenant.

But God now brings back a little remnant, that the true King might be presented to them, and causes the temple to be rebuilt in its place, according to the promises given by the mouth of Jeremiah, and at the request of His servant Daniel.

The latter, indeed, still at Babylon, had a deeper sense of the real condition of the people, than they had who were rebuilding the temple, and received also much more extensive information as to the future destiny of Israel and the intentions of God respecting it. But a due appreciation of this return from captivity also is not without importance, since it is evident that the understanding of God's dealings with respect to the restoration of Israel, and the coming amongst them upon earth of Messiah Himself is connected with this event. It was the will of God that there should be some respite. The current of His purposes, however, concerning the times of the Gentiles, and the position of His people, was unaltered. They were still in subjection to the Gentiles. *

[* The coming of Christ did not change this. The restoration of the remnant gave occasion to the presentation of Christ to the people according to the promises; but His rejection left their house desolate to see Him no more till their repentance in the last days. Meanwhile, during His lifetime on earth, not only have we, in Luke, the epoch divinely dated by the reigns of Gentile rulers, but, pressed on the point, the Lord refers to their position and baffles their hypocrisy, which would have profited by what was the fruit and wages of their own sin to put Him in an inextricable difficulty, by telling them to give to Caesar what was Caesar's, and to God what was God's. Meanwhile deeper and more blessed counsels were accomplished.]

It is Cyrus, king of Persia, who commands the people to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the temple. A type himself in some respects, of a far more glorious deliverer, he confesses Jehovah, the God of Israel, to be the true God. He is "the righteous man, raised up from the east, who treads down the princes like mortar." Called of Jehovah by name for this purpose, he favors Israel and honors Jehovah. Distinguished and blessed by the favor of the mighty God, a man whose conduct was certainly under the guidance of God, his personal character did not interfere with its being the times of the Gentiles, notwithstanding that God had put it into the heart of one of these Gentiles to favor His people. The word of God, by Jeremiah, is fulfilled. Babylon is judged, a characteristic event of all importance. But, in fact, that which still exists is a prolongation of its power. The seat of the royal authority which God bestows on man is a city which is not the city of God, which is neither the earthly Jerusalem nor the heavenly. The house of David no longer holds the sceptre entrusted to it.

It is true that the rod of the tribe of Judah is preserved, in order that "the Branch" of the root of Jesse may be presented to this tribe. But the power of the Gentiles still continues; it existed even when the Messiah was on the earth, and the Jews had to be commanded to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. The presentation of Jesus, the true Messiah, was but the occasion of fully demonstrating this in the cry, "We have no king but Caesar."

Nevertheless, God still gives the peopleguilty under the lawan opportunity for the exercise of faith. Let us examine the principles that characterise the energy of the Holy Ghost in the people at the time of their return.

The first thing to be observed is that, having felt what it was to have to do with the Gentiles, and having experienced the power and wickedness of those whose help they had formerly sought (the unclean spirit was, in this respect, gone out of them), the children of the captivity resolve that Israel shall be an unmingled Israel, and proved to be so. They are most careful in verifying the genealogies of the people, and of the priests, in order that none but Israel should be engaged in the work. Formerly one priest succeeded

another without previous examination; genealogy was not verified, and children came into their father's place in the enjoyment of the privileges which God had granted them. But Israel now, through the great grace of God, had to recover their position. This was neither the beginning of their history, nor the power suited to the beginning; it was a return, and the disorder that sin had brought in was not henceforth to be endured. They were escaping from the fruits of it, at least in part. What had any but Israel to do there? To mark out the family of God was now the essential thing. Deliverance from Babylon was their deliverance. It was this family, or a small remnant of it, which God had brought, or was bringing, out from thence. Thus, even amongst those who had come back to Judea, whoever could not produce his genealogy was set aside; and every priest with whom this was the case was put away from the priesthood as polluted, whatever, as it appears, might be the reality of his qualification. Divine discernment might, perhaps, recognise them and their rights another day; but the people who had returned from captivity could not do so. They were a numbered and recognised people. They dwelt each in his own city. It was weakness, no priest with Urim and Thummim, but it was faithfulness.

In the seventh month, * the children of Israel gather themselves together at Jerusalem, each one going up from the place where he dwelt. The first thing which they do there, under the direction of Joshua and Zerubbabel, is to build the altar, to place themselves under the wings of the God of Israel, the sole Help and sole Protector of His people; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. Their refuge is in God. Beautiful testimony of faith! precious effect of the state of trial and abasement they were in! Surrounded by enemies, the unwalled city is protected by the altar of her God erected by the faith of God's people; and she is in greater security than when she had her kings and her walls. Faith, strict in following the word, confides in the goodness of its God. This exactness in following the word characterised the Jews, at this time in several respects. We have seen it, chapter Ezra 2:59-63, where some could not show their genealogy; we find it again here, chapter Ezra 3:2; and again in verse 4, on the occasion of the feast of tabernacles. Customs, traditions, all were lost. They were very careful not to follow the ways of Babylon. What had they left except the word? A condition like this gave it its full power. All this takes place before the house is built. It was faith seeking the will of God, although far from having set everything in order. We find, then, no attempt at doing without God those things which required a discernment that they did not possess. But with touching faith these Jews exercise piety towards God, worship God, and, as we may say, set Him in their midst, rendering Him that which duty required. They acknowledged God by faith; but until the Urim and Thummim should be there, they placed no one, on God's part, with the

object of giving some competency to act for Him, in a position which required the exercise of God's authority.

[* This was the month in which the blowing of trumpets took placea figure of the restoration of Israel in the last days.]

Having at length, brought together the materials which the king of Persia had granted them, the Jews begin to build the temple and lay its foundations. The joy of the people, generally, was great. This was natural and right. They praise Jehovah according to the ordinance of David, and sing, (how well it became them now to do so!) "His mercy endureth for ever." Nevertheless, the ancient men wept, for they had seen the former house, built according to the inspired direction of God. Alas! we understand this. He who now thinks of what the assembly * of God was at the first will understand the tears of these old men. This suited nearness to God. Farther off, it was right that joy, or at least the confused shout, which only proclaimed the public event, should be heard; for, in truth, God had interposed in His people's behalf.

[* See Acts 2 and 4.]

Joy was in His presence and acceptable. Tears confessed the truth, and testified a just sense of what God had been for His people, and of the blessing they had once enjoyed under His hand. Tears recognised, alas! that which the people of God had been for God; and these tears were acceptable to Him. The weeping could not be discerned from the shout of joy; this was a truthful result, natural and sad, yet becoming in the presence of God. For He rejoices in the joy of His people, and He understands their tears. It was, indeed, a true expression of the state of things.

But, in such a case, difficulties do not arise only from the weakness of the remnant; they proceed, also, from elements with which the remnant are outwardly connected, and which, at the same time, are foreign to the relationship of God's people with Himself. In Israel's case, there was real weakness, because Godalthough faithful to His people according to their needdid not, in fact, come forward to establish them on the original footing. To do so would not have been morally suitable, either with respect to the position in which the people stood with God, or with regard to the power which He had established among the Gentiles apart from Israel, or with a view to the instruction of His own people in all ages as to the government of God. Relationship with God is never despised with impunity.

But besides this, in such a state of things the power of the world having gained so much ground already in the land of promise, even among the people to whom the promise belonged, difficulties arose from the fact that

persons who, in consequence of the intervention of the civil powers, were within the borders of the promised land, desired to participate with the Jews in constructing the temple. They alleged, in support of their claim, that they called upon God as the Jews did, and had sacrificed unto Him since Esarhaddon had brought them into the land. This was not enmity. Why repel such a desire? The Spirit of God calls them the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin. The people of Godthe assembly of Godought to be conscious of their own peculiar privileges, and that they are the assembly of the Lord. The Lord loved Judah and Benjamin. From His grace towards this people flowed all the blessing of which they were the object; and the people were bound fully to recognise this grace. Not to recognise it was to despise it. Now this grace was the sovereign goodness of God. To admit strangers would have been insensibility to this grace as the only source of good; it would have been to lose it, and to say that they were not its objects according to the sovereign goodness of God, more than other persons of the world. But the faithfulness and intelligence of the chiefs among Israel delivered them from this snare. “We ourselves together,” said they, “will build unto Jehovah the God of Israel.” “Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God.” In fact, it would have been to deny that He was their God, the God of Israel. This is especially the case of the assembly when called to remember her privileges after long forgetfulness and painful chastisement. If God allow it for the trial or the chastening of His people, it is possible that the work may be stopped through the practices and the malice of those who will praise the great and noble Asnapper to the powers of the earth; before whom they will appear in their true earthly character, just as they assumed the garb of piety when seeking to insinuate themselves among the remnant of Israel. The power that belonged to God’s people, at the time of their former independence, will alarm one who, not trusting in God, dreads the effect upon his own authority of the energy which the Spirit of God produces in the people of God independently of this authority, however submissive the people may be. Israel was acting here according to Cyrus’s own decree; but this is of no avail. That which depends on God is absolute; that which does not depend on Him is arbitrary; but the faithful have nothing to do with all this. God may see that trial and chastening are needful to them. Whatever happens, they have to go through that which puts faith to the proof; but their path is ordered by the will of God, and their faith relies upon Him. In this case they had to wait; but God’s time would come; and that, not by means of a mere decree from the Gentile king: God raises up a much more precious encouragement for them from another quarter. Although the people had been subject to the Gentiles, God was still supreme; His word is still of supreme authority to His people, whenever He condescends to speak to them. If necessary, He can dispose the hearts of kings to uphold it. In every case His people are to follow it, without seeking

other motive, or other help. Haggai and Zechariah are sent of God, and prophesy among the people. These immediate communications from God were of infinite value, as His word ever is; and although they did not change the position of the people with respect to the Gentiles, they were a touching proof that God was interested in His people, and that, whatever might be their afflictions, the God of Israel was above all that had power to oppress them.

I have said that the people were obliged to wait. This was the case as soon as they received the decree that forbade their continuing to build. But many years had elapsed before this prohibition came; and it seems evident to me, from examining the prophecies which throw so much light on the contemporary history, and from comparing their dates, that it was want of faith in the remnant which was the true hindrance. There were adversaries in the land who made them afraid, and who thus prevented their building. It appears that the Jews did not dare continue. Their adversaries hired counsellors in the Persian court to frustrate the purpose of the Jews. But the first thing was that the adversaries weakened the hands of the people. It was not until two reigns later that the prohibition was obtained; but the Jews had left off building through fear of their adversaries (compare chap. <150404>4:4, 21, and <150501>5:1, with <300101>Haggai 1:1, 2, 4; <300202>2:15). Neither was it because the king's decree was brought them that they began again to build, but because they feared Jehovah, and feared not the king's command, as seeing Him who is invisible (<300112>Haggai 1:12, 13). God was not any more to be feared in the reign of Darius than in that of Cyrus or of Artaxerxes; but the source of their weakness was their having forgotten God. This makes manifest the great grace of God in awakening them by the mouth of Haggai. God had until then also chastened the people.

All this shows us that, in ceasing to build the temple, Israel was in fault. It appears from Haggai (chap. <300202>2:15) that they had made no progress at all. The terror with which the adversaries had inspired the Jews had stopped them. They had no excuse for this, since even the king's commandment was on their side. That which they lacked was faith in God. We have seen that, when there was faith they dared to build, although there was a decree against it. The effect of this faith is to give rise to a decree in their favor, and that even through the intervention of their adversaries. It is good to trust in God. Blessed be His gracious name!

Under the influence of the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah the house was finished (chap. <150615>6:15).

Jehovah's great grace in this was a real occasion for joy. The priests are set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, according to the law of

Moses, and we find more faithfulness than in the best days of the kings (compare chap. 6:20 with 2 Chronicles 29:34). But we hear nothing of the ordinances of David, and a still greater deficiency is seen in their celebration of the feast of dedication. They kept the passovera proof that the redemption of the people could be remembered in the land. Happy privilege of the restored remnant! Many also had joined them, separating themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land. Jehovah had given them cause for joy; but fire no longer came down from heaven to testify divine acceptance of the sacrifice offered for the dedication of the house. This was indeed a negative difference, but one of deep significance. And even that which formed the subject of their joy betrayed their condition. “Jehovah had turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.” It was great kindness and touching grace on His part. But what a change!

Alas! this was not the end of the history. God, in His goodness, must still watch over the unfaithfulness and the failures of His people, even when they are but a small remnant who by His grace have escaped from the ruin. He puts it into the heart of Ezra, a ready scribe in the law of Moses, to think of the remnant in Jerusalem, to seek the law of Jehovah, to teach it and cause it to be observed. Here again it is still the Gentile king who sends him for this purpose to Jerusalem. All blessing is of God, but nothing (except prophecy, in which God was sovereign, as we have already seen in the case of Samuel at the time of the people’s downfall), nothing in point of authority comes immediately from God. He could not pass by unrecognised the throne which He had Himself established among the Gentiles upon the earth. And Israel was an earthly people.

The character of this intervention of God by Ezra’s mission is, I think, a touching proof of His loving-kindness. It was exactly suited to the wants of the people. It was not power. That had been removed to another place. It was the knowledge of the will and the ordinances of God,of the mind of God in the word. The king himself recognised this (chap. 7:25). Guarded by the good hand of his God, this pious and devoted man goes up with many others to Jerusalem. Alas! as soon as he can look into these things, he finds the law already broken, evil already come in. The people of Israel had not kept themselves separate from the people of the lands, and even the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass. Ezra is confounded at this, and remains overwhelmed with grief the whole day. Can it be that the remnant, whom God had snatched, as it were, from the fire, have so soon forgotten the hand that delivered them, and married the daughters of a strange God? Those who trembled at Jehovah’s word having assembled with him, Ezra humbles himself on account of it. At the time of the evening

sacrifice, he pours out the deep sorrows of his heart before the Lord. A great multitude have their hearts touched by grace. There is no prophetic answer, as so often before had happened in similar circumstances; but there is an answer from God in the hearts of the guilty. “We have sinned,” said one among them; “yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.” And they set themselves heartily to the work. Israel is summoned, each one under pain of exclusion, to come up to Jerusalem, and they assembled at the time of rain, for the matter was urgent; and the congregation acknowledge it to be their duty to conform to the law. Under the hand of Ezra, and by the diligence of those who were appointed to this work, it was accomplished in two months. As for all those who had taken strange wives, they gave their hand that they would put away their wives: they confessed their sin and offered a ram for this trespass.

Once more we find that that which characterises the operation of the Spirit of God, and the intervention of God among His people, with respect to their walk and moral condition, is separation from all who are not the people of God as they were. Those of the priestly family who were unable to produce their genealogy had been excluded from the priesthood as polluted; and those among the people who were in the same case were not acknowledged. They positively refuse any participation in the work to the people of the land who wished to join them in building the temple; and, finally, with respect to their own wives, several of whom had born them children, they have to put them away, and to separate themselves, at whatever cost, from all that was not Israel. It is this which characterises faithfulness in a position like theirs; that is, a remnant come out from Babylon, and occupied in restoring the temple and service of God, according to that which yet remained to them.

Moreover, we see that God did not fail to comfort them by His testimonysweet and precious consolation! But the power of the Gentiles was there. That which appertained to authority and the throne at Jerusalem, and to the power of ordaining, which belonged to it, was not re-established. The public sanction of God was not granted. Nevertheless, God blessed the remnant of His people, when they were faithful; and the most prominent thing, and that which should dwell on our hearts, is the grace which, in the midst of such ruin, and in the presence of the Gentile throne set up through Israel’s sin, could still bless His people, though acknowledging the Gentile throne, which God had established in judgment upon them. Their position is clearly and touchingly stated in chapter [illegible]9:8, 9. *

[* Only for ‘were’ in verse 9, we must read ‘are.’]

It is a solemn season, when God, in His compassion, encourages and sustains the little remnant of His people in the midst of their difficulties; and

owns them, as far as possible, after the ruin which their unfaithfulness has brought upon themsuch ruin that God had been constrained to say of them, Lo-ammi.

It is most afflicting to see the people, after such grace as this, plunging again into fresh unfaithfulness and departure from God. But such is God, and such is man.

We must ever bear in mind that Israel was an earthly people, and their full place in blessing now * that of the seat of God's power in righteousness upon earth, so that their relationship to another power, now set up among the Gentiles, was peculiar. But, if this be born in mind in the application of the contents to other circumstances, the instructions afforded by this book are extremely interesting, as exhibiting the principles of conduct in which faith is displayed in the difficulties connected with a partial restoration from a ruined state, the dependence on God by which man is sustained in the midst of these difficulties, God's own ways in respect to His servants, and the absence of all pretensions to re-establish what could not be set up in power. Besides this, we have to view the Book of Ezra as giving that peculiar display of God's mercy and ways which left the rod of Judah subsisting till Shiloh came. No Shechinah was in the temple; no Urim and Thummim with the priest. But there was a sovereign intervention of God in that mercy which endures for ever, so that occasion was given to Messiah's coming according to the promises made to the fathers. The judgment of the Gentile power of Babylon carried with it the witness of a better deliverance, but for this the full time of God's purposes was to be awaited.

[* I say "now," because, till Samuel's time, Israel was called to be blessed in obedience under priesthood, God being their King. But after David's time in view of Christ, the nation became the seat of God's power in righteousness, so far as it enjoyed the blessing.]

# NEHEMIAH

The Book of Nehemiah will require but few remarks; but it is important to establish its import. It is a necessary link in the history of God's dealings, in the recital of His patience and loving-kindness towards Jerusalem, which He had chosen.

In Ezra we have seen the temple rebuilt and the authority of the law re-established among the people, who are again separated from the Gentiles, and set apart for God.

In Nehemiah we witness the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the restoration of what may be termed the civil condition of the people, but under circumstances that definitely prove their subjection to the Gentiles.

Through grace, faith had set up the altar, and the Gentiles had had nothing to do with it, except by voluntary service; but when the city is to be rebuilt, it is the governor appointed by the Gentiles who holds the prominent place, God having touched the heart of these Gentiles and disposed them to favor His people. We see in Nehemiah himself a heart touched with the affliction of his people, a precious token of the grace of God; and He who had produced this feeling disposed the king's heart to grant Nehemiah all he desired for the good of the people and of Jerusalem. We see also in Nehemiah a heart that habitually turned to God, that sought its strength in Him, and thus surmounted the greatest obstacles.

The time in which Nehemiah labored for the good of his people was not one of those brilliant phases which, if faith be there, awaken even the energy of man, imparting to it its own luster. It was a period which required the perseverance that springs from a deep interest in the people of God, because they are His people; a perseverance which, for this very reason, pursues its object in spite of the contempt excited by the work, apparently so insignificant, but which is not the less the work of God; and which pursues it in spite of the hatred and opposition of enemies, and the faintheartedness of fellow-laborers (chap. 4:8, 10, 11); a perseverance which, giving itself up entirely to the work, baffles all the intrigues of the enemy, and avoids every snare, God taking care of those who trust in Him.

It is also a beautiful feature in Nehemiah's character, that in spite of his high office he had all the detail of service so much at heart, and all that concerned the upright walk of God's people.

In the midst, however, of all this faithfulness, we perceive the influence of the Gentile power controlling the whole state of things. Nehemiah's arrival and even his conduct are marked with this influence. It was not faith alone that was in action, but a protecting power also (compare <150822>Ezra 8:22; <160107>Nehemiah 2:7-9). Nevertheless, the separation from all that was not Jewish is carefully maintained (chap. <160220>2:20; <160765>7:65; <160902>9:2; <161030>10:30; <161301>13:1,3, 29, 30).

This history shows us, first of all, how, when God acts, faith stamps its own character on all who surround it. The Jews, who had so long left Jerusalem desolate, are quite disposed to recommence the work. Judah, however, is discouraged by the difficulties. This brings out the perseverance which characterizes true faith when the work is of God, be it ever so poor in appearance. The whole heart is in it, because it is of God. Encouraged by Nehemiah's energy, the people are ready to work and fight at the same time. For faith always identifies God and His people in the heart. And this becomes a spring of devotedness in all concerned.

Let us remark, that in times of difficulty faith does not show itself in the magnificence of the result, but in love for God's work, however little it may be, and in the perseverance with which it is carried on through all the difficulties belonging to this state of weakness; for that with which faith is occupied, is the city of God and the work of God, and these things have always the same value, whatever may be the circumstances in which they are found.

God blesses the labors of the faithful Nehemiah, and Jerusalem is once more encompassed by walls; a less touching condition than when the city of God was defended by the altar of God, which was a testimony to His presence and to the faith of those who erected it; but a condition that proved the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God, who, nevertheless, while outwardly re-establishing them, revoked no part of the judgment pronounced on His people and His city. He who rebuilt the walls was but the vicegerent of a foreign king; and it was the security of the people, and that which uprightness of heart required of them to acknowledge this; and it was done (chap. <160937>9:37). Still, God blesses them. Nehemiah recurs to the numbering of the people, according to the register of their genealogies that was drawn up at their first return from captivity, an already distant period. Thus the people are again placed in their cities.

By means of Ezra and Nehemiah, the law resumes its authority, and that at the people's own request, for God had prepared their hearts. Accordingly, God had gathered them together on the first day of the seventh month. It was really the trumpet of God, although the people were unconscious of it,

that gathered them to this new moon, which shone again in grace, whatever might be the clouds that veiled its feeble light. The people's hearts were touched by the testimony of the law, and they wept. But Nehemiah and Ezra bade them rejoice, for the day was holy. Doubtless these men of God were right. Since God was restoring His people, it became them to rejoice and give thanks.

The second day, continuing the search into the holy book they found that Israel ought to keep a feast on the fifteenth day of the same month. On restoration from chastening, when the church finds itself again before God, it often happens that precepts are recollected, which had been long forgotten and lost during the apparently better days of God's people; and with the precepts, the blessing that attends their fulfillment is recovered also. Since the days of Joshua, the children of Israel had not followed these ordinances of the law. What a lesson! This feast of tabernacles was kept with great gladness, * a touching expression of the interest with which God marked the return of His people; a partial return, it is true, and soon beclouded (and even the hope to which it gave rise entirely destroyed by the rejection of the Messiah, who should have been its crown), yet of great value, as the first fruits in grace of that restoration which will accompany Israel's turning of heart to Christ, as manifested by their saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah!" The gladness was sincere and real; but everything was imperfect. The tenth day had not its antitype. Israel's humiliation had, as yet, no connection with that death which at once filled up their iniquity, and atoned for it. Their joy was well founded. It was yet but transient.

[* The feast of tabernacles was the celebration of their rest and possession of the land after passing through the wilderness. The booths marked that they had been under tents as pilgrims.]

On the twenty-fourth day, the people came together to humble themselves in a manner that became their position, and they separated themselves from all strangers. Beginning with the blessing promised to Abraham, they relate all the tokens of God's grace bestowed upon Israel, the frequent unfaithfulness of which they had afterwards been guilty, and there is a true expression of heartfelt repentance; they acknowledge without any disguise their condition (chap. 9:36, 37), and undertake to obey the law (chap. 10), to separate themselves entirely from the people of the land, and faithfully to perform all that the service of the house of God required.

All this gives a very distinct character to their position. Acknowledging the promise made to Abraham, and the bringing in of the people to Canaan by virtue of this promise, and their subsequent failure, they place themselves again under the obligations of the law, while confessing the goodness of God who had spared them. They do not see beyond a conditional and

Mosaic restoration. Neither the Messiah nor the new covenant has any place as the foundation of their joy or of their hope. They are, and they continue to be, in bondage to the Gentiles.

This was Israel's condition until, in the sovereign mercy of God, the Messiah was presented to them. The Messiah could have brought them out of their position and gathered them under His wings, but they would not.

It is this position that the Book of Nehemiah definitely brought out. It is the king's commandment that provides for the maintenance of the singers. A Jew was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people (chap. 11:23, 24).

We have already seen that gladness was the portion of the people; a joy which acknowledged God, for God had preserved the people and had blessed them. But the princes of the people had immediately relapsed into unfaithfulness; and during Nehemiah's absence the chambers of the temple, in which the offerings had been formerly kept, were given up to Tobiah, that subtle and persevering enemy of God's people. But at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem the joy of the people and the faithfulness of Nehemiah brought them back to the written word, and Israel separated themselves again from the mixed multitude. Tobiah's stuff is cast out of the chamber prepared for him in the temple. The observance of the Sabbath is again enforced. Those who had married strange wives, and whose children spake partly the language of strangers and partly that of the Jews, are put under the curse and sharply rebuked and chastised. The order and the cleansing, according to the law, are re-established, and this leading thought of the book, as to the people's condition, closes the narrative.

That which we have said will give an idea of the great principle of this book.

I will add a few more remarks in this place.

The Book of Nehemiah places Israel, or rather the Jews, in the position they were to hold in their land until the coming of the Messiah; separate from the nations, faithful in keeping the law, but deprived of the privileges which had belonged to them as the people of God; under the yoke of the Gentiles, capable of rendering unto God the things that were God's, but deprived of His presence in their midst, as they had formerly enjoyed it in the temple; and, finally, bound to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. When the Messenger of the covenant came (the Son of God, who could have cleansed the temple and placed the glory there), they received Him not; and they continue under the burden of the consequences of this rejection. This is now their condition until the coming of Christ.

It is this which gives to the Book of Nehemiah its importance. Nehemiah's faith embraced those promises of God which were connected with His government--such, for instance, as those contained in Leviticus 26. But his faith went no farther (see chap. 1). There was blessing upon this faith, and it accomplished the purposes of God; but it left Israel where they were The precious phrase, "His mercy endureth for ever," is not found in this book. Nehemiah's faith did not rise so high. He is himself the servant of the Gentiles, and he acknowledges them. Such trust in God as is expressed in the words just quoted was linked with the altar and the temple, where Jehovah was everything to faith, and the Gentiles nothing, except as enemies (Ezra 3, 4).

Although it leaves the Jews in a much better condition than that in which they had previously stood, through the good hand of God upon them for immediate blessing, yet the Book of Nehemiah has no prophetic future, no future for faith. * The Jews are still Lo-ammi (not my people). The presence of God, sitting between the cherubim, was not with them; nor could it be, seeing that God had removed the throne into the midst of the Gentiles. I speak of His presence in the temple, the habitation of His glory. Set thus in blessing and under responsibility, the Messiah's coming was to put everything to the proof. The result disclosed an empty house, swept and garnished, from which the unclean spirit had gone out, but in which there was nothing. The unclean spirit will return, and others worse than himself with him. Having rejected Christ, this unhappy people will receive the Antichrist; but this was only manifested by the coming of Christ.

> [* And where faith was not, and they had inwardly departed from God, their legal exactitude without grace in the heart became narrowness of heart and hypocrisy. Scrupulousness is not uprightness.]

In Nehemiah the people are only set, meanwhile, in this place of blessing. The prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai are connected with the work of Zerubbabel, and not with that of Nehemiah; with the simple faith that reared the altar as the means of blessing and safety. There (Zechariah 1:16) Jehovah could say that He had returned to Jerusalem with mercies, but it is "after the glory" that He will come to dwell there (chap. 2:8-13). The prophecy encourages them by blessing, and promises them the coming of Christ, and the presence of Jehovah at a still future period. Chapter 8 of the same prophet connects these two things together to encourage the people to walk uprightly; but it will be seen in reading it that the fulfillment is there clearly marked as taking place at the end of the age, the rejection of Christ (chap. 11) becoming the occasion of the judgments that were to fall upon them, and to give occasion, in a still more striking manner, for that sovereign grace which will use the power of the rejected Messiah for the

deliverance of His people, when they are utterly ruined in consequence of their sin.

The prophecy of Malachi, which was uttered after this, declares and denounces the corruption already brought in after the blessing restored in a measure by mercy; and the coming of Jehovah in judgment.

To these remarks it may be added, that neither in Zechariah nor in Haggai does the Lord call the people, My people. It is said, prophetically, that this shall be the case in the time to come, in the latter days, when Christ shall come to establish His glory. But the judgment pronounced in Hosea has never been revoked, and there is not one expression used that could gainsay it.

The Book of Nehemiah gives us, then, the partial and outward re-establishment of the Jews in the land, without either the throne of God or the throne of David, while waiting for the manifestation of the Messiah, and His coming to seek for the fruit of so much grace; in a word, their restoration, in order that He may be presented to them. The people are provisionally in the land, on God’s part, but under the power of the Gentiles who possess the throne.

# ESTHER

The Book of Nehemiah has shown us Judah reinstated in the land, but deprived of the presence of God, except as to general blessing, and unacknowledged by God as His people; so that, whatever length of time may elapse, their condition leads us morally up to the moment when the Messiah should be presented to seal up prophecy, to finish the transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. That book gave us the last word--until the coming of Christ--of the history of Israel; and that, in grace and patience on God's part.

The Book of Esther shows us the position of Israel, or, to speak more accurately, the position of the Jews, out of their own land, and looked at as under the hand of God, and as the object of His care. That He still cared for them (which this book proves to us), when they no longer held any position owned by God, and had, on their part, lost all title to His protection, is an extremely touching and important fact in the dealings of God. If, when His people are in such a state as this, God cannot reveal Himself to them--which is manifest--He yet continues to think of them. God reveals to us here, not an open interposition on His part in favor of His people, which could no longer take place, but that providential care which secured their existence and their preservation in the midst of their enemies. Those who were in danger were of the captivity of Judah (chap. 2:5, 6), and of those who had not returned to the land of Canaan. If this betrays a want of faith and energy on their part, and of affection for the house and city of God, we must see in it so much the greater proof of the absolute and sovereign goodness, absolute and sovereign faithfulness, of that God Himself.

We see then in this history, the secret and providential care that God takes of the Jews, when, although maintaining their position, as Jews, they have entirely fallen from all outward relation to Him, are deprived of all the rights of God's people, and are stripped of the promises, in the fulfillment of which, as offered them by the mercy of God at that time in Jerusalem, they take no interest. Even in this condition God watches over and takes care of them--a people beloved and blessed in spite of all their unfaithfulness; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This, when well weighed, gives this book a very touching and instructive character. It is the sovereign unfailing care of God, come what will, and shows the place which this people hold in His mind.

It has been often remarked that the name of God is not found in the Book of Esther. This is characteristic. God does not show Himself. But, behind the

power and the mistakes of that throne to which the government of the world had fallen, God holds the reins by His providence; He watches over the accomplishment of His purposes and over everything necessary to their fulfillment; and He cares for His people, whatever may be their condition or the power of their enemies. Happy people! (compare, as to Israel, [illegible]Jeremiah 31:20).

It is to be noticed that faith in the protection of God, and an acknowledgment of it, are to be found even when the dealings of God, with respect to His promises, are not owned. We are speaking of God's government, and not of salvation. Salvation is not the question here. The Gentile reigns and does according to his will, taking at his pleasure one of the daughters of Benjamin for his wife. Sad condition, indeed, for the people of God! a position contrary to all divine law, to all faithfulness under other circumstances, but here not leading even to expostulation. The people of Israel are lost here as to their own state. But God acts in His sovereignty, and makes use of this sorrowful evidence of their position to preserve them from the destruction with which they were threatened.

Nehemiah unfolds the last relationship of God with the people before the coming of the Messiah; a relationship of longsuffering, in which God does not own them as His people; a provisional and imperfect relationship. Esther teaches us that God watches in sovereignty over the dispersed Jews, and preserves them even without any outward relationship, and that, without revoking any part of the judgment passed upon them, God shelters them without displaying Himself, and consequently by hidden means.

It was this that, as a matter of history, had yet to be made known before the public interposition of God at the end, in the Person of Messiah, which prophecy alone could reveal.

This interposition appears to me to be pointed out in the circumstances of this history; vaguely, indeed, yet clearly enough for one who has traced the ways of God, as revealed in the word. We see the Gentile wife set aside on account of her disobedience, and her having failed in displaying her beauty to the world; and she is succeeded by a Jewish wife, who possesses the king's affections. We see the audacious power of Haman, the Gentile, the oppressor of the Jews, destroyed; and the Jew, the protector of Esther, Mordecai, formerly despised and disgraced, raised to glory and honor in place of the Gentile. All this, be it remembered, is in connection with the earth.

Finally, in the details of this book there is a very interesting point, namely, the providential means which God employed, the opportuneness of the moment at which everything happenseven to the king's wakefulness,

showing, in the most interesting manner, how the hidden hand of God prepares and directs everything, and how those who seek His will may rely upon Him at all times and under all circumstances, even when deliverance appears impossible, and in spite of all the machinations of the enemy and their apparent success.

The close of the book presents, historically, the great characteristic facts of the dominion of the Gentiles; but one can hardly fail to see in it typically, in the position of Mordecai, the Lord Himself as head of the Jews, in closest connection with the throne that rules over all.

The very circumstances into which this book enters are appropriate. When an acknowledged relationship subsists, the dealings of God are according to the conduct of those who stand in this relationship; but here there is no such relationship subsisting. The scene is filled, and rightly filled, with heathen circumstances and heathen manners. Israel is as lost among them, their conduct does not come forward; but their preservation, where to the eye of man heathenism is everything, and their enemies seemingly all powerful. This is all in place. Any other picture would not have been the truth, nor given the true representation of the state of things, nor brought out into their true light the dealings of God.

It will be easily understood that this book concludes the deeply interesting series of the historical books, which, through the goodness of God, we have been considering, exhibitingas far as there has been abilitytheir leading features. May the Spirit, who has enabled us to enjoy that which God has deigned to reveal in them, continue to instruct us while meditating on those books which we have still to examine!

# INTRODUCTION:

## JOB PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON

The Chetubim, or Hagiographa, in which I do not now comprehend Daniel (though his book has a character distinct from the other prophets) form a very distinct and interesting part of divine revelation. None of them suppose an accomplished and known redemption, in the New Testament sense of the word, though like every blessing all is founded on it. In Job a single passage gives a particular application of the term: I have found a ransom" (Copher). The Psalms recount we know, prophetically, the sorrows and sufferings in which it was accomplished.

But redemption by blood is known by faith, when accomplished, whether by the Jew or the Christian. Isaiah prophesies of Israel's recognition of it fully. There were also, as we know, shadows of it under the law. But the knowledge of eternal redemption is Christian knowledge, or that of the Jews when they look on Him whom they pierced. Till Christ's death, the veil was unrent, the holiest unapproachable. There was knowledge more or less clear of a Redeemer of a personal Redeemer to come; of God's favor towards those that walked with Him, and the confidence of faith in Him and in His promises. But there was no such knowledge of sin as led, God being revealed, to the consciousness of exclusion from His presence as a present state, nor of such a putting of it away as reconciled us fully and for ever to God by its efficacy, and brought us to Him.

The books we are treating of are not prophecies of God's dealings or actings, save as the Psalms express future deliverance by power and by God's judgments; but they are the divinely given expression of man's thoughts and feelings under the government of God,* and the explanatory revelation of God before redemption is fully known. This process has mainly gone on in Israel; and hence they are in the main the various expression of God's ways with Israel. Still, what was carried out there, under revealed conditions and prophetic communications in direct government, was what was in principle true of God's ways everywhere, though there specially displayed (the question of man's positive righteousness being raised too there by the law, the perfect rule of life for the sons of Adam).

[*And these pass into what Christ's were in His humiliation and sufferings, and thus become prophecies of His sufferings, but in the form of His feelings under them, and this of infinite price to us.]

The Book of Job affords us the example of the relationship of a godly man outside and doubtless before Israel, and God's dealings with men for good in this world of evil; but then it runs up, I doubt not, into a clear type of Israel in result Those ways are fully displayed in that people. And it is to be remarked that, when Job practically feels the impossibility of man's being righteous with God, he complains of fear and having no daysman between them; and Elihu, who takes up this ground in God's stead, explains not redemption but chastising and government. These things God wrought oftentimes with man (chap. 33, 36).

Ecclesiastes estimates this world under the same government, in its present fallen state, and raises the question whether by any means man can find happiness and rest there, with no trace of the knowledge of redemption. Nor is there any recognized relationship with God. It is always Elohim (God), never Jehovah, fearing God and keeping His commandments being the whole duty of man as such.

The Song of Solomon affords direct relationship with the Lord, the Son of David, the ardent affections which belong to the relationship with Christ; Proverbs, a guidance through the mixed and entangled scene, and here all is on the ground of relationship with Jehovah, God (Elohim) being only once or twice mentioned in a way which does not affect this (see more fully note to page 24). But none place themselves on the ground of known redemption. They do look for redemption by power. Hence, on the contrary, Romans begins with the revelation of wrath from heaven, not government, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness where truth was, against Gentile and Jew,* and brings in redemption, personal justification, and righteousness God's righteousness. The case of Gentile and Jew is fully gone into, and brought out as before God Himself, and wrath from heaven the necessary consequence; complete redemption by blood for heaven, and sovereign grace reigning through righteousness and giving us a place with the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, together with the result for Israel hereafter. All is made clear in the light as God is in the light His eternal redemption, and heavenly places, though finally earth will be blessed. But we are pilgrims and strangers here. This is our place by redemption itself. To the Abrahams and Davids it was so, by getting nothing of what was promised, or else persecution under the government of God upon the earth; so that under that order of things it was after all a puzzle to both, though the final inheritance of the land, the heir, and the judgment of the wicked, known by revelation, met the puzzle in their minds.

[*And note here <19401>Psalm 14, which he quotes as proof of sin in the Jew, and <23901>Isaiah 59, both end in deliverance in Jerusalem by power. In Romans it is met by present justification by blood.]

But in Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, which express men's feelings under it, this puzzle is fully manifested. Faith and confidence in God may get over it, or persevere through it; prophetic testimonies may meet it; but it is there, and this earth is the scene of the reply of God, even if their faith might be sometimes forced to rise above it, nourished by personal confidence in God. But a present fixed eternal relationship with God even our Father through redemption, in a wholly new scene into which we are brought by that precious blood, whose shedding has glorified God Himself, and reconciled us to Him, though yet in an unredeemed body, that was unknown. Much was learned, learned as to God, and this was most precious. But the actual result for Job was more camels and sheep, and fairer daughters; in the Psalms, judgment of enemies, and deliverance through mercy that endured for ever, and an earth set free under heaven's judicial rule; in Ecclesiastes, as to the perception of the present effect of government, that man must fear God, keep His commandments, and leave it there. Present known redemption is nowhere found. And oh what a difference, an unbounded difference, this makes! "As he is, so are we in this world." He who redeemed us is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Proverbs and the Song of Solomon have, as I have said, another character, though referring to the same scene: Proverbs, not man's feelings in the scene, but God's guidance through it by the experience and wisdom of divinely instructed authority;* and the Song of Solomon, the carrying the heart quite out of it all, though still in it, not by known redemption, but by devoted affection to Messiah, and of Messiah to Israel, by the revelation He makes of Himself, indeed of His love to them to beget it in Israel's heart.

[*It will much help the reader as to the character of this book and Ecclesiastes to remark, that in Proverbs the name Jehovah is always employed, save in chapter <20250>25:2, where it is "Elohim," and "her God," chapter <20207>2:17. But this is not an exception: that is, it is recognized relationship with the revealed God of Israel. Whereas in Ecclesiastes Jehovah is never found. It is always Elohim, the abstract name of God without any idea of relationship: God as such in contrast with man and every creature, and man having to find out experimentally his we place and happiness as such, without special revealed relationship with God. In Job the editor, if I may so speak, or historian who gives the dialogues, always uses Jehovah; but in the body of the book Job, unless at any late once as to the government of God (chap. 12:9), and Elihu constantly, use the name of Almighty, the Abrahamic name of God, or simply God. The friends generally use God, or particularly Eliphaz the Almighty, sometimes it is only, He.

Zophar, I think, uses no name. The dialogue is characterized by God or Almighty.]

These exercises of heart have their place in us now, for we are in the world; but in the consciousness of accomplished redemption and the present care of a holy Father, the perfection of whose ways, as seen in Christ, is the model of our conduct. We can take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing in ourselves that we have in heaven a better and an enduring substance; and glory in tribulation, because it works its needed end, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. This is another case, and a blessed one it is.

I think these general remarks will help us to understand the books which are now about to occupy us. I turn to the books themselves.

# JOB

After what I have said, the Book of Job will not require a long examination not that it fails in interest, but because when the general idea is once laid hold of, it is the detail which is interesting, and detail is not our present object.

In the Book of Job we have one portion of those exercises of heart which this division of the holy book supplies. These are not joyful exercises, but those of a heart which, journeying through a world in which the power of evil is found, and not being dead to the flesh, not having that divine knowledge which the gospel furnishes, not dead as to one's self with Christ nor possessing Christ in resurrection, is not capable of enjoying in peace, whatever its own conflicts may be, the fruit of God's perfect love; but which struggles with the evil or with the non-enjoyment of the only real good, even while desiring to possess it; while, by the means of these very revelations, the light of Christ is cast upon these exercises, and the sympathy and entering of His Spirit in grace into them practically is touchingly developed. What is learned in them is what we are not committed sins; that was not Job's case, but the soul itself is put before God.

In Job we have man put to the test; we might say, with our present knowledge, man renewed by grace, an upright man and righteous in his ways, in order to show whether he can stand before God in presence of the power of evil, whether he can be righteous in his own person before God. On the other hand we find the dealings of God, by which He searches the heart and gives it the consciousness of its true state before Him.

All this is so much the more instructive, from its being set before us independent of all dispensations, of all especial revelation on God's part. It is the godly man, such as one of Noah's descendants would be, who had not lost the knowledge of the true God, when sin was again spreading in the world and idolatry was setting in; but the Judge was there to punish it. Job was encompassed with blessings and possessed real piety. Satan, the accuser of the servants of God, goes to and fro in the earth seeking occasion for evil, and presents himself before Jehovah among His mighty angels, the "Bene-Elohim": and God states the case of Job, the subject of His government in blessing, faithful in his walk.

It is carefully to be remarked here, that the spring and source of all these dealings is not Satan's accusations, but God Himself. God knew what His

servant Job needed, and Himself brings forward his case and sets all in movement. If He demands of Satan if he had considered His servant Job, it is because He Himself had. Satan is but an instrument, and an ignorant though subtle instrument, to bring about God's purposes of grace. His accusations result really in nothing as against Job, save to disprove their truth by what he is allowed to do; but, for Job's good, he is left to his will up to a certain point, for the purpose of bringing Job to a knowledge of his own heart, and thus to a deeper ground of practical relationship with God. How blessed and perfect are God's ways! How vain in result the efforts of Satan against those that are His!

Satan attributes the piety of Job to God's manifest favor and to his prosperity, to the hedge He had put around him. God gives all this into the hands of Satan, who speedily excites the cupidity of Job's enemies; and they attack him and carry off all his possessions. His children perish through the effects of a storm which Satan is allowed to raise. But Job, dwelling neither on the instruments employed nor on Satan, receives this bitter cup from the hand of God without murmuring. Satan suggests again that man will, in fact, give up everything if he can preserve himself. God leaves everything to Satan except the life of His servant. Satan smites Job with a dreadful disease; but Job bows under the hand of God, fully recognizing His sovereignty. Satan had exhausted his means of injuring Job, and we hear nothing more of him; but it is beautiful to see that God has hereby completely justified Job from the accusation of Satan. Job was no hypocrite. He had lost all to which Satan traced his piety, and it shone forth brighter than ever. Satan can trace the motives which work in flesh, the evil in man's heart which he excites; but grace in God, His uncaused love, and grace in man which trusts in and leans on it, he cannot measure, nor know the power of.

But the depths of Job's heart were not yet reached, and to do this was the purpose of God, whatever Satan's thoughts may have been. Job did not know himself, and up to this time, with all his piety, he had never been in the presence of God. How often it is the case that even throughout a long life of piety the conscience has never been really set before God! Hence peace, such peace as cannot be shaken, and real liberty, are not known as yet. There is a desire after God, there is the new nature; the attraction of His grace has been felt: nevertheless God and His love, as it really is, are not known. If Satan is foiled (the grace of God having kept Job's heart from murmuring) God has yet His own work to accomplish. That which the tempest that Satan had raised against Job failed in doing, is brought about by the sympathy of his friends. Poor heart of man! The uprightness and even the patience of Job had been manifested, and Satan had no more to

say. But God alone can search out what the heart really is before Him; and the absence of all self-will, perfect agreement with the will of God, absolute submission like that of Christ, these things God alone could test, and thus lay bare the nothingness of man's heart before Him. God did this with Job; revealing at the same time that He acts in grace in these cases for the good of the soul which He loves.

If we compare the language of the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms, we shall often find the appreciation of circumstances expressed in almost identical terms; but instead of bitter complaints and reproaches addressed to God, we find the submission of a heart which acknowledges that God is perfect in all His ways. Job was upright, but he began to make this his righteousness; which evidently proves that he had never been really in the presence of God. The consequence of this was that, although he reasoned more correctly than his friends, and showed a heart that felt really far more than they what God was, he attributed injustice to God and a desire to harass him without cause (see chap. 19; 1910 23:3, 13; 1935 13:15, 18; 1962 16:12). We find also in chapter 29 that his heart had dwelt upon his upright and benevolent walk with complacency, commending himself, and feeding his self-love with it. "When the eye saw me it gave witness to me." God was bringing him to say, "Now mine eye seeth Thee and I abhor myself." It is with these chapters (29, 30, 31), which express his good opinion of himself, that Job ends his discourse; he had told his whole heart out. He was self-satisfied: the grace of God had wrought and in a lovely way in him; but the present effect through the treacherousness of the human heart, and not being in God's presence which detects it, was to make him lovely in his own eyes If (chap. 9) he confesses man's iniquity (for who can deny it; and especially what converted men?), it is in bitterness of spirit, because it is useless to attempt being just with such a God. Chapter 6, as well as the whole of his discourse, proves that, whether it was the pride of his heart which could not bear to be found in such a state by those who had known his greatness, a state which pride would have born in stubbornness alone, or sympathy which, in weakening that had left him to the full sense of it, it was the presence and the language of his friends that was the means of bringing out all that was in his heart. We see also in 1910 chapter 30 that the pride of his heart was detected.

As to the friends of Job, they do not call for any extended remarks. They urge the doctrine that God's earthly government is a full measure and manifestation of His righteousness, and of the righteousness of man, which would correspond with it: a doctrine which proves a total ignorance of what God's righteousness is, and of His ways; as well as the absence of all real knowledge of what God is, or man as a sinner. We do not see either that the

feelings of their hearts were influenced by communion with God. Their argument is a false and cold estimate of the exact justice of His government as an adequate manifestation of His relationship with man, though they say many true commonplace things which even the Spirit of God adopts as just. Although Job was not before God in his estimate of himself, he judges rightly in these respects. He shews that although God shews His disapprobation of the wicked, yet the circumstances in which they are often found overthrow the arguments of his friends. We see in Job a heart which, although rebellious, depends upon God, and would rejoice to find Him. We see, too, that when he can extricate himself, by a few words, from his friends, who, he is quite sensible, understands nothing of his case, nor of the dealings of God, he turns to God (although he does not find Him, and although he complains that His hand is heavy upon him), as in that beautiful and touching chapter 23, and the reasonings as to divine government, chapters 24, 21. That is to say, we see one who has tasted that God is gracious, whose heart, wounded indeed and unsubdued, yet claims those qualities for God because it knows Him which the cold reasonings of his friends could not ascribe to Him; a heart which complains bitterly of God, but which knows that, could it once come near Him, it would find Him all that it had declared Him to be, and not such as they had declared Him to be, or were themselves could he find Him, he would not be as they were, He would put words in his mouth; a heart which repelled indignantly the accusation of hypocrisy; for Job was conscious that he looked to God, and that he had known God and acted with reference to Him, though God thought fit to bring his sin to remembrance.

But these spiritual affections of Job did not prevent his turning this consciousness of integrity into a robe of self-righteousness which hid God from him, and even hid him from himself. He declares himself to be more righteous than God (chap. 10:7, 8; 16:14, 17; 23:11, 13; 27:26). Elihu reproves him for this, and on the other hand explains the ways of God. He shews that God visits man and chastises him, in order that when subdued and broken down if there is one who can show him the point of moral contact between his soul and God, in which his soul would stand in truth before Him* God may act in grace and blessing, and deliver him from the evil that oppresses him. Elihu goes on to show him that, if God chastises, it is becoming in man to set himself before God to learn wherein he has done wrong: in short, that the ways of God are right, that He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous, but if they are in affliction He shews them their transgressions, and if they return to Him in obedience when He openeth their ear to discipline, He will give them prosperity; but that the hypocrite shall perish. The first case which Elihu brings forward (chap. 33) is God’s dealings with men. He awakens their consciences to

their state, and puts His bridle on the pride and self-will of man. God chastises and humbles him. The second is specially with the righteous (chap. 36), the case of positive transgression but in one righteous in God's sight, from whom He withdraws not His eyes, in whom He allowed not iniquity; but in the first case he was in the path of destruction. It was this case** which needed the interpreter to place him in uprightness before God. Finally, he insists upon the incomprehensible power of God Almighty.

> [*This is a very important point. God can bless in a direct manner with the light of His grace, when the soul is brought into its true place, to what it really is in His sight. Then, whatever its state may be, He can bless it, in respect of that state, with increased light and grace. If I have got far from Him, and careless in walk, when I have the consciousness how far I am, He can fully and directly bless. But the soul must be brought into the recognition of its state, or there would be no real blessing; I should not see God in unison with it. For its sensible state did not answer to its real state in God's sight.]
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> [**In this case it may be a first conviction of sin, or the knowledge of self where self has never been really judged, as was Job's case.]

Jehovah then speaks, and addressing Job, carries on the subject. He makes Job sensible of his nothingness. Job confesses himself to be vile, and declares that he will be silent before God. The Lord resumes the discourse, and Job acknowledges that he has darkened counsel by speaking of that which he understood not. But now, still more submissively, he declares openly his real condition. Formerly he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear; now his eye had seen Him, wherefore he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. This is the effect of having seen God, and of finding himself in His presence. The work of God was accomplished the work of His perfect goodness, which would not leave Job without causing him to know himself, without bringing him into God's own presence. The object of discipline was attained, and Job is surrounded with more blessings than before.

We learn two things here; first, that man cannot stand in the presence of God; and secondly, the ways of God for the instruction of the inner man.

It is also a picture of God's dealings with the Jews on the earth.

The Book of Job plainly sets before us also the teaching of the Spirit, as to the place which Satan occupies in the dealings of God and His government, with respect to man on the earth. We may also remark the perfect and faithful care of God, from whom (whatever may have been the malice of Satan) all this proceeded, because He saw that Job needed it. We observe that it is God who sets the case of Job before Satan, and that the latter disappears from the scene; because here it is a question of his doings on the

earth, and not of his inward temptations. Further, if God had stopped short in the outward afflictions, Job would have had fresh cause for self-complacency. Man might have judged that those afflictions were ample. But the evil of Job's heart consisted in his resting on the fruits of grace in himself, and this would have only increased the good opinion he had already entertained of himself: kind in prosperity, he would have been also patient in adversity. God therefore carries on His work, that Job may know himself.

Either the sympathy of his friends (for we can bear alone, and from God in His presence, that which we cannot bear when we have the opportunity of making our complaint before man), or the pride which is not roused while we are alone but which is wounded when others witness our misery, or perhaps the two together, upset the mind of Job; and he curses the day of his birth. The depths of his heart. are displayed. It was this that he needed.

We have thus, man standing between Satan, the accuser, and God, the question being not God's revelation of everlasting righteousness, but His ways with the soul of man in this world. The godly man comes into trouble. This has to be accounted for, the friends insisting that this world is an adequate expression of God's righteous government, and that consequently as Job had made great profession of piety he was a hypocrite. This he stoutly denies, but his will unbroken rises up against God. God has chosen to do it, and he cannot help it. Only he is sure if he could find Him, He would put words in his mouth. He spoke well of Him though in rebellion, and thinking of his goodness as his own. Still he affirms that though there was a government, this world did not show it as his friends said; but he is not broken down before God. Elihu comes in, the interpreter, one among a thousand (and practically how rare they are!) and he shews God's discipline with man and with the righteous, and rebukes both sides with intelligence. Then God comes in and puts Job in his place by the revelation of Himself; but owns Job's right feeling as to Him, and puts the friends in their true place, and Job is to intercede for them. Job, humbled, can be fully blessed. This knowledge of self in God's sight is of all importance; we are never humble nor distrustful of self till then.

# PSALMS

## INTRODUCTION

The Book of Psalms has evidently a peculiar character. It is not the history of God's people, or of God's ways with them, nor is it the inculcation of positive doctrines or duties, nor the formal prophetic announcement of coming events. Many important events, doubtless, are alluded to in them, and they are immediately connected with various prophetic revelations (as, indeed, with precepts and all the other parts of the divine word to which I have just referred); but none of these form the true character of the book itself. The subjects too, of which the various parts of scripture I refer to treat, necessarily find their place in the thoughts expressed in the Psalms. But the Psalms do not directly treat of them.

The Psalms are almost all the expression of the sentiments produced in the hearts of God's people by the events (or I should speak more correctly if I said, prepared for them in the events), through which they pass, and indeed express the feelings, not only of the people of God, but often, as is known, those of the Lord Himself. They are the expression of the part the Spirit of God takes, as working in their hearts, in the sorrows and exercises of the saints. The Spirit works in connection with all the trials through which they pass, and the human infirmity which appears in those trials; in the midst of which it gives thoughts of faith and truth which are a provision for them in all that happens. We find in them consequently the hopes, fears, distress, confidence in God, which respectively fill the minds of the saints sometimes the part which the Lord Himself takes personally in them, and that, occasionally, exclusive of all but Himself, the place which He has held that He might so sympathize with them. Hence a maturer spiritual judgment is required to judge rightly of the true bearing and application of the Psalms than for other parts of scripture; because we must be able to understand what dispensationally gives rise to them, and judge of the true place before God of those whose souls' wants are expressed in them; and this is so much the more difficult as the circumstances, state, and relationship with God, of the people whose feelings they express are not those in which we find ourselves. The piety they breathe is edifying for every time; the confidence they often express in God in the midst of trial has cheered the heart of many a tried servant of God in his own. This feeling is carefully to be preserved and cherished; yet it is for that very reason so much the more important that our spiritual judgment should recognize the position to which

the sentiments contained in the Psalms refer, and which gives form to the piety which is found in them. Without doing this, the full power of redemption and the force of the gospel of the grace of God is lost for our own souls; and many expressions which have shocked the Christian mind, unobservant of their true bearing and application, remain obscure and even unintelligible.

The heart that places itself in the position described in the Psalms returns back to experiences which belong to a legal state, and to one under discipline for failure and trial in that state, and to the hopes of an earthly people. A legal and, for a Christian, unbelieving state is sanctioned in the mind: we rest content in a spiritual state short of the knowledge of redemption; and while we think to retain the Psalms for ourselves, we keep ourselves in a state of soul in which we are deprived of the intelligence of their true use and our own privileges, and become incapable of the real understanding of, and true delight in, the Psalms themselves; and, what is more we miss the blessed and deeply instructive apprehension of the tender and gracious sympathies of Christ in their true and divinely given application. The appropriating spirit of selfishness does not learn Christ as He is, as He is revealed, and the loss is really great. There are comforts and ministrations of grace for a soul under the law in the Psalms, because they apply to those under the law (and souls in that state have been relieved by them); but to use them in order to remain in this state, and to apply them prominently to ourselves, is, I repeat, to misapply the Psalms themselves, lose the power of what is given to us in them, and deprive ourselves of the true spiritual position in which the gospel sets us. The difference is simple and evident. Relationship with the Father is not, cannot be introduced in them, and we live out of that if we live in them, though obedience and confiding dependence be ever our right path.

I purpose in this study of the Psalms to examine the book as a whole, and each of the Psalms, so as to give a general idea of it. The most profitable manner of doing this (though the character of the Book of Psalms renders it more difficult here) will be, as I have attempted in the books we have already considered to give the meaning and object of the Spirit of God, leaving the expression of the precious piety which it contains to the heart that alone is capable of estimating it, namely, one that feeds on Jesus through the grace of the Spirit of God.

The Psalms, and the workings of the Spirit of God expressed in them, belong properly in their application and true force to the circumstances of Judah and Israel, and are altogether founded on Israel’s hopes and fears: and, I add, to the circumstances of Judah and Israel in the last days, though as to the moral state of things those last days began with the rejection of

Christ. The piety and confidence in God with which they are filled find an echo, no doubt, in every believing heart, but this exercise, as expressed here, is in the midst of Israel. This judgment, of which the truth is evidently demonstrated by the reading of the Psalms themselves, is sanctioned by the Apostle Paul. He says, after citing the Psalms, “Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.”

The Psalms then concern Judah and Israel, and the position in which those who belong to Judah and Israel are found. Their primary character is the expression of the working of the Spirit of Christ as to, or in, the remnant of the Jews This so distinctly characterizes the Psalms that there are very few indeed even of those which are prophetic of Christ, where the remnant is not found. In the second book they are not, because that element is distinctly presented as the primary subject in the first: the connection being moral through His entering into their sorrows in grace, this is easily understood. And it is necessary to remember this, to account for various passages in which they come in, though partly applicable to, or used by; Christ. See pp. 46, 47, 48, 50, and 51.

They teach us thus that Christ entered into the full depths of suffering which made Him the vessel of sympathizing grace with those who had to pass through them and that as seeing and pleading with God in respect of them. In the path of His own humiliation, He got the tongue of the learned to know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary. They were sinners, could claim no exemption, count on no favor which could deliver and restore. They must, if He had not suffered for them, have taken the actual sufferings they had to undergo in connection with the guilt which left them in them without favor. But this was not God’s thought; He was minded to deliver them, and Christ steps in grace. He takes the guilt of those that should be delivered. That was vicarious suffering as a substitute. And He places Himself in the path of perfect obedience and love in the sorrow through which they had to pass. As obedient, He entered into that sorrow so as to draw down, through the atonement, the efficacy of God’s delivering favor on those who should be in it, and be the pledge, in virtue of all this, of their deliverance out of it as standing thus for them, the sustainer of their hope in it, so that they should not fail.

Still, they must pass through sorrow, according to the righteous ways of God, in respect of their folly and wickedness, and to purify them inwardly from it. Into all this sorrow Christ entered, as He also bore their sins, to be a spring of life and sustainer of faith to them in it, when the hand of oppression should be heavy without, and the sense of guilt terrible within and hence no sense of favor, but that One who had assured to them and could convey this favor had taken up their cause with God, and passed

through it for them. The full efficacy indeed of His work in their deliverance, in that one Man's dying for the nation, will not be known by them till they look on Him whom they have pierced. They are purposely left (and especially the remnant, because of their integrity; for the rest will join the idolatrous Gentiles for peace' sake) in the depth of trial, which, as ways of God in government, brings them through grace to the sense of their guilt in a broken law and a rejected and crucified Messiah, that they may truly now what each of them is, and bow before an offended Jehovah in integrity of heart, and say, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah."

But, though the deliverance and a better salvation be not to come till then, still, in virtue of the work wrought to effect it, Christ can sustain and lead on their souls to it; and that is just what is done in these Psalms. These are His language to, or rather in, their souls when they are in the trouble sometimes the record of how He has learned it. Hence too, souls yet under the law find such personal comfort under them. Let not any soul, let me remark in passing, suppose that deep heart interest in these sorrows of Christ is lost by passing from under the law to be under grace. There is immense gain. The difference is this instead of using them merely selfishly (though surely rightly) for my own wants and sorrows, I, when under grace, enter in adoring contemplation and joyful love into all Christ's sorrows, in the deeper competency given by His Spirit dwelling in me. I go back now in peace, as He is on high, and I trace with divinely given interest and understanding (whatever my measure) all the sorrows through which He passed when here, tracing this "path of life" in love to us across a world of sin and woe, glorifying God in it, through death itself, to the righteous glory in which He now is. Christ comforted His disciples in John 14, though not indeed as under law, but He says at the close, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father." Under law the Psalms may comfort us in profitable distress; under grace we enjoy them as loving Christ and with divine intelligence.

But to return. The great foundation which had to be laid to make sympathy possible was, that Christ did not escape where the remnant of Israel will, It is in the point of death that the sufferings of Christ, whether for righteousness' sake, and that which He underwent to be able to sympathize with them when they suffer under the government of God, on the one hand, or atonement on the other the latter prefigured in the burnt and sin-offering (compare Hebrews 9), the former the expression and testing of perfectness in the meat-offering meet. Christ suffered onward up to death. Then He also made atonement for sin. Some of the remnant may suffer unto death, as faithful under the trials of this government; but then, like

Christ, they will obtain a better resurrection Of course, the atoning Hpart is exclusively His.

The Psalms, then, belong properly to Israel, I here use Israel as contrasted with the Assembly and Gentiles We shall see Judah distinguished from Israel when we enter into details.

In examining the Psalms themselves, we shall find other elements of this judgment, which are very clear and positive. The Psalms distinguish (<19730>Psalm 73) and commence by distinguishing (<19001>Psalm 1) the man who is faithful and godly, according to the law, from the rest of the nation. “The ungodly are not so,” nor shall they “stand in the congregation of the righteous.” Indeed, Isaiah teaches the same truth doctrinally just as strongly. Compare <23422>Isaiah 48:22; <23572>57:21.

Again, it is evident (and it is the second general principle I would notice), that it is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of prophecy, which speaks. That is to say, it is the Spirit of Christ interesting Himself in the condition of the faithful remnant of Israel. This Spirit speaks of things to come as if they were present, as is always the case with the prophets. But this does not make it the less true that it is a spirit of prophecy which speaks of the future, and which in this respect often resumes its natural character. But if the Spirit of Christ is interested in the remnant of Israel, Christ’s own sufferings must be announced, which were the complete proof of that interest, and without which it would have been unavailing. And we find, in fact, the most touching expressions of the sufferings of Christ, not historically, but just as He felt then, expressed as by His own lips at the moment He endured them. Hence the intimacy of feeling and peculiar interest of the Psalms. They are the beating of the heart of Him, the history of whose circumstances, the embodying of whose life, in relationship with God and man, whose external presentation, in a word, and all God’s ways in respect of it, are found in the rest of scripture. Compare <60111>1 Peter 1:11.

Another principle connects itself with this, which gives the third great characteristic of the Psalms. The sins of the people would morally hinder the remnant’s having confidence in God in their distress. Yet God alone can deliver them, and to Him they must look in integrity of heart.

We find both these points brought out: the distresses are laid before God, seeking for deliverance; and integrity is pleaded and the sins confessed at the very same time. Christ, having come into their sorrows, as we have seen, and made atonement, can lead them in spite of their sins and about their sins, to God. They do not indeed know at first perhaps the full forgiveness, but they go in the sense of grace as led by Christ’s Spirit, (and how many souls are practically in this state!) The state of the prodigal till he

met his Father the state of every soul, where the God who is light and love has been revealed in Christ; but redemption-work, and acceptance in Him are not known there is confidence, but not peace.

In sum, then, the Psalms are the expression of the Spirit of Christ, either in the Jewish remnant (or in that of all Israel), or in His own Person as suffering for them, in view of the counsels of God with respect to His elect earthly people. And since these counsels are to be accomplished more particularly in the latter days, it is the expression of the Spirit of Christ in this remnant in the midst of the events which will take place in those days, when God begins to deal again with His earthly people. The moral sufferings connected with those events have been more or less verified in the history of Christ on the earth; and whether in His life, or, yet more, in His death, He is linked with the interests and with the fate of this remnant. In Christ's history, at the time of His baptism by John, He already identified Himself with those that formed this remnant; not with the impenitent multitude of Israel, but with the first movement of the Spirit of God in these "excellent of the earth," which led them to recognize the truth of God in the mouth of John, and to submit to it. Now it is in this remnant that the promises made to Israel will be accomplished; so that, while only a remnant, their affections and hopes are those of the nation. On the cross, Jesus remained the only true faithful one before God in Israel the personal foundation of the whole remnant that was to be delivered, as well as the accomplisher of that work on which their deliverance could be founded.

There are some further general observations on a point to which I have already alluded, which, while in a great measure they are drawn from the Psalms themselves, yet, through the light the Gospels also cast on it, may aid us in seeing the spirit of the whole book, and entering into the purport of many psalms in detail. I mean the sufferings of Christ. We have seen in general already that the book brings before us the remnant, its sorrows, hopes, and deliverance, and Christ's association with them in all these. He has entered into their sorrows, will be their deliverer, and has wrought the atonement which lays the foundation of their deliverance, as it does of the deliverance of any living soul but He died for that nation. Of course His own perfection shines out in this; but here we are to look for its connection with Israel and the earth, though His personal exaltation to heaven be mentioned, from which their final deliverance flows. We are not, however, to look for the mystery of the assembly, which at this time was hid in God, nor for Christ viewed in His associations with the assembly. The Psalms furnish most exquisitely all the earthly experiences of Christ and His people which the Spirit of Christ would bring before us. We must look to the New

Testament (as in Philippians, for example, and elsewhere) to find the heavenly ones of those He has redeemed.

Now Christ passed through every kind of moral suffering the human heart can go through, was tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart. Nor can anything be more fruitful in its place (for it must not be too long dwelt on in itself, and entirely separated from the divine side of His character, or it becomes profitless or hurtful, because really fleshly sentiment), than to have the heart engaged in contemplating the sorrows of the blessed Redeemer. Never were any like His. But the Psalms will bring them before us, and I refrain from entering on them here. In these introductory remarks, I can only shortly refer to the principles on which, and the positions in which, He suffered. There are, I think, three. He suffered from man for righteousness and love, for the testimony He bore in that which was good, in which He bore testimony to and revealed, God: He suffered from God for sin. These two distinct characters of suffering are very simple and plain to every believer's mind. The third kind of suffering supposes somewhat more attention to scripture. It is said of Jehovah's ways with Israel, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." This was (as to the last part, yet will be) most especially fulfilled in Christ, Jehovah come as man in the midst of Israel. But the sufferings of Israel, at least of the remnant of the Jewish portion of the people, take a peculiar character at the close. They are under the oppression of Gentile power, in the midst of utter iniquity in Israel, yet are characterized by integrity of heart (indeed, this is what makes them the remnant), but conscious of, for that very reason, and suffering under, the present general consequences of sin under the government of God and the power of Satan and death. The deliverance which frees them from it not being yet come, the weight of these things is on their spirits. Into this sorrow Christ has also fully entered.

During His whole life, up even to death itself, He suffered from man for righteousness' sake (see, in connection with this Psalm 11 and others). Besides this, on the cross He suffered for sin, drank the cup of wrath for sin, the cup His Father had given Him to drink. But besides these two kinds of suffering He bore in His soul, at the close of His life (we may say from after the paschal supper), all the distress and affliction under which the Jews will come through the government of God not condemnation, but still the consequence of sin. No doubt He had anticipated, and, so far felt it, as in ◂John 12 the coming cross; but now He entered into it. It was, as to the point we are now on, as He said, apostate Israel's hour then and the power of darkness. But He was still looking to His Father in the sense of faithfulness. Nor was He yet forsaken of God. He could still look to man's watching with Him. What could watching do when divine wrath was upon

Him? But the distinctive character of these kinds of suffering is clearly seen if we, as taught of God, weigh the psalms which speak of them respectively. Thus we shall see that, when He suffers from man, He looks, as speaking by His Spirit in and for Israel, for vengeance on man. Others too are then often seen to suffer with Him. When He suffers from God, He is wholly alone, and the consequences are unmingled blessing and grace. As to suffering from man, we can have the privilege of so suffering, having the fellowship of His sufferings. In suffering from God as under wrath, He did so that we might never have the least drop whatever of that cup; it would have been our everlasting ruin. In the sufferings He underwent under Satan's power, and darkness, and death, when not yet actually drinking the cup of wrath, besides what was due to the majesty of God in view of this see <sup>58</sup>Hebrews 2:10), He suffered to sympathize with the Jews in their afflictions, which they come into through their integrity and yet in their sins. Every awakened soul under the law will find comfort in this. All these sufferings are entered into in the Psalms as to Christ and as to Israel. But the Jews passed into utter ruin, and loss of all the promises (save sovereign grace), and the remnant into their place of trial and sorrow as such, by the rejection of Messiah.

It is to be remembered that, though all three principles of suffering are essentially different, and all very clear and important in their character, at the close of Christ's life all coalesced and united in the sorrows of His last hours save that I doubt not, in coming out of Gethsemane, the pressure of Satan's power on His spirit had been gone through and was over, but on the cross He suffered from man for righteousness, and from God for sin only. I am persuaded that this last, when fully on His soul, was too deep to leave it possible for the other or anything else to be much felt.

Having made these general observations, which appeared to me necessary to understand the book, we will now examine, with the Lord's help, its contents; and may He indeed guide both myself and my reader in doing it! If it does depict Christ's sufferings and His interest in His people on earth, it behooves us to search into it reverently, yet with child-like confidence, and to wait as indeed we ever should upon His teaching, that we may be led and taught in our search. That which speaks of what He felt should be touched with confiding love, but with holy reverence.

It is generally known that the Psalms are divided into five books, the first of which ends with <sup>19</sup>Psalm 41; the second, with <sup>72</sup>Psalm 72; the third, with <sup>89</sup>Psalm 89; the fourth, with <sup>106</sup>Psalm 106; and the fifth, with Psalm 150. Each of these books is distinguished, I doubt not, by an especial subject. Our examination of the Psalms contained in each will give the fullest insight

into the character of the several books; but it may be well to give here a general notion of their contents.

The subject of the first book is the state of the Jewish remnant before they have been driven out of Jerusalem, and hence of Christ Himself in connection with this remnant. We have more indeed of the personal history of Christ in the first than in all the rest. This will be readily understood, as He was thus going in and out with the remnant, while yet associated with Jerusalem. I use Jewish here in contradistinction with Israel or the whole nation.

In the second book, the remnant are viewed as cast out of Jerusalem (Christ, of course, taking this place with them and giving its true place of hope to the remnant in this condition) The introduction of Christ, however, restores them, in the view of prophecy, to their position in relationship with Jehovah as a people before God (<19401>Psalms 45, 46). Previously, when cast out, they speak of God (Elohim) rather than Jehovah, for they have lost covenant blessings; but by this they learn to know Him much better. I doubt not, the history of Christ's life afforded occasion to His entering into the practical personal sense of thus condition of the people, though, of course, less historically His place in general. In <19501>Psalm 51 the remnant own the nation's (more precisely the Jews') guilt in rejecting Him. I think it will be found that the first two books are somewhat distinguishable from the last three. The first two are more Christ personally among the Jews; the last three, more national and historical. And so <19720>Psalm 72, the last part of the first two books, closes with the Solomon reign.

In the third book we have the deliverance and restoration of Israel as a nation, and God's ways towards them as such (Jerusalem, at the close, being the center of His blessing and government). The dreadful effect of their being under the law, and the centering of all mercies in Christ are brought out in <19801>Psalms 88 and 89, closing with the cry for the accomplishing of the latter. Electing grace in royalty for deliverance, when all was lost, is presented in <19870>Psalm 87.

In the fourth, we have Jehovah at all times the dwelling place of Israel. Israel is delivered by the coming of Jehovah. It may, in its main contents, be characterized as the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. Jehovah having been always Israel's dwelling-place, they look for His deliverance. For this the Abrahamic and millennial names of God, Almighty and Most High, are introduced. And where is He to be found? Messiah says, "I seek them in Jehovah, the God of Israel." There He is indeed found. Thus there will be judgment on the wicked, and the righteous delivered. The full divine nature of Messiah, once cut off, is brought in to

lay the ground for His having a part in the latter-day blessings, though once cut off. He is the unchangeable living Jehovah, the Creator. Then comes blessing on Israel, creation, judgment of the heathen, that Israel might enjoy the promises. But it is the same mercy which has so often spared them.

The last book is more general, a kind of moral on all, the close being triumphant praise.

Having spoken of the details of their restoration, through difficulties and dangers, and God's title to the whole land, the wickedness of the antichristian tool of the enemy, the exaltation of Messiah to Jehovah's right hand till His enemies are made His footstool, and the earthly people made willing in the day of His power we have then a rehearsal of God's ways, a commentary on the whole condition of Israel and what they have passed through, and the principles on which they stand before God, the law being written in their hearts.

Then the closing praises.

As this rapid sketch will have shown (and the details I shall now enter on will show more clearly still), there is far more order in the Psalms than is generally supposed by those who take them up as each an isolated ode to serve as the expression of individual piety. They are not connected, it is true, in one continuous discourse or history, as other parts of scripture may be; but they express in a regular and orderly way distinct parts of the same subject; that is, as we have seen, the state of the remnant of the Jews or Israel in the latter day, their feelings, and Messiah's association with them. These topics are treated in the most orderly way. The Spirit of God, who has superintended the structure, as He has inspired the contents of the whole scripture, has stamped the unequivocal traces of His hand on this especial part of it. Who collected these divine songs, the work of diverse authors, and written at different epochs, I do not pretend to say. This the learning of divines may discuss; but the result cannot, I think, leave a doubt on the mind of any one who enters into their purport as to whose power wrought in it.

I have already noticed generally the subject of each of the five books. The distinction of subject I found in them had led me to divide the whole Book of Psalms in the same way, before my attention had been drawn to the well-known fact of its being so divided in the Hebrew Bible. But this principle of order is carried out also in the details of each of the books This order in the first book, and the contents of the psalms which compose it, are now to occupy us. It is, perhaps, the most complete in the general and characteristic view it gives of the subjects treated of in the Psalms, and so

far the most interesting. The others naturally pursue more the details which carry out the general idea thus given.

It will be remarked that the following principle runs through it, and indeed, more or less, the others when it is applicable some great truth or historical fact is brought forward as to Christ or the remnant, or both, and then a series of psalms follows, expressing the feelings and sentiments of the remnant in connection with that truth or fact.

# PSALMS

## BOOK 1

The first book may be in general thus divided into distinct parts. The first eight psalms form a whole, an introductory whole to the entire collection of Psalms. This series may be subdivided into the first two, which, in a more particular manner, lay the basis of all that is taught or expressed in Psalms 3-7? and, finally, Psalm 8. The character of these I shall enter on immediately. At present I proceed with the order of the book. Psalms 9, 10 form the basis of the psalms which follow to the end of 15. They give, not the great principles which are at the foundation of all Israel's latter-day history, but the historical condition of the remnant in the latter day. Psalms 11-15 unfold the various thoughts and feelings which that condition, and the circumstances in which the pious remnant find themselves, give rise to. Psalms 16-24 present to us Messiah formally entering into the circumstances of the pious remnant, the testimonies of God, the sufferings of Messiah, and the final manifestation of His glory when He is owned as Jehovah on His return. The remnant are found in this series as in Psalms 17, 20, and 23; but the main subject spoken of in them, with the exception of Psalm 19, which gives the testimony of creation and the law, is Messiah. Psalms 25-39 present to us the various feelings of the remnant under these circumstances. The whole book closes and is complete with the true source of the Messiah's intervention in the counsels and plans of God, the place He took in humiliation, and the blessing which belonged to him who could with divine intelligence discern and enter into His humbled condition, and that of the righteous remnant who were associated with Him (for so indeed they were, and this is what the Psalms especially bring out).

It is extremely important that, on the one hand, some psalms should personally bring before us the Messiah; but it is also important that the moral traits which form the beauty and excellency of His character in God's sight, and the attractive object which God delights to bless, should be brought before us also, that, on the one hand, we may delight in them, and, on the other, the indissoluble moral connection between Christ and the remnant may be brought into view. This connection of moral character and its display in Christ is very distinctly brought before us in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. There blessing is pronounced on those who exhibit certain moral traits and qualities. These characterize the remnant; yet, if they be carefully looked into, they will be found to be morally a

description of Christ Himself. Hence it is that we find Him and the remnant so mixed up together in many psalms, while some, as I have said, present distinctively the great foundation of blessing in Himself. We may apprehend also thus the difference of the associations of Christ with the remnant of Israel and those of the assembly with Him. Those of the assembly begin when redemption is accomplished, and Christ is already exalted on high. By the Spirit sent down from heaven the saints are united to Christ there; and their experiences as Christians flow from their position as united to Christ consequent on accomplished redemption, and then in conflict with the world.

Previous to the knowledge of redemption, and for that very reason, saints may now pass through experiences analogous to, and in principle the same as, those of the Psalms, and find, in consequence, great comfort from them; but their own place, as Christians, is in union with Christ. * The Lord's associations with the remnant are different. They pass through their trials before the knowledge of redemption or its application in power to them. Their experiences are not the fruit of union ** with Christ. Christ has trod the same path, in grace towards them; not that they were united to Him, for He was alone; but He was afflicted in their affliction and oppression by the world. Death was before Him; the fruits of the penal government of God on them, manifested in the state in which Israel then was, He has entered into in grace, as we have seen. Suffering under wicked Israel, and oppressing Gentiles, as the remnant will in that day, He thus, by His Spirit prophetically, associates Himself with them in all their sorrows, and gives a voice by His Spirit to them on their way up to the discovery of redemption.

[* Hence it is too that in the Romans we find experiences, because the soul is brought through the process which brings it into liberty; while in the Ephesians we find no experiences, because man is seen first dead in sins; and then united to Christ exalted to God's right hand. The Epistle to the Philippians gives us, almost exclusively, proper Christian experience.]

[** Union belongs to the assembly's position alone, and is by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Union in scripture is not attributed simply to life. (Compare <4>John 14:20.)

This makes the tone and purport of the Psalms very plain The "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" was on the cross when atoning work, the fruit of grace, was going on. Judgment on Israel was then suspended, and the Holy Ghost blessedly took this cry up by the mouth of Peter in <4>Acts 3:17, where the return of Jesus to them (as the children of the prophets, and the people in whom the blessing of the nations was to be) was proposed on their repentance. This grace was then of no effect; but in the last days all the fruit of that cross and that cry on earth will be made

good on earth, when they have repented and looked on Him whom they have pierced. But this demand (as its final accomplishment will be also) was founded on atoning work, accomplished with God alone, which was based on grace and will bring grace; and not in connection with His sufferings from men, which bring judgment on men, His adversaries.

The Psalms constantly present to us this consequence of the wickedness of men against Christ, and the wish of the remnant that it may arrive. Such a wish will never be found expressed by Christ in the Gospels. He pronounces prophetic woes on others for hindering those that were entering in; but this is love to these souls. No call for judgment is found. In the Psalms, on the other hand, no such passage as "Father forgive them" is found; though the fruit of grace, after His own deliverance from the horns of the unicorns, is most strikingly unfolded. The gospel was the good news of the visitation of the world and of Israel in love by the Son of God. The incarnation was Christ entering alone into this path of love towards all. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Nought else was, nought else could be, revealed and unfolded then. It was what He was personally in the world. But the remnant of God's people are to go through these sorrows. The only possible means of their deliverance was the destruction of their enemies. We shall go up from the midst of our sorrows to meet the Lord in the air; we have no need to wish our enemies destroyed in order to our deliverance; we have in the gospel to do with grace, with a heavenly Christ that is not passing through sorrows, and with glory.

The remnant of Israel therefore call for this execution of judgment on their enemies. They have to do, not with that heavenly, sovereign, abounding grace which gives us a place with Christ clean out of the world (not of it, as He was not of it who was loved before the world was founded), but with the government of this world. Objects, no doubt, of grace themselves (and of mere grace, for they have rejected the promises in Christ presented to them in the truth of God, and have been concluded in unbelief that they might be the objects of mercy), still, they are the nation in whom the government of this world centers and in respect of whom it is displayed. Hence they await judgment, and the display of the righteous exercise of that government, and the cutting off of the oppressor and the wicked. Hence Christ (who has entered into, and will in spirit enter into, their sorrows, but was Himself cut off instead of seeing His enemies cut off, accomplishing a better and more glorious work) did not then ask for the world, but for those that were His, and that they might be with Him where He was. [John 17] marks the formal contrast of the two systems. He would not call down fire from heaven would not execute righteous judgment. It is intimated indeed in the Sermon on the Mount that He was in the way with Israel (as in John,

that the world had not known Him). Still, the Christian path is to do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, as He did.

Hence, while passing through the sufferings, He could only prophetically be associated with the desires and aspirations after judgment which will have their righteous place when the time of public divine government of this world and judgment is come. Hence already in Psalm 2 this is the place we find Him set in. All the psalms are constructed in view of that. Thus the remnant in suffering, calling for judgment, reach back to Him who, though He never sought judgment for Himself, did suffer and will seek judgment for them and execute it-Himself the center of that center of earthly government divine. He is seen by the prophetic Spirit in the same circumstances and the cry for judgment is heard. But it will be found that, wherever this is the case, as we have remarked, the remnant, other men, are found besides the Lord Himself.

In principle, any suffering Jew might so speak; only, as Christ suffered above all, the terms used in the Psalms, where the demands for vengeance occur, sometimes rise up to circumstances which have been literally true in Him in His sorrow on earth. But the point of departure of the feeling, and of the whole of what is said, is any godly Jew whatever in the last days. Into that Christ has entered. The proper or exclusive personal application to Himself is only true when it is proved by the circumstances and the terms of the passage. The point of moral departure is always the remnant and their state. He is merely associated with them in the mind of the prophetic Spirit; though, as to the facts, He entered into deeper sorrow than they all. Hence the immense importance of first of an seeing the position and necessary thoughts of the remnant in the Psalms.

Christ is merely associated with them and their position in grace; though He must be the center, and pre-eminent, wherever He is found. There is no possibility of understanding the Psalms at all otherwise. All interpretation is false which does not take this principle or truth as its point of departure. When we get into a prophetic and governmental order, even in the New Testament, we at once find the same demands of vengeance. It is judgment, and not grace. The souls under the altar in the Revelation desire that their blood may be avenged; and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon.

This important principle then is to be laid down, that, in every psalm in which the godly remnant can have a part, that is, where the Person of Christ is not the direct subject (we have seen there are some, as Psalms 2, 102, and others, which speak personally of Christ), the whole is not to be applied to Christ, nor the psalm itself, in general, primarily. It belongs to the condition

of the remnant, and speaks of it; and the principle of God's dealings with them through Christ is often given as the great example of the sorrow of the suffering godly. And hence, in the circumstances it refers to, it may rise up to such as literally depict those through which Christ has passed, so as to show the way in which Christ has entered into their circumstances. This last may be evidently the most important part of the psalm. But this does not change the principle. There may be psalms where the remnant are introduced collaterally as objects of blessing in result, but where a particular part may be evidently applicable to Christ, who only procures that result.

**PSALM** 22 has a distinct and peculiar character, because there Christ, while speaking of sufferings common in kind, though not in degree, to Him and the remnant, yet, as in them already, passes into that in which He was entirely alone. Indeed, the bringing these out in contrast is the very subject of the psalm. The godly have been, the remnant will be, in suffering. But the godly were delivered when they cried, so will the remnant; but Christ, perfect in the fullest sorrow, was not. So that Christ is really alone here; though, in order to show the contrast of this suffering with others in which saints could be, and had been, this last character of suffering is mentioned. The fact already mentioned (that, in the psalms expressive of the godly man's suffering from men, there is always the call for vengeance on the part of the speaker, and that in Christ's life as the Gospels give it to us, that is, according to truth as personally come into the world, and standing as a witness alone in the world He never does so, but the contrary when on the cross, and in His life-time forbids it, reproaching the disciples with not knowing what manner of spirit they were of) evidently has the most important influence on our judgment, how far and in what way we find the living historical Christ in the Psalms as a direct object.

To turn now to details.

The attentive reader will remark that, in the order of which I have spoken of the psalms of the first book, a principle I have referred to is fully exemplified: that is, that standard psalms with some great principle or fact come first, and then a series expressive of the thoughts and feelings of the remnant produced by these. Thus Psalms 1, 2 are followed by Psalms 3-7, which depict the state of things as felt by the Psalmist connected with Psalms 1, 2, Christ being rejected (closing with the result in Psalm 8); * then Psalms 9, 10, the state of facts in the latter days; Psalms 11-15, the various feelings of the remnant connected with them. Next, Psalms 16-24 Christ and the whole testimony of God, and Christ on the cross or atonement, having been set before us, the feelings consequent on this are depicted from Psalms 25-39. Sins are acknowledged for the first time in Psalm 25. Trials and deliverance had been spoken of before; but sins could

not be confessed but in view of, and as building on, the foundation of atonement, when God really taught. So it will be indeed historically with Israel in the last days; though that is not entered on here.

[* Psalm 8, while it is the great result, is a mighty change in the position of Christ according to the counsels of God, which forms the basis of all that follows. It is referred to in <430101>John 1, in contrast with what Nathaniel says, which refers to Psalm 2. It is found in <420901>Luke 9 and parallel passages, and quoted in <490108>Ephesians 1, <461501>1 Corinthians 15, and unfolded in <580206>Hebrews 2. In the close also of John's Gospel, we have the three characters noticed on which these psalms are founded. God vindicates in testimony His rejected Son. He raises Lazarus, and the Son of God is glorified thereby. He rides into Jerusalem as king of Israel. Then the Greeks come up, and He says, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified; but thus, to take this place in God's purpose, He must suffer and die. In chapter 13 consequently He begins His heavenly place. Psalms 1, 2 are in fact an introduction to the whole book. For His glory as Son of man, though prophesied of here when entered into is another sphere of glory. Still He is owned as such, as He ever called Himself such down here.]

I will now pursue in detail what the Lord may graciously afford me on the psalms of the first book. I have already said that the first two psalms lay the ground of the whole collection They show the moral character and position of the remnant; and the counsels of God as to Christ King in Zion; the law and Christ, the two great grounds of God's dealing with Israel. Psalm 1 is the description of the godly remnant, and the blessing that accompanies their godliness according to the government of God. This blessing, save in the heart-comfort and peacefulness of an upright mind, has never been accomplished; but it is given in the same manner as the portion of the meek when Christ presents the kingdom (<400501>Matthew 5). They shall inherit the earth; but the kingdom was not, has not yet been, set up in power. * (This is the subject of <190201>Psalm 2). Hence the Lord in Matthew speaks of suffering for righteousness sake. The kingdom of heaven is the portion of those who do; and if suffering for His name's sake, then heaven itself comes in, and their reward there is great. **

[* But they are viewed as in the last days with the judgment at hand.]

[** 1 Peter makes the same distinction, chapter <600314>3:14; 4:14.]

In Psalm 1, however, we have simply the godly remnant on the earth. I say remnant, for the subject of the psalm is spoken of as characterized by individual faithfulness. The ungodly, sinners, and scornful, are around him. The law is his delight. He is a godly Jew, keeping apart from the ungodly, and is blessed, and prospers. Such is the principle of the psalm. But to make it good the earthly judgment must come in. There the ungodly shall not stand, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous then left free

from the pressure of those who cared not for God. The psalm gives us the general character of the godly man, and the result under the judicial government of God.

Another element is then brought in. Jehovah knows the way of the righteous the way of the ungodly shall perish. It is a judgment on one side, and a moral approbation before that judgment come on the other, which is connected with the covenant-relationship of Jehovah with Israel. We have seen that Christ was on earth this godly man, and took His place among the faithful remnant, these excellent of the earth was perfect in that place. So far this psalm takes Him in; but that is not yet directly spoken of. Its subject is the character of the godly, and the result under the government of God, Jehovah, in the midst of His people. It is not yet suffering because of this. That is a circumstance which will come out in its time. It is the character of the godly man in presence of the wicked, and the result measured by the abiding principles of God's government. Jehovah knows the righteous others shall positively perish. Psalm 1 is the moral character of the remnant, their position in the midst of the ungodly, and the general government of God, and the connection of Jehovah and the righteous.

Besides this, remark that the psalm places both in presence of a proximate judgment, by which the wicked are driven away like chaff, and the righteous form the congregation; that is, it refers definitely to the remnant in the last days. The principles of this psalm, the character of the persons spoken of in it, and their position, are clear enough, and important as laying one great part of the basis of the whole superstructure of the Psalms God's government, and the trials of the remnant which seemed to deny the government here spoken of, which is only to be made good in judgment when the mystery of God shall be finished. We are on the ground of Israel's place and of God's government according to the law, but the righteous distinguished from the wicked, and blessing, not the portion of all Israel as a whole, but of the righteous who will form the congregation when judgment is executed. Blessing is on the righteous, but these shall be the people when the ungodly shall be driven away as chaff. It is just the doctrine of the end of Isaiah (see chaps. [2482]48:22; [2570]57:20; 65; 66). Only in the last passage the judgment reaches the nations also.

A godly remnant of the people, delighting in the law, and the judgment of God, resulting in the congregation of the righteous, according to the true character of Jehovah, the wicked being driven away such are the first truths presented to us, the moral government of God on the earth made good by judgment in Israel. * Hence the last days are clearly in view.

[* More specifically in the Jews. The remnant of the Jews are spared and pass through the tribulation when two-thirds are cut off in the land (Zechariah 13). The judgment of the ten tribes is outside the land, and the rebels do not enter into it (Ezekiel 20). Israel is the general term of promise as applied to the nation.]

The next great element of the condition of Israel and the government of God, is Messiah the counsels of God concerning His Anointed. Here the heathen are brought in, and form the principal subject of the psalm; and again we find ourselves in the last days, when Christ's rights will be made good against the kings of the earth and all opposers. But Israel is again here the center and sphere of the accomplishment of these counsels of God. The Anointed is to be King in Zion. The adversaries are the great ones of the nations, the evil reaching alas! to the heads of Israel who, as we shall find, "shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" "an ungodly nation" (Psalm 43) and as Peter also himself has taught us in applying this psalm.

I have said that the counsels of God as to Messiah are the element here introduced to us of the ways of God treated of in the Psalms. But the psalm opens with the rising up of the nations to cast off His authority, and Jehovah's who establishes it, the apostate Jews, as we have seen, being engaged in this great rising alas! against God. The nations rage, the peoples imagine a vain thing the kings of the earth, and the rulers would break the bands of Jehovah and His Anointed together. But this rising only brings in wrath and displeasure, against which all resistance will be vain. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh, Adonai * has them in derision; Jehovah, in spite of all, has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. Such is the sure counsel of God made good by His power. Man's presumption in resistance only brings his ruin.

[* The Lord, but not the word LORD which represents generally Jehovah in the English version; but that which gives the Lord as an official relative title.]

But more is then brought out. This King, who is He? Jehovah has said to Him, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." It is One who begotten on what can be called "today," that is, begotten in time is owned Son by Jehovah. It is not then here the blessed and most precious truth of eternal sonship with the Father, though it is not to be dissociated from it, as if it could be without it, but One who-the Anointed Man, and that holy thing born into this world with the title, by His birth there also, of Son of God is owned such of Jehovah. Thus, Paul tells us, this raising up Jesus (not raising up again) is the accomplishing the promises made to the fathers, quoting the psalm in confirmation. He quotes another passage for His

resurrection and incorruptibility. Thus we have Christ born into the earth, owned Son of God by Jehovah.

But large counsels flow from this title. He has only to ask of Jehovah, and the heathen are given Him for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He will rule them with a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel break with resistless power, ruling in judgment all that impiously and impotently rise up against His throne. But this execution of judgment is not yet accomplished. The psalm itself invites the kings and judges to submission and humbly owning the Son, lest they perish if His wrath be kindled but a little. He is Himself to be trusted; and who can claim this but Jehovah?

This summons to the kings of the earth is founded, remark, on the establishing the title of Christ to royal judgment and power on the earth. But is Christ set King in Zion? He was cast out of it and hung upon the cross for better blessing and higher glory, even that He had with the Father before the world was, yet cast out of Zion, to which He presented Himself as king. And as to the heathen and the earthly inheritance, He has not yet asked for it; when He does, in the Father's time, He will surely give it, and so His foes be His footstool. He declares (John 17) that He did not ask about it, but about those given Him out of it. The kings of the earth reign on, many bearing His name to be found yet in rebellion when He shall take to Him His great power, and the nations be angry, and His wrath come. No rod of iron has yet touched them the potter's vessel, broken as nothing, is not now their image. The Lord is not yet awakened to despise it. They reign by God's authority. But there is no king yet in Zion. Christ has been rejected. Meanwhile we know He is Adonai in the heavens.

We have now the great elements of latter-day history, a Jewish remnant awaiting judgment, the wicked being still there, the heathen raging against Jehovah and His Anointed, He that sits in heaven laughing at their profitless rage, Jehovah setting Christ surely king in Zion, yea, upon His asking, giving Him all the nations for His inheritance (the submission of all to be enforced by resistless judgment). No sorrows here, not even as to the remnant in Psalm 1; but the counsels and decrees of God, and power such as none can resist. In a certain sense the kings of the earth did stand up and the rulers take counsel together, and as to earthly power and scenes succeeded. Christ was rejected and did not resist.

Where then is the remnant viewed in the Jewish scene of this world's history? What place have they? The great principles on which they stand are unfolded in the Psalms 3-7. It will be easily seen now how the first two psalms form the basis of the whole book, though the great body of its

contents are the consequences of their non-fulfillment in the time to which those contents apply. Indeed in this the structure of the book resembles that of a great multitude of psalms the thesis stated in the first or few first verses, and then the circumstances, often quite the opposite, through which the saint passes to arrive at what is expressed at the beginning of the psalm. The five following psalms then unfold to us, in general and in principle, the condition of the remnant and the thoughts and feelings produced by the Spirit of Christ in them, in the state of things consequent in Israel upon His personal rejection. The circumstances in which they find themselves are not historically alluded to till Psalms 9 and 10. Hence these psalms give the working of the Spirit of Christ in them in the suited moral fruits, so as to display the state of the godly remnant, the holy seed that is in Judah when all is ruined. The principles of their state, the elements of feeling unfolded in it, are brought before us. There is not the strong expression which flows from the pressure of circumstances; but each moral phase is exhibited, the different feelings to be produced by the Spirit of Christ in relationship to God.

The first, Psalm 3, gives the condition in general in contrast with Psalm 2, and the support and confidence of faith in it. The troublers of the godly man are multiplied, haughty, and triumphing over him as having no help in God; but Jehovah is his shield. He lies down in peace, and by faith sees his enemies smitten and their power destroyed. Salvation belongs to Jehovah, and His blessing is upon His people. Here again, remark, we find the latter days; and, though surrounded by his enemies, the godly man rests in peace and prophetically sees their destruction, and blessing on Israel. It expresses confidence in God in the midst of hostile numbers, and without resource. Christ has surely entered fully into this; but the place of the psalm is in the latter days, after proof of the non accomplishment of Psalm 2, at His first presenting Himself as Messiah to Israel.

**PSALM** 4 differs in this respect from Psalm 3, of which we shall see other examples, that it is not simple confidence, but appeals to righteousness against the sons of men, who turn all the glory that belongs to the people of Jehovah, and especially to their king, into shame; but Jehovah has chosen the godly. The light of Jehovah's countenance is his resource. In Psalms 3:4, and 4:1, the experienced mercy of Jehovah is referred to.

In Psalm 5 the cry of the godly is presented, and the character of God, as necessarily responding to that of the godly, is appealed to as necessitating His hearing him and judging the wicked. If the godly love godliness, surely Jehovah does; if the godly abhor wickedness, surely He does. It answers to the "righteous Father" of the Lord in John 17: only there the answer was

heaven; here, earth the necessary consequence of the difference of Christ's position on earth and that of the remnant.

In Psalm 6 the remnant take another ground. They are oppressed, their soul vexed, the extremity of distress presses on their spirit, and their conscience not being cleared gives the fear that Jehovah might be against them in anger, and they look that Jehovah should not rebuke them in anger nor chasten in hot displeasure, which they had as a nation deserved but which the redeemed heart deprecates. But they look to be saved through mercy and saved from death, and call on the wicked to depart, for Jehovah has heard.

**PSALM** 7 appeals to Jehovah, on the ground of the righteous and more than righteous dealing of the godly with their enemies, that Jehovah may arise and awake to the judgment He has commanded, and that thus, by the deliverance of the remnant by judgment, the congregation of the various nations of the earth would compass Him about. He would then judge the peoples, thus distinctly bringing out the future judgment. Another point is brought out here. The Lord judges the righteous man. If a man turn not, but go on in his wickedness, His wrath will follow him.

In all this we have the Spirit of Christ as it associates itself with the Jewish remnant, and in certain respects Christ Himself called to mind; that is, as passing through the circumstances which enabled Him to enter into theirs with truth (for we have seen that the effect on His soul personally was never what it is in the remnant). It is not His history, but His sympathy with them. There are two principles which connect Christ on earth and the remnant in the latter days: He takes them in grace into His place as on earth, * and He enters into theirs. As to the nature and principles of their life, the righteous have the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ as it would work in their state. Their appeals are the expression of this. And God allows their claims (though they have not clear intelligence respecting this), furnishing in the Psalms expressions to them. It is a need and a desire too which the life that is in them legitimates to His heart who can take account of the ground Christ has laid for blessing, which makes Him righteous in forbearance, though the righteousness, as to the Jews, be not yet manifested. Their knowledge of what Jehovah is as respects integrity and oppression what He has ever been makes them look for a deliverance which seems impossible. **

[* See Matthew 17:24-27, already when here below. This may seem in a measure anticipation: still, He revealed the Father's name to them.]

[** Leviticus 9:22-24 strikingly shows this. The acceptance of the sacrifice by God was not manifested till Moses and Aaron had come out after going in (v. 24)Christ as priest and king. Then the people worship, but

Aaron blessed from the offering before. We know by the Holy Ghost come out that the offering has been accepted, while the priest is yet within the veil. And hence the full value of divine righteousness.]

There is another expression to note here "how long?" It expresses the expectation of faith. God cannot reject His people for ever: how long will He deal with them as if He did, and take no notice of oppression? Hence in one place He says, There is none that knoweth how long. As a whole, then, these psalms are a general exhibition of the state of the remnant of the Jews before God in the latter day, and the principles on which their souls stand as godly not as yet the strong outpouring of their feelings under the trial of circumstances. Is Christ then absent from them all? Surely not, or the Psalms were not here. Christ entered in sympathy into their condition, forms the faith of their hearts in it by His Spirit, is thus fully found in their low estate in the best way. His own personal feelings when on earth they do not express, * though He has learnt by His own sorrows in like circumstances blessed truth to have a word in season for him that is weary.

[* I do not mean by this that none of the psalms do. We know this is not so, as Psalm 22 notably shows; nor that no sentence is found in psalms which are not wholly of Him which does express feelings He had. I have referred to several in the course of these notes and stated the principle of their application already; but I here speak of the psalms I am treating of (Psalms 3-7).]

We have now come to **PSALM** 8 which closes this unfolding of the condition of the remnant, and the counsels of God as to the rejected Anointed of Jehovah. What is said is still by the mouth of the now delivered remnant. "O Jehovah, our Lord!" In vain have the heathen risen up against Him! "How excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." It is not now a king in Zion though surely that will be true; but a glory set above the heavens. It is not now merely the people of the great King blessed; but wherever the children of men dwell, Jehovah's name, Israel's Lord, is great. Is it now as setting the Christ on His holy hill of Zion? No, it is in setting the Son of man, not merely over the children of men, but over everything His hand has created in all places of His dominion. He is set over all the works of His hand; none are excepted. He only is excepted who put all things under Him. And who is this Son of man? It is one made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned now with glory and honor, and set (which the Epistle to the Hebrews, Heb. chap. 2, shows us is not yet accomplished) over all the works of God's hands. * He could not be rejected as Christ (even if that title was afterwards to be made good by Him who laughs from heaven at the impotent rage of the kings of the earth) without His having a yet more glorious place destined to Him in the counsels of God the being gloriously

crowned in heaven, and set over all things. Son of God and (Son of David) King in Zion was His title on earth. **

[* The littleness of man compared with the creation on high, gives occasion to the revelation of God's counsels in man.]

[** Compare <430149>John 1:49-51.]

But His first rejection in this character throws Him out into this wider glory He had faithfully acquired too, what belonged by divine committal to the Son of man. Hence we see in the Gospels the Lord charging His disciples to say no more that He was the Christ (for He was now virtually rejected by Israel), because the Son of man must suffer and be rejected, delivered to the Gentiles, die, and rise again (<420901>Luke 9). This was grace to Israel therefore; but to man, to man in Christ. Still Israel's Lord, Jehovah, was thus excellent in all the earth. This is that with which the psalm closes, as the proper result in the mouth of the remnant, though it was brought about by, and dependent on, a much higher glory. God, in the presence of the rage and ill-will of His enemies, and to silence the oppressors and the pride of the enemy, and of the relentless pitiless persecutors of His saints and people, has chosen the weakest things of the earth to perfect praise.

We have had an example of this a little anticipative example of this in the reception of the rejected Christ riding into Jerusalem. It shall be fully accomplished in the last day. Then He had witness given to Him, as Son of God in raising Lazarus, as Son of David in thus riding into Jerusalem, as Son of man when the Greeks came up. But then He must die to have this last glory (John 11, 12). In the last days all shall not thus fail on earth. It shall be accomplished in power. Meanwhile He is crowned with glory and honor in a better place. The psalm has an elevated and enlarged energy, as is suited to the great deliverance celebrated. Creation makes man so little in himself. What is he when we consider this vast and shining universe? But glance at Christ, and you see all its glories grow dim before the excellency of Him under whose feet all is put. Yea, they are lighted up again by that glory. Man is indeed great and above all in Him, the Son of man set over all things.

It is not the place here to enlarge on the use of this psalm in the New Testament; but it makes its use and import very clear. In <461501>1 Corinthians 15 we see that it is accomplished in resurrection. In <580201>Hebrews 2 we see that the subjection of all things is in the world to come that they are not yet put under Christ's feet, but that He is crowned already with glory and honor. Ephesians 1 shows that the church is united to Him in this place of glory, but that does not at all enter into the scope of the psalm. It was part of the mystery hid from ages and generations.

Before passing on, I would briefly review the ground we have gone over in these introductory psalms. First, the remnant in the latter day is set before us; then the counsels of God as to Messiah, but the kings of the earth and the rulers setting themselves against Jehovah, and His Anointed. Yet He will be set king in Zion. Then Psalm 3 to Psalm 7 present the great principles on which the remnant will have to walk under the circumstances in which they find themselves, Christ being rejected. They do not afford us the deep expressions of feeling which the extent of distress brings out, but only the sentiments produced by grace in their position, so far as they are needed to give a voice to the feeling of grace and faith in it: Psalm 3 to Psalm 5 confidence; Psalms 6, 7, bowing of heart under distress; Psalm 3, simple confidence; Psalm 4, appeal to the God of righteousness, and the path of the righteous marked out; Psalm 5, he cries to Jehovah, because He discerns between the evil and the good, and the wicked thus must be removed, and Jehovah bless the righteous that trust in Him; Psalm 6, mercy is appealed to, as, distressed in spirit, he entreats Jehovah not to rebuke him in anger, and Jehovah has heard him in his distress to save him from death; Psalm 7, he appeals against his persecutors, contrasting their conduct and his own towards them, but Jehovah judges His people.

These are the great elements of relationship between Jehovah and the remnant of His people in that day. How precious it will be for the remnant to have their faith sustained and given words to, above their fears, by these gracious witnesses of the Spirit of Christ, to guide them, and justify their best hopes, and calm their justest fears! It is not difficult, I think, to understand why Christ could not personally have the feelings and desires here expressed, and yet animate by His Spirit prophetically these same desires in the remnant, and enter into all their circumstances in sympathy. He came from heaven, and never lost the spirit that breathed there, though He was in the circumstances which earth brought upon Him; but that spirit is love. He was above evil in the power of love, and the consciousness of divine feelings which the Son of man who is in heaven would have, though He passed through every sorrow which the Son of man on earth could be subject to. He went through all the distress that sin and man’s relentless enmity and the insensibility even of His disciples * could bring upon Him; but, while only the more sensible of it and feeling it the more deeply because He was perfect, He was above all the evil in love in the personal perfection of good. The remnant will not be so. They will be sustained of God, yet not only in the midst of evil, but under it, pressed by it, by the sense of guilt, by fear of wrath not merely the deep sense of wrath, but a personally sifting dread of it. There is no deliverance for them without the destruction of their enemies; and they desire it. These are Jehovah’s enemies too, and their desire is right (see [1965]Psalm 6:5, 7, 10).

[* Not once did they understand what He said to them.]

This Christ, as we have said, did not. He was above all this enmity in heavenly love and through known communion with His Father, whose will He had peacefully to do in known approval: until, in the end, He entered into that dark valley, where, for our sakes and Israel's, He was indeed to meet wrath, but there His converse was with God. As to His human enemies, He only says, "If ye seek me, let these go their way," and all were prostrate before Him, and it is His to tell them in peace, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Hence Himself, love divine, passing through every sorrow that Israel or we may have to pass through, He did so personally in love. All was felt, but He was above the evil in love to men, being in perfect communion with heaven and its loving favor. In this He is a pattern for Christians, not for Israel. But He really went through all that the remnant can ever go through, yet was free enough from any power over Him to feel for others in it. This He does perfectly, and prophetically inspires the expressions of faith to those who, not knowing yet heavenly love and deliverance, are pressed under it; and gives utterance, by the prophetic Spirit towards God (as the Spirit would in such), to the sense of their oppression of heart which circumstances give occasion to, when divine favor and deliverance are not known.

No one can enter into another's sorrows under this oppression so well as one who knows the cause of it, and what that produces in respect of relationship with God, but is not in it. Christ has been in all their affliction, and felt it, but not felt, as to others, what those who are under it, and necessarily and rightly occupied with themselves, feel. He felt for His oppressors with heavenly love. His sympathy, being perfect, has, by the prophetic Spirit, entered into all the remnant's circumstances and feelings, and given divinely-furnished expression to them. The heart may rise up and say, It is an easy thing to give it by the prophetic Spirit if He is not really in it. I answer, He was in every part of the affliction to the full, and infinitely more than the remnant ever will be, having suffered, withal, that which they never will because He has. But does His having a better feeling in that into which He entered hinder His having perfect sympathy with them? It enables Him to have it, as regards all the distress, which came from Satan, and from God when it was not merely a question of feeling for those from whom the distress came, when He was suffering Himself He went through all in the same way (only much more deeply) than they; and, as to a part and the deepest part of it, took on Himself what they never will have.

When the remnant are in the same sorrows, not knowing divine favor, He will minister to them, and through these psalms, all the feelings which God can look upon with approbation and listen to. He will conduct their souls

through them. How often in trial when we hardly dare to express what we feel (for fear of offending God, in the uncertainties of a cloudy faith) does a text which utters our sorrows in a way which, being in the word, must be right, assuage the heart and give confidence in looking up to God! So will it be then.

In Psalms 9 and 10 we enter historically on the circumstances of the remnant in the last days in the land. The great principles having been laid down (the remnant Messiah trial in the midst of Israel through His rejection a path He had learnt in person glory in the Son of man), we get in these a preface as regards the circumstances, a laying of them down, that the scene of the exercises, the state of things which gives rise to these, and the deliverance wrought by the judgment of God, may be plainly before us.

We may remark here, in confirmation of previously expressed judgments, that the righteous man, Messiah, according to the counsels of God, but rejected (with the consequent sorrows of the remnant into which He thus enters), and in result glorified as Son of man, and set over all the works of God's hands, having been brought before us in the first eight psalms, we find ourselves at once (when entering on the historical detail of circumstances) in the last days, the righteous remnant being under the oppression of the wicked and the heathen. Messiah, in Spirit, in the oppressed remnant, owns the righteousness of Jehovah, in judgment, sitting on the throne judging right.

Remark the great difference here, in passing, between the celebration of the righteousness of God, sitting in the throne, judging right, and vindicating the righteous man from the oppressor, and Christ on the cross, who was not vindicated on the earth, but declares Himself forsaken of God (His enemies, outwardly, having all their will against Him), and then righteousness being established in a heavenly way, God's righteousness in setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." As regards this righteousness, He was taken completely out of the world, so that the disciples as in flesh, as was the case with the Jews saw Him no more. He had glorified God, and was glorified in God, as God has been in Him. The righteousness which judged the oppressor, though executed by God who alone is really righteous and has power, had its sphere and measure in earthly government, and in discerning the righteous and the wicked among men, the oppressed and the oppressor. It was connected with the righteous government of God. The clear apprehension of this difference is a key to the whole frame of thought in the Psalms.

Another point, it may be useful to remark, is this. In the English translation several words are translated people: Am * in the singular, people, or Ammi ** my people (Israel): Goim + heathens or nations, that is, those outside, who are in contrast with Israel as the people of God. Israel is so designated to mark its guilt, <1901>Psalm 43:1. Leummim ++ the peoples and nations in general on the earth, the various races of mankind; ‘Ammim peoples in the plural, I think the nations viewed in connection with Israel restored and taken into relationship with Jehovah.

[* <1916>Psalm 3:6.]

[** <1918>Psalm 3:8 (here “thy people,” the same practically).]

[+ <1928>Psalm 2:8. The Hebrew references are to the verses in Hebrew.]

[++ <1907>Psalm 7:7.{<1908>Psalm 7:8.}]

To turn now to the psalms before us: Psalm 9 presents to us Jehovah, the Most High (the names of God which connect themselves with the Jews, and the millennial accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham), delivering the people by judgment from the oppression of the heathen, and destroying the wicked. The delivered Jew celebrates this goodness which has maintained the right and cause of the righteous. The Spirit of Christ speaks fully in this, as having taken up their interests. It is really His right. If the Jew has any, it is through Him. If they say it, He has put the words in their mouth. Indeed, if Christ had not entered into their sorrow, and given them these words, they could not have said, My right.

Let us consider this (as to circumstances) first leading psalm with somewhat more detail. The humble and oppressed one praises God with his whole heart, under the double name of Jehovah and Most High. * The turning back of his enemies is not merely a human victory. They fall and perish before the presence of Jehovah Elohim. But this was to maintain the right and cause of the godly one really the right and cause of Christ, who had thus thrown Himself into their portion in gracious sympathy. In verse 6 a very important principle is brought out for faith at all times, then to be verified in fact. The efforts of the enemy here are for time. He can destroy, if God allow, present prosperity. The Lord endures for ever. We have only to do His will by the way. He has always His way at the end. That will which we do by the way, perhaps in sorrow and suffering then, will surely reign at the end of the way. Destructions were now to come to a perpetual end the cities and their memory had been destroyed. Jehovah endures for ever.

[* These names are not without importance. One is the abiding name of God in Israel, His memorial for ever; the other, the millennial name of God

introduced by the judgments spoken of in the psalm. Compare Psalm 91 and <01149>Genesis 14:19, 20.]

We have heard of the patience of Job that was by the way; we have seen the end of the Lord that is the ground for faith. It walks with Him who certainly has the end at His command. He shall endure for ever has prepared His throne for judgment. He will judge the world universal in righteousness, and minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness. This was the public character of Jehovah. But there was a private part of His character, so to speak, the making of which however also public, is the great subject of the psalm; and indeed with that first public one, the great subject of all the psalms. Both are known only to faith, but are celebrated beforehand. This second part is this: Jehovah is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. The result is confidence in Jehovah at all times on the part of those who know His name. The intervention of Jehovah in that day in favor of those that seek Him will make good this name everywhere.

Another point is brought out also. Jehovah dwells in Zion as thus revealing Himself. His doings, what He does for the display of His name through judgment in favor of the remnant, are to be declared among the peoples * another word than that often used, and signifying, I apprehend, the peoples that He owns that they may be able thus to trust in Him. He is returned thus to Zion at the close. Verses 13, 14, are the cry of the remnant, and on the ground of mercy, that their hearts may praise Jehovah in Zion, as well as because of His judgments; verse 15 celebrates the judgment; and the moral, so to speak, is told in verse 16. Jehovah is known by the judgment which He executes. The way in which this psalm serves as a preface for understanding the scope of the book, and its application to the last days, is evident. Once seized, it largely helps in the intelligence of the whole book. In verse 17 the wicked, ** be they who they may, Jew as well as Gentile, and indeed particularly the Jew, and all the nations who forget God, + are shown to be rejected and judged, and to have their place in Hades by judgment. And in this God remembers the needy, for the destruction of the wicked is their deliverance. Hence for this, for Jehovah to arise, is the cry of the remnant. This feature explains certain expressions in the psalms to which I have before alluded the demand for judgment. Compare the characters of the judged ones in <45001>Romans 1, 2. Only there the wrath is from heaven, not governmental on earth from Zion; and a greater moral development will be found, as was to be expected, and not the external judgment of nations. ++

[* Ammim, v. 11. Leummim, v. 8.]

[** Here in the plural. The difference is sometimes important, because, as Paul says, there is that wicked one.]

[+ Had not liked to retain God in their knowledge.]

[++ In Revelation 4 are found the characters of the seraphim as well as of the cherubim, as prefacing, I believe, the judgments there, as characterized as being according to the holy nature of God as well as governmental. It is true the application of Isaiah 6, where alone the seraphim are found, is to a governmental judgment, because grace preserved a remnant. But the incompatibility of Jehovah and uncleanness with man in himself is what the prophet sees.]

The body of Psalm 10 depicts the state of things in the last days, until Jehovah arises to judgment, and more especially the character of the wicked, for he is known by his character, and is especially to be found in the Jew. Compare Isaiah 40-48 and 49-58: in the one passage, the question being particularly idolatry and Babylon; in the second, the rejection of Messiah (the two capital sins which bring the Jews to judgment Jehovah, and His Anointed). The wicked in his pride acts upon that which is seen; as the righteous by faith on the character of Jehovah, faith in Him. The wicked boasts himself in his heart's desire, and blesses him (counts him happy, that is) whom Jehovah abhors. He pursues his plans without conscience, seeking to destroy the humble by craft, and reckons that God has forgotten him. How well Christ could help them here! The humble cry under the oppression. Why does Jehovah stand afar off, and hide Himself in the time of trouble?

They were far indeed from being where Christ was, yet the shadow, so to speak, of that sorrow was passing over them, but they could hope in God. So in verse 12. They call upon God to lift up His hand not forget the humble: why should the wicked contemn God? Jehovah has seen it and will requite; the poor committed himself to Him. Verse 16 to the end celebrates Jehovah's coming in reply, and its results. Jehovah is King for ever; the heathen are perished out of His land. There is the public judgment; now the secret of the Lord. Jehovah has heard the desire of the humble. He prepared their heart, and then hearkened; and that hearing will be in judging, in being Judge for the fatherless and the oppressed, so that the man of the earth, he who had his strength and hope there, should no more oppress.

One or two remarks are required on both psalms. There are two parties, and in a certain sense three, besides the poor humbled remnant who wait upon God: the heathen (Goim), strangers to Israel, who oppress them, enemies of God; and the wicked, then more especially among the Jews, as we have seen. I have said three, because the wicked are spoken of in a double way. In general, indeed exclusively so in Psalm 10 and each time it is used in Psalm 9, except verse 17, it is in the singular. In verse 17 it is plural, to show that all of them will be cast down into Sheol. In the singular it is, I

judge, characteristic; yet I doubt not, there will be one special wicked one The Lawless One, 2 Thessalonians 2:8; the Antichrist, but known here certainly by his character, not by a distinct prophecy of his person. The lawlessness is manifested, but not The Lawless One, and it is not confined to one. The analogy of this, with the circumstances in which Christ was in His rejection on earth, is very plain, as is the case with all the forms of wickedness. The very Trinity is imitated in mischief in the Apocalypse. There is the city of corruption, as the bride of Christ; and so on.

Up to this, save as the Messiah of God's counsels was brought out in Psalm 2, the righteous man was given characteristically, and here it was necessary to characterize the whole party opposed to Jehovah and His Christ, though one may be the concentrated expression of this character. The remnant were to judge by this character morally. Next, remark, these wicked ones are judged with the heathen; they all come together under the same judgment. The wicked shall be turned into "Sheol," and all the heathen who forget God. So verse 5: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked." Psalm 9 is, as we have seen, the general view of Jehovah's intervention in judgment. In Psalm 10 we have particularly the position of the sorrow and trial of the remnant within. Hence we find the wicked (man), not the heathen until on the execution of judgment they are found too to have perished out of Jehovah's land, so as to identify the judgment with the general statements of Psalm 9. How completely this all answers to the history we have of the latter days, I need not say.

What the righteous remnant are to do when the power of evil is thus dominant in Emmanuel's land, Psalm 11 treats of. Psalms 11-15, as I have already remarked, give the thoughts and feelings of the remnant at that time (that is, consequent on the state of things spoken of in Psalms 9, 10). I will now trace the outline of these five psalms. Psalm 11 presents to us the righteous repelling the idea of quailing, as void of resource, before the godless wickedness of those who fear not God. He trusts in Jehovah. Still the wicked, with all will, seek the destruction of those who are true of heart. And if all human resource fails all that was a ground on which hope could be built for the earth, what was the righteous to do? Jehovah is as stable as ever. He is in His holy temple has His place on earth, which faith owns, let it be ever so desolate; and His throne is in heaven: no evil can enter there, and it rules over all.

But there is more than this. If He abide in sure repose, because Almighty and far above all evil, in heaven, He looks on the earth He governs it, for this, not the assembly's heavenly portion, is our subject here and indeed in all the Old Testament. His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. This is a most solemn and consoling truth for those in trial. But the ways of

God in government are still further revealed. The Lord tries the righteous: so the history of Job, a picture of what happens to Israel, teaches us. The present state of things is not in any way a revelation of the government of God. Faith knows God has the upper hand, and that all things work together for good to those that love Him; but immediate government, so that the present state of things should show the result of God's estimate of good and evil here below, is not in exercise. If it were so, no evil could be allowed. The righteous would flourish, and all he does prosper. But it is not so. The assembly, meanwhile, has her portion out of the world, has her place of abode where Christ has gone to prepare her one. She suffers with Him and will reign with Him. But as to all His saints, He tries them; as to the wicked, whom He abhors, upon them He will rain judgment, snares, and fire and brimstone; for the righteous Jehovah loves righteousness, His countenance beholds the upright. Here is the clear ground for faith then, when the remnant are in trial. God beholds He tries the righteous, and will in due time execute judgment. It involves this: the righteous Jehovah loves righteousness.

Such is the general basis of the godly man's confidence and walk; but they are not insensible to the evil, but can present it to the Lord. This is the subject of Psalm 12, "Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceaseth." Jehovah will cut off the proud and deceitful lips. It is the character of the wicked. He knows no check, no bridle to his will says, Who is Lord over us? But it is just for his oppression of the poor that Jehovah arises. God's word, on which these had relied, and which promised help as the necessary witness of Jehovah's character to which they looked, is a sure and well-tried word. It will bear infallibly its promised fruit. There is nothing deceitful in it. Jehovah will keep His poor from the generation of the wicked. But the wicked have full scope when the worthless are exalted on high.

In Psalm 13 the righteous is reduced to the lowest point of distress as far as evil from men goes. It is as if God had entirely and definitely forgotten him. His enemy was exalted over him, and he taking counsel in his heart; but then he cries-looks to Jehovah to hear lest he should perish on the one hand, and his enemy on the other have to say he had prevailed. But he is heard, and sings to Jehovah, in whose mercy he had trusted, and who deals bountifully with him at last.

In Psalm 14 the evil has reached its climax in God's sight What is ever true of flesh is now brought up under God's eye at the time when He is going to judge. Man rises up in pride before Him: yea, He judges because flesh does so. He looks down to see if any understand or seek Him amongst men; but there are none. A remnant indeed wrought in by grace, whom He already owns as His people (v. 4), are there, and these the wicked eat up as they

would bread they do not call on Jehovah. It is man's full-blown pride and wickedness; but all is soon changed: God is in the congregation of the righteous. Fear falls upon the proud, who but a while ago were scorning the poor for trusting Jehovah. The seventh verse shows us that all this is anticipative and prophetic, and where and how it will be accomplished. It is the desire of the godly one according to the intelligence of faith. He looks for it, note, out of Zion, not content till Jehovah establishes praise there. The people, too, remark, are seen as in captivity.

Then comes the inquiry who is the person that will have a share in the blessings of that holy hill, when the Lord shall have established the seat of His righteous power in Zion?

**PSALM** 15 gives the answer he in whom is uprightness of heart in the path of the law. Remark here, that while the godly (when all is utterly dark, and wickedness has entirely the upper hand, and the foundations of human earthly hope, even in the things that belong to God on the earth, are destroyed, and wickedness is in the place of righteousness) look above and see God's throne immutable in heaven, and thus all in heaven and earth brought into connection; yet, as to the point they look to, it is Jehovah in His holy temple and deliverance coming out of Zion; and so it will (see <23606>Isaiah 66:6). The immutable throne in heaven will establish in sure power the long desolate throne upon the earth. Jehovah will be in His temple, but will reign in the Person of Christ in Zion. This is Jewish deliverance and according to just Jewish hopes.

There is one important general remark to make here the sense of full relationship with Jehovah is enjoyed. Whatever the trial, whatever the condition of the remnant, the wickedness of the people, the oppression of the Gentiles in the land, the faith of the remnant contemplates its relationship with Jehovah. And hence Jehovah is viewed as in His holy temple, though there is as yet no manifestation of His power. We have not, therefore, the remnant as yet entirely cast out, nor is the power of Antichrist here contemplated as manifested. When he sets up his power, there will be open apostasy, and the faithful will be driven out. But the wicked and the Gentile, as such, in the land, are contemplated. We learn clearly from this psalm (11) that the wicked is characteristic. It is plural, except verse 5 where it is in contrast with the righteous.

These psalms, passing over the driving out from Jerusalem, go on in hope to another scene the deliverance wrought by Jehovah when He is indeed returned to Jerusalem; not the destruction of Antichrist by the Lord coming from heaven, but the driving out of the Gentile oppressors by Jehovah established in Zion. Hence all Israel is brought in (<19407>Psalm 14:7). And

their salvation comes out of Zion. Hence these psalms, as far as they refer to Christ, look at the time in which He walked on earth before His final rejection. They do not, save Psalms 2 and 8, directly refer to Him, but to the remnant. But in His public path on earth, He did, from His baptism by John Baptist, associate Himself graciously with them; as at the close He tasted in grace their final sorrows in the close of their history.

These psalms present to us the state of the remnant while still having their place among the nations who have not yet openly broken, in apostasy, with Jehovah, but whose wickedness is in fact showing itself, and ripening to its highest pitch. And they pass over, in faith, to the time when Jehovah, seated in Zion, delivers His people, casting all the Gentiles out of His land, all Israel being restored from their captivity. The whole latter-day scene, except the last half-week of Antichrist's power, is before us. Jehovah is still in His place, as publicly owned. It was just thus in the Lord's days. In <19145>Psalm 14:5, Elohim is spoken of, because it is not relationship which is there in question, but God Himself in His nature and character. Not man, or anything human, or even Satan's power, was there; but God was in the generation of the righteous.

With Psalm 16 we begin a very important series of psalms-those in which the connection of Christ Himself with the remnant is brought before us by the divine Spirit. In Psalm 16, Christ takes formally His place among the remnant. It is quoted by the apostle Peter to prove His resurrection, and the principle of it is referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews to show His participation in human nature. * After examining many critical authorities, I adhere to the English translation of the second verse. The third leaves the sense obscure, from not changing the preposition. "But to the saints" answers to "said unto the Lord," not to "extendeth not to thee." He says to the Lord, "My goodness... to the saints,... in them is all my delight." Thus this psalm has a most important and deeply interesting place. It is Christ taking His place in grace amongst the poor remnant of Israelof the servant to tread the path of life which none as in flesh had found in this world, and that leading through death to beyond it, where there was fullness of joy. He takes the place of dependence, of trust, not of divine equality. And He who says He does not, must have had title to do so, or need not have said it. He was taking another place. He takes the place of servant, and calls Jehovah His Lord. Nor was this all. He takes a place, however alone He might be in perfection and perfect in doing it, with the saints on earth. And this He does, not merely as a fact, but with the fullest affection. His delight is in them. He joys to call them the excellent of the earth.

[* The quotation in <580210>Hebrews 2 is literally from the LXX of <230810>Isaiah 8.]

Note further, it is not with the heavenly saints He associates Himself, nor are those of whom He speaks here united to Him in heaven, but He associated with them. Some may go to heaven by that path of life of which He has Himself left the track, but His association with them, and theirs with Him, is under the title of the excellent of the earth.

We may further remark, that the whole psalm breathes this spirit, and takes this place, of dependence, so precious for the poor remnant. It is not, Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days that was taking a divine place. His body was a temple; He raised it up Himself. Here He leans as man on Jehovah in both perfect. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.” Let us now consider the contents of this psalm in more detailed order. We have already noticed the first verses; but the principles are of the last importance, as presenting Christ taking this place, so that I return to them.

Messiah looks as man to God to preserve Him. He takes the place of man. It is not merely a Jew already there calling on Jehovah, but a man with God. He puts His trust in Him. The principle of trust Paul alleges in Hebrews 2 as a witness that Messiah was the true man. Next, He takes the place of a servant. He says to Jehovah for now He takes His place before Him “Thou art my Adoni, my Lord.” This is a definite and distinct place. He moreover takes His place, not in divine goodness towards others, but before God in a man’s place. My goodness, He says, extendeth not to thee. Thus He said to the young man who came to Him, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.” But though in truth alone, looked at in His relationship to man, for all were sinners, He takes His place with the remnant, the excellent of the earth. This He did historically, when He went to the baptism of John Baptist, with those whom the Spirit led to God in the holy path of repentance. They went first there. He associates Himself with them in grace. Still, we look on to the full result in the last days even here. He will not hear of any God but Jehovah. The sorrows of those who did should be multiplied. Jehovah Himself was His portion, and He maintained Him in the sure enjoyment of that which He was to enjoy in the purpose of God, and pleasant was the place where the lines had fallen to Him. It was Jehovah’s inheritance on the earth that was His portion, and this is specially in Israel. Such was His portion; but then there was His path first. Here He blesses Jehovah too. His counsel was always His guide. He walked by it. The secret of Jehovah was with Him to guide Him; and away from men, when all was brought into the silence of His heart and its inmost feelings, His own inmost thoughts were light and guidance. It is ever so when we are in communion with God; for, though in the heart (such thoughts are always His light in it, the fruit, and the moral fruit, of the working of His Spirit)

there was the positive direction and guidance of Jehovah, and those inward apprehensions of His soul, the result of divine work in it.

In Christ of course this was perfect. It is well, while judging of all by the word, not to neglect this working of the soul, as moved and taught of God. The mind of the Spirit in moral discernment, is found in it. Besides this guidance, there was positive purpose of heart. He had set Jehovah always before Him. This only direction did He follow, and because of His being near, and at His right hand, He would not be moved. It was not self-dependence, but trust in Jehovah. This was indeed the path of life, though as yet unmanifested in visible power (compare <6104>Romans 1:4).

Hence He would rejoice through all, and pass through death with unclouded hope; His flesh should rest in it; as a man He did not fear it. Jehovah, whom He trusted, would not leave His soul in Hades, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Soul and body, though going respectively to the place of departed spirits and the place of corruption, would not be left in the one or see the other. Jehovah would show Him the path of life through, but beyond, death. How blessedly He did so! It led up to brighter joys than Israel's blessing, among whom He had come to sojourn. There indeed the excellent of the earth could not follow Him (<4333>John 13:33, 36; <4219>21:19). He must first dry up the waters of Jordan for them, and make it the path for them also where He was gone. For that path, since it led through death, must lead, if it was indeed the path of life, to what was beyond it the presence of Him, in whose presence there is fullness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Such is the blessed issue and result of the Lord's path across this world, where He took His place among the saints, and trod, in confidence on Jehovah (into whose hands He committed His spirit), the path which, if He took us up, must lead through death, and then found the path again in resurrection, and so as man up to Him with whom is fullness of joy. The Spirit of holiness marked the life of the Son of God all through. He was declared to be such, with power, by resurrection; but, being man, passed up into the presence of God. The holy confiding life found its perfect joy there. He is (blessed be God, and the name of that blessed One who has trod this path!) our forerunner. *

> [* Compare as to a special aspect of this, <4823>John 12:23, 24; and the Lord's consequent place, in chapters 11, 12, 13, as we have seen, had given testimony to His place according to Psalm 2. See note on Psalm 8.]

Let us dwell for a moment on the connection of this with other scriptures, partially referred to. It is of importance, as showing Christ's position in the midst of Israel, and the difference of their associations with Him, from

those of the saints of the assembly. And besides that, we get the divinely perfect feelings of Christ Himself in this position: He is in association with the saints in Israel; only He voluntarily takes it (that is, that into which they are called out in witness of their return to God). We see (Hebrews 2:13) that this association is with those that are sanctified. He makes one company with that pious remnant manifested thus for God. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, having taken up their cause and consequently become man, become flesh and blood, because the children whom God had given Him partook of it.

We see that He really became man, but to identify Himself with the interests, and to secure the blessing of the saints, * of the remnant, of the children whom God was bringing to glory, and who are distinguished from the mass of Israel, to whom they were to be a sign (see Isaiah 8:18). In this passage the condition of this remnant and the expectation of better days are considered. Leaving aside the assembly which is not the subject of prophecy, the passage passes, as we often see, from Christ's personal connection with the saints in Israel to this position and portion of these saints in the last days. This is with sufficient distinctness given us in this passage of Isaiah to help us much in understanding the way in which the Spirit of God does pass from the previous history of the saints in Israel over to the last days, leaving out the assembly altogether. Christ, in spirit, contemplates these only His connection, that is, with the remnant of Israel, and so far with the nation, and thus passes over the whole history of the assembly, to Himself again in the same connection with the nation in the last days.

> [* Thus, becoming man, and through glorifying God in His work as man, He has also title under God's gift over all flesh.]

"Bind up the testimony," He says (Isaiah 8:16, 17), "seal the law among my disciples, and I will wait * upon Jehovah, who hideth his face from the house of Israel, and will look for him." This was when He had become the rejected sanctuary and the stumbling-stone.

> [* This is the passage quoted in Hebrews 2 "I will put my trust in him."]

It continues to the final glory, when Israel shall possess Him as the Son born to them (Isaiah 9:6, 7). If we do not abstract the assembly, it is impossible to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament. The assembly has her heavenly portion, but Christ can consider His relationship with His earthly people separately.

To return to Psalm 16, the reader will remark the reference to idolatry (one of God's great controversies with Israel) in the fourth verse. From

<4012443>Matthew 12:43-45, and <2360501>Isaiah 65 we learn that the Jews will fall into idolatry in the latter days. Jehovah alone is acknowledged by the prophetic Spirit of Christ. It is after this is all done away that He will rejoice, in the days that are to come, in the portion which Jehovah has given Him with the excellent of the earth. The certainty of this hope is connected with the resurrection (which is a necessary condition to its fulfillment, and which the favor of Jehovah secures to His Anointed) in all the virtue of that power which will not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Hence the apostle refers to the sure mercies of David; that is, to the accomplishment of all God's promises to Israel, as a proof that Christ was to rise from the dead now no more to return to corruption. Nothing can be more beautiful (if it be not His death) than the expression of the Lord's feelings given us in this psalm the expression by Himself of the place He has taken, and that with the saints. Jehovah is His own portion. How truly was it so! What other had He? Yet His delight was in the saints. Do we not see it in His disciples? With the first step of spiritual life in the remnant, shown in their going to John's baptism of repentance, He identifies Himself who surely had no need of repentance. So, as a faithful man, an Israelite, He sets Jehovah always before Him. So, even in death, He rests, in confidence, on Him for resurrection, that path of life through, and in spite of, death (and which He has opened for us), and there Jehovah, God, His Father's presence, is (He knows) the fullness of joy; at His right hand pleasures for evermore. This is the highest proper joy of the mind and Spirit of Christ; not glory, but the presence of God.

The key to Psalm 16 was in the words, "In thee do I put my trust"; to Psalm 17, "Hear the right." In Psalm 16 we have seen the blessed path and working of that spirit of confidence. It is, though the same spirit works in the remnant, essentially applicable to Christ Himself in Person. Psalm 17 doubtless applies to Him also, but not so entirely so. It is on somewhat lower ground, though one on which the Spirit of God speaks. We see distinctly that it contemplates others, though not without Christ, in verse 11. "They have now compassed us in our steps." Still, Christ is found here: without Him none really could say to purpose, Hear the right. It is an appeal to the judgment of Jehovah, God, coming forth to vindicate the righteousness of Him that cries to Him. The godly remnant will be, in the main, delivered from their deadly enemies. Jehovah will arise and disappoint them.

Still, some will fall, even of the wise (<2701135>Daniel 11:35)Christ Himself, the perfect One, though for more glorious reasons, still in sympathy with His people, did. Hence the righteousness goes higher up than the present deliverance by God's government of the godly remnant on earth, to a result

true of Christ, and a comfort for the faith of all those who may fall under the oppression of the enemy. “I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness.” This is fully true of Christ, who is before His Father in righteousness, and is the very image of the invisible God He in whom He is displayed in glory. But He traces the path He trod as the righteous One on earth, in the midst of evil, and where He underwent the temptations of the enemy. First, there was perfect integrity of heart, and that in the most secret thoughts of it. There was purpose not to transgress. In obedience the words of God’s lips guided Him; and thus the paths of the destroyer were never an instant entered on; the words of God’s lips never lead there. This the Lord showed in His temptation in the wilderness. In the paths of Jehovah He looked to Him to hold up His goings. This is a part of righteousness in man dependence. He called on God, sure that He would hear Him. This is the confidence we have. Such was His path.

He applies it then as the ground of looking for the intervention of God’s power to protect Him as He does those that trust in Him from the wicked that oppressed Him. Prosperous and lifted up as they were, Jehovah was His refuge when He did not yet interfere. But He looked to His openly doing so. Remark that the perfectness of moral character gives nearness of confidence and sense of preciousness to Jehovah. Even in us God would have this. We are of more value than many sparrows the very hairs of our head counted. Here it is perfect, and He looks to be kept as the apple of the eye that which is most preciously guarded by him whose it is.

After all, these prosperous oppressors were but the hand of Jehovah men of this world, who got all heart could desire from the outward providence of God. But what a lesson among Jews, whose legal portion was blessing in basket and store and children! (Compare the parables of Dives and Lazarus, and of the unjust steward). Here then the breach with this world, and a place in glory in the next, are fully contemplated. Jehovah’s face in righteousness, and likeness to Him when thus woke up into another world, were well worth the portion of the men of this world. But here, mark, death and another world are contemplated, though deliverance is also (the remnant being more distinctly brought in). It is the same as we have seen in Matthew 5, where also both are contemplated. We have thus, in this first book, the Jews at the end of days, but in circumstances analogous to what Christ’s life was, that is, moving as godly ones in the midst of the wicked people.

**PSALM** 18 presents to us the connection of Christ, and particularly of His (not atoning suffering that is found in Psalm 22, but His) entering into the sorrows of death, with the whole history of Israel. It is the connection of the

deliverance of Israel and the final judgment executed in their behalf on the earth with the title Christ had to that intervention. No doubt the atonement was absolutely necessary to this, but it is not on that side that His sufferings are looked at here. God delights in Him and answers Him according to His uprightness, and delivers the afflicted remnant, into whose sorrows He has entered, with Him. Christ is the center, in a word, of the deliverances of Israel the cause of their deliverance from Egypt, and of their complete and final redemption by power in the latter day, and then their personal Deliverer too. He is dependent on Jehovah, is heard, and His sorrows are before us; but at the close He works in the power of Jehovah the deliverance of His people, and then is the full witness of God's mercy (chesed) to His Anointed David and His seed for evermore. Mercy here is not simply such as we would speak of to sinners, but favor and grace shown and enjoyed, so as even to be used for piety in man. It is particularly celebrated in Psalm 89, where, from these mercies centering all in Him, the term is applied to Christ in person. He is the chasid (v. 19). Hence the blessings conferred on Israel at the close (and indeed on all who enjoy them) are called by the same word "the sure mercies of David," confirmed by an everlasting covenant, and indeed, as the apostle shows us, secured by the resurrection of Christ, making their connection with His sorrows of death in this psalm very plain.

This psalm presents us also with a direct scriptural proof and illustration of a most essentially important principle as to the nature of all the psalms, giving a key to their general character and form. We know from the book of Samuel that the occasion of this psalm was the celebration of David's deliverances from the hand of Saul and of all his enemies. But it is evident that the language of the psalm in no way stops short at any events in the life of David, or that in its main purport the Spirit of God contemplates even what happened to that already anointed sufferer, who was the occasion of the psalm. The Spirit of God takes up the circumstance which has present personal interest for him whom He uses as prophet merely, as the occasion to bring out the larger and wider scene of which Christ alone can be the center, giving a meaning to the whole, in respect of which the more immediate circumstance only forms a partial, though perhaps a most interesting, link in the chain which leads up to the full display of God and His ways in the great result. So it was with all the prophets, only here more personally predictive. Sennacherib's invasion, for example, is the occasion of bringing on the scene the Assyrian of the latter days. Thus prophecies had an application of the deepest interest at the time and became the instrument of the present government of God, but were also the revelation of those ultimate events on the earth in the same peoples and nations in which the government of God would be fully and finally displayed. They

are of no private interpretation. See 2 Peter 1:20. They formed part of the great scheme of divine government.

In the Psalms the writer and immediate occasion sometimes almost wholly disappear, are never the main object, but are not to be lost sight of in the expressions used as the utterance of personal feeling, and which are not the revelation of objective facts. In the latter case the circumstances of the writer have little application. The Psalms necessarily bring in the speaker more, though believers find that the Holy Ghost used the speaker's feeling to provide for the hearts of others, yet commanded and wrought in them, and led the writer by His power far beyond anything that the occasion would have suggested to his own mind. The feeling, in its nature suited to the event which might give rise to the psalm, was only the occasion of the Holy Ghost taking the writer up to provide a divine record to guide feelings in future days, or to reveal those of Christ as taking up the cause of His people. They may be those of the speaker too, as in simple piety was often the case; but in all cases it was the Spirit's provision for future days, or a prophecy relating to Christ Himself and the part He takes in those dealings of God with Israel, and going on, looking at the book as a whole, to the full and undisguised celebration of the results.

The psalm, as we have said, takes in the whole history of Israel, and speaks as in the time when deliverance from the pressure of hostile power is already accomplished. But it celebrates especially Jehovah Himself the Deliverer, and still declares the speaker's dependence on Him. This is the thesis of the psalm. It then, as is the usual form of the Psalms, goes through all the circumstances which lead the soul up to what is celebrated in the first verse or verses. Christ is seen, the sorrows of death compassing Him and floods of ungodly men besetting Him, the sorrows of Hades upon Him and the cords of death about His soul. I have no doubt the letter of this was the expression of what David had felt, as indeed verse 50 shows. Still, as I have said, this was merely the occasion. The substance of it applies to Christ. He passes in His mind, as in Gethsemane, through the sorrows of death. This is the groundwork laid for all the rest.

The next point is dependence and entreaty. In His distress He calls upon Jehovah and cries to His God. He hears Him as in the midst of Israel, His cry comes before Him Now comes the results. Christ but represented Israel here, for we have nothing to do with the assembly here. From verse 7-16 we have the deliverance of Israel from Egypt by the mighty acts of Jehovah. But these were not all Israel's difficulties The power of his enemies was to be annulled, who were stronger than he as regards flesh. This also was accomplished, and he was brought into a wealthy place.

But this introduces another principle the righteousness in which God delighted; and which, while found absolutely and perfectly only in Christ as a living man, yet characterizes the remnant of Israel in whose hearts the delight in God's law is written. This principle is brought out from the latter part of verses 19-26. Christ is the foundation of this, but it is as entering into the condition and sorrows of His people. He is the Israel in spirit; and hence, while all the value of His perfectness is before God for them, the perfectness of that One whose whole life, as identified with the remnant, was well-pleasing to Him, yet we must take the place and state of the remnant, as of David himself. For, though Christ entered into this place of the remnant in His own perfectness, to give the value of that perfectness to them before God, as agreeable in His sight, yet the state of those to whom it was to be applied is that which is substantially before us in the psalm. Hence we find, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

This is most important in judging of the literal use of the Psalms. Christ could have said, "from iniquity"; but personally, "from mine iniquity," He could not. But the Spirit of godliness (of Christ) in the remnant thus working guards them from following the flesh. They own, that if Israel goes astray (and so they did all but universally in principle), this wickedness was theirs, in themselves; but they were kept from it. Now this is truth in the inward parts just what God wants. It is the government of God which we have here distinctly brought out in its unchangeable principle (v. 25, 26). Now Christ, having taken up their cause, as associated with them, with these "excellent of the earth," all the value of what awakened God's delight in Him, and which, by grace, animated them, was their place of acceptance before God, though the atonement was the final ground of it. But in their case this integrity and divine inward nature were shown in keeping themselves from their natural course. But there was another part of this government, tender care of the afflicted ones, saving them and bringing down all man's pride (v. 27). In darkness there would be light. To the righteous there arises light in the darkness.

Now another scene dawns on us the coming in of power in their behalf. And, as Christ had taken the sorrow at the beginning, and then we had the remnant in their own condition, yet Christ not separated from them in the way of interest and association (for it is not union here, that is the assembly's portion), so here He must take the power in Person too; just as in Mark He was engaged in the sowing and engaged in the harvest, all the intermediate time going on without His personal intervention or seeming care, though the crop was always His. God's word had stood good all through, and Jehovah Himself was a buckler to those that trusted in Him. But now He gives strength and victory to His anointed for Israel from verse

29 to the end. Doubtless the language is that of David, but it is substantially the introduction of the kingdom of Christ.

A very few remarks will suffice to give the details, this general character of the latter part of the psalm being seized. The general strain is rest less victory. But in verse 43 there are particulars to be noted. Three classes of persons are here introduced: the people He is delivered from their strivings; the heathen He is made their head; then a people, not before known with which He had not been in relation as in Israel, shall serve Him. That is, Messiah delivered from the strivings and revoltings of ungodly Jews; made the head of the heathen; and then a people hitherto strangers should serve Him become now a people to Him. Submission will be immediate, so evident is His glory and power now. And even where there is no sincerity, or at least no proof of it, they will at once serve, bowing down to Him. This is the introduction of what is millennial. Here Jehovah is again recognized.

We return, so to speak, to the original thesis of the psalm, having arrived with Israel, or the Jews at least, across all the difficulties of the way. I do not see the Antichrist here. The only word which might seem to speak of him is in verse 48th. man of violence; but I apprehend it is an enemy from without. Hence he praises among the heathen. The destruction of Antichrist would make him praise among the Jews. Here, it is to be remarked, though clothed with strength by God, Christ is seen as the dependent man, and on earth, whether suffering or victorious. We find Him (as we may have seen from the study of the details in verses 4-6, at the beginning of the psalm) in His sorrow and trial; and though David be partly in the scene, yet substantially Messiah again from verse 32. Between the two, it is Israel, first delivered as a nation, then in sorrow and calamity. Then the principles of God's government are stated, and the deliverance comes in. It is very interesting to see, after the Person of Messiah has been introduced, and His association with the godly remnant shown, the whole public history of Israel dependent from first to last on His interest in them, His having entered into their sorrows, afflicted in all their afflictions.

We now come (it is just the same order of thought in John 17) to the testimonies given in the world or to Israel. Psalm 19 gives us two: the creation, particularly that in the heavens, which is above man and has not been corrupted by him (this a testimony to God as such). Then the law (v. 7). This is the law of Jehovah. Here, in lowliness, the godly Jew takes two views of sin. First, he cannot tell his: so much lies hidden from him. Here he desires to be cleansed. Secondly, presumptuous sins: from these he desires to be kept. Thus he would be kept from any falling away from Jehovah.

In Psalm 20 we have, in the midst of sorrows and evil come in as regards the two preceding testimonies, the faithful witness, the living witness Himself. He is seen in the day of His distress, for He is come down into the midst of an ungodly people. The remnant is prophetically designated by the fact that they in heart enter into His distress, assured that Jehovah will hear His Anointed.

Conscience then characterizes the remnant, truth in the inward parts in presence of the law, and taking that law spiritually; interest of heart in Messiah, when He is the despised and rejected of men. Still we are in Israel, and the help is sought from the God of Israel, and still as dwelling amongst them, having His sanctuary there.

In Psalm 16 the Lord identified Himself with the remnant. Here they associate themselves in heart with Him thus suffering, and in His conflict here, though they may see as but the outside of it, yet be assured of His acceptance with Jehovah. They look for His offerings to be accepted, the desire of His heart and His counsels to be fulfilled, all His petitions accomplished. Their joy is in the full deliverance of this blessed but dependent One. In verse 6 we have the assurance of faith as to it, that from heaven itself Jehovah has heard, the mighty are fallen, the poor of the flock are raised up and maintained before Him.

In verse 9 Messiah takes another place. While Jehovah had delivered Him as the dependent One in the day of His distress, the remnant now look to His hearing them when they call. Jehovah is still looked to as the Savior, but Messiah the king is invoked. They now know that the Anointed is exalted. No part of scripture opens out the Person of Christ as the Psalms do, unless the first two chapters of Hebrews, which quote and serve as a key to them: here Messiah connected with the remnant in the dependent One, but exalted too as the king to be invoked of Israel. A little farther on we shall find that He is Jehovah Himself. I see no reason to alter the text according to the Septuagint, followed by others, such as the Latin. The Targum, and Syriac, and all Jewish interpretations, read as it is read in English. The other reading is, “Jehovah save the king hear us,” etc. Already in Psalm 21 Jehovah and the king are associated in judgment, as indeed we have seen they were already in Psalm 2. It is the very main point of instruction in the Psalms the mystery of the manifestation of Christ in flesh.

In Psalm 21 we get the full answer to Psalm 20 and its desires, in the exaltation of Christ, throwing its light back on the true character of that psalm. The king rejoices in Jehovah’s strength and exults in deliverance through it. What this is is then unfolded. The faithful longing of the remnant was that Jehovah would grant the suffering Messiah according to His own

heart, that He would fulfill His petitions. Now in the exaltation of Christ they can say the Spirit says for them Thou, Jehovah, hast given Him His heart's desire, and not withholden the request of His lips. Nay, He was met by Jehovah's free and willing love towards Him, with the blessing of goodness, and was gloriously crowned by Him. But what had really passed and been done is more minutely revealed. He had asked life of Jehovah (compare [illegible]Hebrews 5). He gave it Him, but it was length of days for ever and ever, the abiding eternal life of the risen glorified man. That was the answer to the cry of the suffering Messiah when death was before Him. And this is clearly seen in what follows. His glory is great in this deliverance by Jehovah's delight. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Jehovah has laid honor and majesty upon Him. He has made Him most blessed for ever and glad with Jehovah's countenance. Such was the suffering Messiah's deliverance, the divine answer to His cry, His being glorified as the suffering man. It is not the wrath of God which He is here viewed as undergoing; on the contrary, help is looked for from Jehovah when He is brought low. We have already seen the result of this judgment on His enemies. Man's enmity and devices are seen. Man's judgment follows. The king's right hand finds out all His enemies. Jehovah shall swallow them up. It is not His atoning sufferings which are seen here, but the mischievous devices of men. Hence His sufferings do not bring peace, but judgment.

We have here, then, Christ suffering and crying to Jehovah; Christ exalted as man, crowned with glory and honor; Christ executing judgment on His enemies. In the three psalms we have the witness of creation, the witness of law, and the Messiah's (the Faithful and True Witness) sufferings and exaltation the we final witness of the righteous ways of God. This must be a revelation of all importance to the remnant in the latter day for suffering or for assured deliverance. Christ has suffered as man from men and for faithfulness; and judgment on man will be the consequence; meanwhile He is exalted on high. But He has suffered for sin from God. The facts connected with this last suffering are unfolded to us in Psalm 22 with its results also.

Here the sufferings of Christ have another and deeper character. We have before us that great work which is the foundation of all the blessing developed in the other psalms, and of every blessing and eternal glory, making the interest He takes in the saints possible, because it makes it righteous, and the very way of glorifying God. This psalm, as it has been already observed to be a common principle of their structure, gives us the theme in verse 1. Christ had suffered from man from men alike heartless and violent: dogs had compassed Him, fat bulls of Bashan closed Him in.

But if the measure of this was extreme, and felt more and otherwise than ordinary sufferings from men because it was wholly unrighteous and for Jehovah's sake, for whose name He suffered reproach; yet others had in some measure born the suffering of violence and reproach from heartless men too, and for Jehovah's sake. If He in grace was the leader and finisher of faith, others through grace had trodden it was their granted privilege, but His willing grace some steps of that divinely marked-out path. But they trusted in Jehovah and they were delivered. Jehovah never left or forsook them. He had promised He would not. They knew in their consciences that He had never failed in one good or gracious thing He had promised.

But here was a suffering out of the reach of promise, yea, which was to lay the ground of its righteous accomplishment. It was a new scene, which none had been ever like, nor ever will be, in the history of eternity; which stands alone, The Righteous One forsaken of God. It cannot be repeated a second time; it would have lost its character and the repetition destroy or deny the witness of the first God perfectly glorified, morally glorified, about evil; He has not been, if it has to be repeated. It is once for all, complete and perfect. The nature of God has been made good in testimony, morally, in the universe. How should that be repeated? I say again, if it had to be, neither had done it; but it is done. The divine glory is perfectly, eternally, made good. But for this in respect of good and evil that righteousness and grace, or love, where feebleness and evil are, should be made good all that God is against evil must be verified and made good. Against whom? Who should endure it? Against the sinner it were everlasting misery, nor was love then displayed; what God is, not manifested. But the Lord gives Himself for this; He who was able to bear it, and, in the lowest humiliation of those He took up, to accomplish it in their nature, He bears in His soul all that God is against evil. Tremendous moment!

It is this alone which makes us in any way apprehend what righteousness and judgment are. This is what is shown to us here. It is shown in the utterance of Christ, showing the fact and His sense of it. What it was in its depths no human heart can fathom. It is the fact which is given here, but as felt by Him. Yet we see the consciously righteous One, but the perfectly submissive One; the sense of His own nothingness as to His position, of the certain and immutable perfectness of Jehovah. He is righteous; He can say, "why?" submissive: "yet thou holy"; no working of will, calling God's ways into question; the clear and perfect state thus, which sees God's perfectness, come what will. For it was the one righteous One who had glorified God in all His ways, an exception from all God's ways in righteous grace with such. He is forsaken, cries, and is not heard. He is a worm and no man. But this could not last for ever, no more than He could

be holden of death, having perfectly glorified God in going to the close of trial and awaiting His time. He who was the very delight of Jehovah all through could not be heard till all was accomplished; though more gloriously, and deservedly more gloriously, Jehovah's delight than any living righteousness, though ever so perfect, could claim to be. In that living righteousness He had glorified God about good, perfect in His obedience as man, and perfect in manifesting His Father's name of grace, declaring what God was, cost what it might. The reproaches of those that reproached God fell on Him. But now He glorified God in the place of evil as made sin. This, as we have seen, stands alone. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." There in the place of sin before God, that is, as made sin, yet in that wherein obedience was absolute and perfect in entire self-devotedness to God the contrary of sin where God's righteousness found a motive for love, yet where it was made good in forsaking Him; there the foundation was laid of everlasting righteousness and everlasting blessing; there God perfectly glorified, the foundation laid for the accomplishment of all His counsels in glory. *

> [* The more we study the cross, the more we shall see that every question of good and evil was brought to an issue, and the immutable basis laid for perfect blessing according to what God is in righteousness and grace and majesty too, for the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We come by the blessed testimony that it meets all our wants; but in contemplating it at peace, we see man in absolute sin, hating and rejecting God in grace and goodness; Satan's full power the disciples fled in fear, and all the world else in his power against Christ; man in absolute goodness loving the Father and obedient, glorifying God in the very place of sin where it was needed, and at all cost; we see God in perfect righteousness against sin as nowhere else, and perfect love to the sinner. Innocence was conditional blessing. This is completed in perfectness, and its value can never change. It is everlasting righteousness. Hence the blessing of the new heavens and new earth is immutable. We have had an innocent Eden; a sinful world; and shall have, besides the reign of righteousness, new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.]

Then, when the work is complete, the moral work of glorifying God, He is heard from the horns of the unicorn. Man and all around was hidden, by a darkened heaven, from view, when all of God, and of the power, and powerlessness, of evil as against the sovereign goodness and righteousness of God, was brought to this divine issue, and God glorified about it. And all is between the soul of Him who is an offering for sin and the righteous Jehovah. And it was closed. He was perfect, had secured the glory of God, had glorified Him when He could not be heard, and was heard and it was finished. He goes down indeed into the grave, that trusty and irrefutable witness that all was closed of this great question of which death was the appointed witness, but only to rise without one element wanting that the

work of propitiation and of glorifying God in respect of sin was completed, and the victory over every and the last enemy fully won. He was heard. Who could call it in question who knew that He was risen? And now what remained? Not sin; it was as regards the work to be accomplished for that purpose wholly and for ever put away as in God's sight though not in full result yet, but perfectly for those who had a part with Him. * Wrath for such? The cup had been drunk. Judgment against the sin, or of the sinner for it, where faith is? He had undergone it. The power of death upon the soul? It was overcome. Of Satan who wielded it? It was destroyed. But there was the full light of the Father's countenance and love, the delight of God in divine righteousness, and for us. Into this relationship Jesus now entered as established there in righteousness on the ground of what He had accomplished to glorify His Father; not merely in the everlasting delight which God had in His Person. Hence it was immutable for those who had a part with Him in this place, and for eternal blessedness in the new heavens and the new earth. The place was won for sinners in the putting away of their sin, and founded on the righteousness of God Himself. Into the full blessedness of this name (that is, true relationship with God revealed according to it) He now entered as man. **

[* And this is known by the Holy Ghost sent down when He had ascended on high. The new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will be the full result, while it is the manifestation of the just ground of unbelieving man's final condemnation.]

[** Christ in His lifetime uses naturally the term Father; on the cross, at the close of the hours of darkness, "my God, my God" (in dying, Father, and so before in Gethsemane); after His resurrection, Father and God: one, in His personal relationship and the Father's delight; the other; in divine righteousness, bringing us into it.]

But He had His brethren those at least, with whom He associated Himself and whom He had at heart first of all after His Father's glory. He was entered into this cloudless place of delight. What remained for His heart was to declare the name which expressed it, and to know which was the being brought into it, to His brethren. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." And this most precious witness of His love was exactly what He did after His resurrection: "Go, tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God." Remark, He was heard from the horns of the unicorn. It was on the completing the work, or His subjection of soul to death as divine judgment, that He was heard. When the obedience unto death was complete, hearing became righteous and necessary. The resurrection was the proof to man. But He could say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and deliver it up to Him, and assure the thief he should be that day with Him in paradise.

I have already remarked an infinitely important characteristic of this psalm, so opposed to those which speak of Christ's suffering from man: I mean that all is grace no word of judgment. Who was to be judged, when God had been the One to inflict the suffering the hiding of whose face rather was the suffering and the men who had a part in it, believing, had their sins put away by it? It was as to them the judgment, and the judgment executed and passed. Hence what follows is the wide out-spreading of wave beyond wave of blessing and nought else. We may remark, however, that the blessing here is all on earth: so much does the Lord confine Himself to Israel and the Jews in the Psalms. And though we have seen His own resurrection, and we shall see His ascension brought in, and the path of life thus opened up to faith into the presence of God Himself, yet the heavenly place for the saints is not unfolded. We know well that the truths on which the blessing is based carry us farther; but the psalm does not speak of them.

"In the midst of the congregation will I sing to thee." The remnant then gathered is the first circle gathered into the place of praise; then millennial blessing all Israel. Those that fear Jehovah are to praise Him. Men fear Jehovah, and only fear; but this work makes those that fear praise. Those that feared Jehovah in that day and suffered might take courage, for Christ was their warrant for deliverance and confidence (and could be, having made atonement), but for positive deliverance also; for Jehovah had not turned a deaf ear to the affliction of the afflicted, nor hid His face from him. When He cried, Jehovah heard. He had been for a time there: that had only wrought atonement. And now, heard when that was accomplished, He could assure others of deliverance also. The meek of the earth should now eat and be satisfied, and be at peace. But the blessing would not limit itself to Israel. All the ends of the world would remember themselves, and turn to Jehovah, and worship before Him; for the kingdom will then be Jehovah's. All should bow before Him. Nor was it confined to that generation: to the people that should be born those should declare that Jehovah had done this.

I cannot, in explaining the Psalms, meditate on the wonderful work on which this psalm is founded. I say founded, because the psalm speaks directly of the feelings of Christ under it, rather than of the work itself. I can only desire that this constant and exhaust less theme of the saint may have all the power on my reader's soul, as upon my own, that poor, but renewed, human beings, even by the power of the Holy Ghost, can be capable of. Our comfort as to peace is that God (as indeed His love gave it) estimates it fully; and, while He has glorified Jesus, has Himself accepted that work for our peace. My part here is to unfold, as well as I can, the structure of the psalm itself.

As to the outward sufferings the reader will remark how deep they were. But Christ alone, of all the righteous, must undergo forsaking of God; and, having often declared His confidence in, and intimacy with Jehovah, and taught His disciples to trust in Him, as ever hearing prayer, has publicly now to proclaim that He is not heard, but forsaken. What a tale it tells of what that hour was! But what is important is, as has been already remarked, that His sufferings from man bring judgment on His enemies; His forsaking of God, being expiatory, is a bearing of the judgment, and all that flows from it is unmingled grace. This work being expiatory, once He is heard from the horns of the unicorns, all is grace. A stream of grace flows out for the remnant, then for Israel, for the world, for the generation to come all from the sure and divinely perfect work of atonement in the death of Christ. In the work, in the suffering, He was alone. Once that was finished, He takes His place in the congregation with which He surrounds Himself. Remark how perfect must Christ's knowledge of, and consequent joy be in, the name of God and Father, into the enjoyment of which He entered as man, consequent upon having put away sin, and the delight of God in Him and His work: all that God was against Him then, for Him, according to the virtue of this work, now. How well He must know what the deliverance out of His sufferings on the cross into this light is! Now this is the source of His praise. Such must be the character of ours, founded on the blessed certainty of being come out of the place of sin, death, and judgment, into the perfectness of divine favor. All that is not thus in the spirit of it is out of tune with Him who leads our praises.

**PSALMS** 23, 24 go in a certain sense by themselves, giving the perfect confidence in the Shepherd, Jehovah, founded on the experience of what He is in all circumstances; and, secondly, the character of those who would have a part with Jacob. The two principles we have seen brought out as to Christ in Psalms 16, 17 (and shown in many others); confidence in the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the practical righteousness which characterizes those who will stand in Jehovah's holy place in the time of His millennial glory. But Jehovah Himself takes His place there as King of glory. This gives us the divine side in all its perfectness, of the principle of the path and the result in glory on earth both as to the remnant, Christ, and Jehovah with the blessed witness that on one side He took a place and part with the remnant in' their divinely-given path, and on the other with Jehovah, for He was really a man, but really Jehovah; the daysman that laid his hand upon both.

But we must examine them a little more closely. The comfort of Psalm 23 is not in what Jehovah gives, but in Himself. He does it is the natural fruit of His grace at all times and will be the result make us to lie down in green

pastures, and lead us beside the waters of peace: pleasant food where there can be no drought, security in enjoying it, and guidance in divine refreshings in peace. Such is the portion given by His shepherd care; but still it is Himself as that which gives confidence and takes away care. Evil is come in: we have to feel it we in ourselves, Christ in all that was around Him; so that He could be full of sorrow and troubled we alas! more than that. The Good Shepherd (and Christ is such for us) restores the soul, and leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. The blessing depends on what He is, not on what we have got. I have blessing indeed, and learn it in green pastures; but, if troubled or gone astray, He restores. And not only sorrow and evil had come in with sin, but death too. Then He comes and leads me through it and comforts me. But there are enemies to meet. I have a table spread, on which I feast in their very presence. And how comforting this is to the Christian also! Hence, as it is Jehovah Himself, and not our circumstances, the soul has to depend on, it can say "Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over." When I have contemplated all the pains and difficulties of the way, I have Jehovah Himself more distinctly as the blessing. Hence I can count on it for ever, for He changes not. Experienced in the past, in all the effects of the power of the enemy, and knowing what He Himself has been for me in them, I can reckon on it in the future and at all times. The end of the Lord's dealings will be our dwelling with Him for ever. The blessing thus, though less apparent, is much deeper and more personal, at the close; and, as we have said, the soul rests on Jehovah known in all circumstances, not in the blessing it was natural to Him to give.

An exercised soul thus has in result a far deeper blessing than an outwardly blessed one. So the result for Israel still I more for us entis more than the green pastures, in which originally Jehovah set him. It is the deep knowledge in a tried heart of the faithfulness of Jehovah: and thus, according to the blessing of His own nature, the rest will be His rest. The green pastures were suited to sheep; but the anointed head, and the cup running over, and the house of Jehovah for ever, were what suited Him who dwelt there. Such is the result, for the remnant, of trusting Jehovah, when the green pastures are for the time, at any rate, lost. Such will follow the Lamb. For us Christ is the Shepherd. We suffer with Him, and we have yet better blessing. The Shepherd's care is there meanwhile under another form.

**PSALM** 24 gives, as we have seen, the other part of the condition of the remnant as to the good that is working in them what grace produced in them. Jehovah was the Shepherd by the way. At the end the earth and the fullness of it are His the world and those who dwell therein. Heaven does

not here directly enter into the scene on the road, nor at the end of it; but Jehovah has a special place, a hill more especially His own, in the earth. Who shall ascend into it? We then get their character clean hands, a pure heart. No idol-following heart, no false oath with his neighbor. Such shall be blessed. That is the generation, the real character of those who seek Jacob; for in Jacob is God's seat. They seek Jacob as the blessed people of Jehovah; but, if such ascend into the holy hill, and enter into the holy place, the crowning blessing is that Jehovah Himself enters in at the unfolded gates to dwell there. The victorious Lord Jehovah of hosts enters in. It is Christ Himself who took the place of His sheep to go before them, and has the place of Jehovah, as that which is His by right, and in which He is owned when the fullness of blessing comes in and is revealed.

This closes the development of Christ's place in connection with the remnant, first formally entered upon in Psalm 16. We have now to go through the position of the remnant on a new ground and a different footing.

Christ has been introduced, not indeed yet in glory, but associating Himself with the remnant, and suffering even unto death for them. Hence their whole case can be prophetically gone into. And here for the first time we meet the confession of sins. It is not merely positionth at we had from Psalms 3-7; nor the sense of circumstances which Psalms 11-15 gave, founded on Psalms 9, 10; but the whole case of the remnant, as they will feel, entered into. The first word characterizes them: "Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I lift up my soul." The godly man expresses his trust in his God, and prays that he may not be ashamed, but that those may that are willfully wicked. The remnant are distinguished thus in verse 3. There is the desire to be shown Jehovah's ways, to be taught in His truth, for He was the God of their salvation: they always waited on Him.

Next, verse 6, he casts himself on what God is in mercy, as He had shown Himself, and pleads that He may not remember Israel's past sins, but himself according to His mercy. He knows Jehovah, that He is good and upright, and will therefore teach sinners in the way. His dealing with them is according to His own nature and character where He works in grace, goodness, and uprightness. This is an all-important point. Next, we get the present character of the remnant: they are the meek of the earth; these Jehovah would guide in judgment. All Jehovah's ways were mercy towards such; and faithfulness to promises and righteousness infallibly marked them. In it we have the fullest confession by the godly man of his own sin, not merely the former sins of Israel. He looks only for mercy, his iniquity is so great, and founds his hope on Jehovah's name. This is exceedingly beautiful. Jehovah's name, as revealed in Israel, had in the

previous verses of this psalm been fully entered into; His ways of mercy and truth in Israel. The answer to this cry, in the effectual work of Christ, though testified of in the prophets, and forming in God's sight the ground-work of all, is not, I apprehend, at this time known by the godly remnant, nor till they look on Him whom they have pierced; but they have the ways of God, His promises, and the abundant declarations and invitations, yea, pleadings, of Jehovah in the prophets, that if their sins had been as scarlet, they should be as white as snow. All this revelation was Jehovah's name to them; and to this they look, something in the state, though not exactly, of the poor woman in the city that was a sinner before she received the Lord's answer of peace.

In verses 12-14 we get the prophetic answer of the Spirit in hope; in verses 15-21, the meek one. He lays his whole case before Jehovah. The great result and true application is seen in the last verse. This psalm lays the whole case of the remnant before Jehovah in the expression to Him of a heart attracted and taught by grace. It is a very full and distinct expression of their place and pleadings before Him, and according to what He is. Some very definite points are brought out: the confession of Israel's past sins, the confession of his own by him who speaks. Mercy is looked to as the only resource. Yet from so gracious a God they can count on His teaching sinners. But these sinners are the meek of the earth who are to inherit it. Integrity of heart characterizes them, and they trust in and wait for Jehovah. Compare with this the incomparable picture of the remnant in the beginning of Luke. The psalm is both beautiful and very fully characteristic.

**PSALM** 26 is especially the pleading of integrity and trust in Jehovah. Having trusted Him, the godly would surely not slide. He invites Jehovah to search his inmost heart, as Peter did even though fallen. Here, still the goodness of Jehovah was his first motive. Then the separation of the godly from the ungodly body of the nation is fully brought out and taken as a plea that they might not have their souls gathered with the ungodly. Still, though integrity was pleaded, redemption is sought, and mercy. The end would be blessing. Their foot stood in an even place. They would, in the full assembly, bless Jehovah. This is substantially the entire separation of the godly from the nation, and the former becoming the congregation of God.

Thus in these two psalms we have the confession of sins and the pleading of integrity, both marking the real renewal of mind. Though the possibility of government in forgiveness and mercy is founded on the atonement which has been presented in Psalm 22, and is owned fully in Isaiah 53 by Israel subsequent to the period of these psalms; yet the aspect in which all is viewed by the remnant in these two psalms is the known character and government of Jehovah in Israel; and the feelings of a renewed heart are

expressed in reference to that government to Jehovah's ways. His name is the key to their thoughts, and awakens their best and truest affections. It is the faith of a godly Israelite in the last days. The moral state of the remnant is especially brought out in all this part, and more especially their own with Jehovah, circumstances comparatively little; though the enemies without and the transgressors around form necessarily the occasion of those feelings in respect of deliverance and redemption. The heart of the godly one has the key to all Israel's history and Jehovah's dealings with them, because grace is looked to, and sin confessed. This it is that ever gives understanding. And so it is here. Jehovah's ways have been are perfect. He is called upon to remember His own mercies, and not the early sins of His people. The enemies of His people are presented to Him. The hope of forgiveness is founded on Jehovah's name (it is, as we have seen, connected with His government; they have not yet looked on Christ, and understood atonement); the faithful looks to be guided in the way, and Jehovah's faithfulness to him is reckoned on. His sins, sorrows, and enemies are all presented to Him with an open heart. Covenant mercies can be seen, looked to, because Jehovah is, in truth by an upright confessing sinner.

In Psalm 27 we have two distinct parts, and, I apprehend, then in the last two verses the result for the mind of the saint as taught of God. The first part, verses 1-6, is the confidence of the believer, and that absolutely, whatever enemies there were. In the second part, 7-12, we find the cry of distress. In the former, singleness of eye lays the ground of confidence; in the second, the call of Jehovah to seek His face. Enemies without or oppressors within (for the remnant of the Jews will find both against them), a host and war arising, awake no fear Jehovah is the light and salvation of the soul; its only desire, dwelling in the house of Jehovah to see His beauty and inquire in His temple. He had known Him casting confusion on the enemies of the faithful. He sought Him as the desire of his heart. In the time of trouble He would hide him, and the assault of foes would only be the occasion of lifting up his head above them, and then he would offer sacrifices of joy.

From the seventh verse things are otherwise. It is not his state, as thinking of the Lord in faith; distress is there, and he cries. Here he appeals, not to his integrity, but that Jehovah had said, Seek my face. Was He going after that to turn it away? He looks to be guided in a straight path. There is integrity, but he looks to the call of God. Finally, he looks for, and trusts for temporal deliverance in the land of the living; meanwhile he must wait on Jehovah. He would interfere at the right time; He would strengthen the heart meanwhile. It is an additional and instructive picture of the state of the

faithful remnant; their abstract confidence and their ground of hope in distress when Jehovah must be waited for.

**PSALM** 28. The godly Jew pleads, in the time of trouble come on the nation, that he may not be confounded with the wicked. If Jehovah did not appear in his behalf, so much was he in the same distress with them, death would drag him into its jaws. He looks for judgment on the wicked. They slight Jehovah. Jehovah should reward their doings. The psalm furnishes to the remnant not only the cry, but the prophetic witness that Jehovah has heard it. The heart trusts in Jehovah, had found help, and thus joy and praise. Then Messiah is fully joined with the righteous. Jehovah is their strength, He is Messiah's. This once settled, the prophetic desire of the godly, according to the Spirit of Christ, expresses itself that Jehovah should have His people and bless His inheritance (for the faith of covenant blessing and relationship runs through all this part of the Psalms), that He should also feed them and lift them up for ever. Deliverance, blessing, feeding, and unaltered exaltation, such are the fruits looked for of Jehovah's coming in power.

In Psalms 25, 26 we have seen the great moral principles of trust in Jehovah (even when confessing sins) and integrity In these last we have more the personal sense of condition, and way or ground of relationship with God, beautifully shown in the first part of Psalm 27 in the one desire of the heart; and in the second part, in the touching plea, You taught me to seek Thy face; my heart, in those times of divine instructions, said, I will seek it: Lord, will you turn it away now that I am in trouble, when You taught me to seek and trust it? The truth is the same, but in the first part it is the one moral desire of the heart; in the last, the exhortation of God to do it becomes a resource to the soul. Jehovah Himself is their refuge, and has taught them to look for it.

In Psalm 28 the pressure of evil is more felt, and coming judgment and the separation of the remnant looked for. This separation characterizes the whole testimony of God connected with the coming of Messiah, a circumstance which will aid us in seeing the unity of the remnant in the mind of God. Not only was it prophetically announced, as in Isaiah 65, but John the Baptist characterizes the coming of Messiah by it, their being children of Abraham being of no avail (<401809>Matthew 3:9); as indeed it spiritually took place: only that He being rejected and not yet coming in power, they were then added as "the saved," <442047>Acts 2:47, to the assembly. For that, however, Peter takes it up (<442040>Acts 2:40). The Lord Himself receives them as His sheep (<431001>John 10). Paul rests his argument in <451101>Romans 11 upon it too.

**PSALM** 29 summons the mighty to hear the mightier voice of Jehovah, to own Him and worship before Him according to the holy order of His house, celebrating the power of His voice in universal creation; but there is a place of intelligent worship where His glory is understood His temple where men are to come. But this Jehovah is above the haughty raging of the surges of created strength; He sits King for ever above and in spite of all. And He, this mighty Jehovah, will give strength to His people and bless them with peace. It is a positive encouragement for the faithful; not their complaint or appeal, but a testimony for them to encourage their hearts in presence of the mighty. He that cares for them is mightier than they.

In Psalm 30 we have the contrast between trust in prosperity even in that given of God and in God Himself. He has come in and lifted up the poor, and not left him to his foes. His favor is life. If angry, it is but for a little moment, and for the good of His saints: the favor is for ever. In the morning it is light, if heaviness endure for a night. He may let them down as to the grave's mouth, but only to show His power in infallible deliverance. He, the godly man, Israel themselves, as a people, had trusted in given prosperity. Now, in the depth of adversity, he has found Jehovah in deliverance. The power of evil overcome is better than good we may lose. It is security, and in the blessing and arms of Jehovah for us; for He is the deliverer. We see plainly here that it is a living people to be blessed on earth (v. 3, 9). And though there may be analogous mercies in all times, for there is a government of God as regards Christians, to apply it to the saints now would be a dangerous mistake. It speaks of temporal deliverance for peace in this world (compare <2607>Isaiah 64:7, 8). No mountain, even if we own it to be made strong by Jehovah, is like Jehovah Himself, even if I am at the pit's mouth. It is my mountain for my heart when I think of it.

**PSALM** 31 is a proof how Jesus could use devout and holy expressions of a psalm, and indeed pass through all in spirit, without its having a literal application to Him. Here is found the expression He used, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit," which was in the fullest sense true. But the psalm continues, "For thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah God of truth. "He added Father. Yet I doubt not that His spirit had got into the comfort of divine delight again. Still the words, "thou hast redeemed me," cannot apply. * So the whole complaint of the psalm is, besides David, the complaint and confidence of the remnant connecting the two principles, trust and righteousness, and looking for guidance for Jehovah's name's sake, and deliverance when surrounded by enemies. The godly man had called on Jehovah. His name was in question. On His goodness, laid up for them that trusted in Him, he counted; and this in the midst of a life spent in sighing. Distress pressed upon him, and drank up his strength. Yet, tried

for faithfulness, friends and acquaintances fled from him. Such will be the condition of the remnant. How truly Christ entered into it, I need not say. But the time of deliverance, and of all that in any time the saint should be under and pass through, were in God's hand not the enemy's, though he might rage. And in the adversities Jehovah knew his soul, for he walks in the knowledge of covenant-relationship. The presence of Jehovah was a tabernacle and a hiding-place. In the pressure of his spirit, the godly thought himself cast off; but when he cried, Jehovah heard. In all the rage around (v. 13, 14) he cried to Jehovah as his God. The result he now celebrates, and encourages the saints in the last two verses, and all that hope in Jehovah. Whatever sorrows they are in, Jehovah helps the faithful and judges the proud.

> [* The only possible sense it could have as to Him was the deliverance of His soul at that moment as a fact, from the curse He bore for us, in which He had perfectly glorified God as to our sins, and as made sin for us. But the Lord does not use it. But though He had as a fact yet to die, its bitterness and sting were past.]

This, in a certain sense, closes and sums up the experimental expression by the Spirit of the state of the remnant? and fully unfolds it. In the psalm that follows, forgiveness in grace is spoken of. Then there is a clearer apprehension and more objective confidence and judgment of all around, till we come to Psalms 38, 39, which have a peculiar character of their own. Of course, deliverance is not yet come; but the sentiment expressed is become more that of favor in light than confidence out of the depths. How fully this Psalm 31 is the expression of the Spirit of Christ must be obvious to every divinely-taught reader. Yet His own relationship was different. He was Son, and commends His spirit to His Father in death, not to Jehovah to save Him from it; and, as we have seen in the preface, prays for His enemies who crucified Him, instead of demanding vengeance upon them. This demand of His Spirit in the remnant is according to His mind in that day. In Him personally it must have been otherwise; for He came in grace, and was giving His life a ransom for Israel and for many. Hence He passed through all in perfection with His Father in Gethsemane, and gives Himself up then, as being His will, to death. Yet, as to the sorrow and trial, He went through all. And the prophetic Spirit in the Psalms expresses in the denunciatory words what will certainly be accomplished as the consequence of the wicked enmity of the Jews and heathens too at the close; and will become living demands in the mouth of the remnant, whose only and necessary deliverance these judgments will be.

Christ did ask life, and it was given in resurrection and glory, as Psalm 21 shows; but not, as we know, in His being spared here. The path of life led for Him through death in the accomplishment of redemption, though He

could not be holden of it. Thus in spirit He entered into all their affliction. The literal application in the writer's mind was to his own feelings; the prophetical is to the godly remnant in the latter day. The word translated "iniquity," in verse 10, should, I doubt not, be "distress." But the fullness of the various motives and feelings brought together in this psalm require a further brief notice. I have already remarked how the two grounds, so frequently found, of the appeal of the saint's trust in God, and righteousness as the motive and ground of it, are both brought together here. The name's sake of Jehovah is also added here. In verses 3-6 we have His utter rejection of the followers of idolatrous vanities. In verse 7 Jehovah's goodness is recognized as mercy. He has known the soul of the believer in adversities a sweet thought, how dark soever all may have been. And deliverance was granted (v. 9, 10) He pleads his extreme present distress. The first eight verses are a kind of preface of general principles; now it is the pressure of his present state. He was a reproach to enemies, specially to neighbors a fear to his acquaintance; so mean, despised, and yet hated and rejected, was he. It is the portion of a divine character, of God Himself, to be both. Man neglects a despised person; but he never does God, or what is of Him. * They will bring Him low if He puts Himself low, or those that are His; but will fear and hate Him too. He is forgotten, yet slandered, and the active enemy plotting against his life. Thus verses 9-13 give the condition the Spirit of Christ, or Christ Himself, holds in the world.

[* What thief would, if hung, revile another thief hung by his side? But the condemned thief did so to Christ.]

It is a most striking picture in verse 14. He trusts in Jehovah. All that is to befalll him is, after all, in His hand. Another motive now is pleaded. He has called on Jehovah. It is the lying lips which should be put to silence (v. 18). Confidence in goodness laid up for them is there, and the hiding in God's presence for the time of evil (v. 20). Verse 21 celebrates the faithfulness of Jehovah. Verses 23, 24, encourage the saints by it. Thus, with the extremist distress, all the pleas of the faithful are beautifully brought together here. All these past psalms have been the feelings of Israel under the pressure of distress, and sought deliverance from it. And this Israel will do.

Now (Psalm 32) we have what he wants still more the forgiveness of sins. The pressure of affliction turns him to God's law, but to the consciousness of having broken it. Righteousness in that sense he could not plead: forgiveness was his need, and that Jehovah should not impute the iniquity he had, and was brought to acknowledge. Long he had striven against this; but Jehovah gave him no rest. But he confesses sin, and guile is gone from his heart: impossible till then. We are hiding iniquity in it. Forgiveness in grace draws the godly man to God. In the water-floods they do not come

nigh him. Jehovah is the hiding-place of the soul preserves, blesses, guides. Only they are warned to be intelligent through obedience, and not to be without understanding, so that God must guide by providential power.

Remark here that while forgiveness is celebrated (and the remnant will deeply need it), yet the great distinctive truth which separates them from the mass of the people is kept up distinctlytrust, righteousness, and integrity of heart. To the wicked there are sorrows.

In principle, such a psalm, blessed be God, has the widest application. For the remnant it is prophetic, to induce truth in the inward parts, and encourage them by goodness to that confession of sin in which alone God can bless, as is ever the case. For forgiveness and no guile go together. They will only know full acceptance when they look upon Him whom they have pierced, who comes as Jehovah to deliver. But let us lay to heart the great principle of this psalm. Full absolute forgiveness, the not imputing sin at all, is what takes guile from the heart. Else we flee from God, excuse, palliate, if we dare not justify. Where full pardon is before us, we have courage to be true in heart. Who will not declare all his debts when their discharge by another is the only thing in question? who not tell his malady for a certain cure? Grace brings truth into the heart brought to confess its transgressions. He finds all the burden of his sins gone. The humble and godly are encouraged to draw near to a God thus known. “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightest be feared.” The psalm will encourage the remnant thus to true confession. When possessed, they will enter into full blessing. We thus see how it is a prophetic preparation and school for them, drawing out before them what will not all be accomplished when they are thus brought to look to Jehovah, but which they thus know will be. Hence these psalms speak of Jehovah’s character, as it has been proved with the inspired composers; in principle, often in letter, with Christ, in order to draw out the confidence of the Jews in the day of distress, and to comfort every uneasy soul. Thus the celebration of complete deliverance is mixed with the cry for it, because it is prophetic and has had fulfilments.

**PSALM** 33 has its just place after the forgiveness of the people. Before we pass on to these psalms, remark how the guilelessness of heart produced by complete forgiveness leads to that intimacy with God which gives us to be guided by His eye. We have His mind with Himself, and that in the perfectness of His own nature in which He reveals it. Forgiveness leads to full blessing.

In Psalm 33 the full result of deliverance is celebrated. The upright are called on to rejoice. Jehovah’s character, His word and works, are made manifest, and the earth is now full of His goodness. He is the glorious

Creator; the earth is to fear Him; all man's devices and counsels come to nothing before Him; His counsel stands. Blessed the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people He has chosen for His inheritance It is Jehovah who has looked down on men and disposed of all; but His eye is on them that fear Him and hope in His mercy Thus the great result of the intervention of Jehovah is brought before the faith of the remnant, chanted as if all were come. The last three verses show the confidence this produces in them.

**PSALM** 34. The sure government of God enables faith to bless at all times. He has proved His faithfulness to them that were in distress. The psalmist, Christ in spirit, calls on the remnant to praise, for Jehovah has manifested His deliverance in his case. The eyes of Jehovah are over the righteous, and His ear open to their prayers; His face set against them that do evil, and to cut them off from the earth (v. 17-19). The broken heart, the afflicted and the contrite, to such Jehovah is nigh. The righteous must look for suffering while man has his day, but Jehovah delivers him. While evil slays the wicked, Jehovah redeems the soul of His servant, and none that trust Him shall be desolate. It is the full assurance of the government of Jehovah in favor of the humble in heart. This enables to bless, not only when they are blessed (that is not faith), but at all times, for they are heard, preserved, redeemed, when they are in trouble. Christ is the great example of this. I doubt that He speaks personally, though He does in spirit in the beginning. The faith of the remnant takes His case up as an encouragement in verse 6. Verse 20 was accomplished also literally in Him. It is the secret of faith alone, the test of it, to bless at all times. Peter applies this psalm to the constant principles of the government of God. This is the first psalm in which we have found the interlocutory character, which sometimes occurs (as in Psalms 91, 145), though doubtless the psalmist's experience, who again speaks in verse 11. Yet, I apprehend, it is Christ in spirit who opens out God's ways in this psalm. "O magnify with me." "I sought Jehovah." It is the fullest encouragement to the humble righteous.

**PSALM** 35 is an urgent appeal for the judgment of Jehovah against relentless and insidious persecutors who seek after the soul of the righteous. Insult, craft, violence, all were used against him. They pretended to have found him out. Deliverance is sought that Jehovah may be praised in the great congregation, that is, the full assembly of restored Israel. In verses 13, 14, we see the grace in which the godly (Christ Himself) dealt with these enemies. Though generally true of the godly, Christ specially comes in here in spirit.

**PSALM** 36. We have a needed warning as to the wicked, particularly the enemies of righteousness, the instruments of Satan's power. There is no conscience to be expected; nothing that will stop them in their evil plans.

The power and goodness of Jehovah are the sure refuge of those that trust in Him. In result the wicked are cast down.

**PSALM** 37. In this interesting psalm the great point pressed on the remnant, a lesson for every soul, is waiting on Jehovah, and not having the spirit disturbed by evil; they will soon be cut down like grass. They are not to fret themselves, but trust in Jehovah and do good; to delight in Himthey will have their desires; to commit their way to HimHe will justify them; to rest in Him and wait patiently for HimJehovah will soon interfere, the wicked doers be cut off, and the meek inherit the land. The other character of the remnant is also largely unfoldedthe righteous manfrom verse 12 onward. Jehovah does not forsake His saints: they are preserved. The righteous shall inherit the land. The final word is, Wait on Jehovah and keep His way. The righteous suffer, but are not forsaken; the ungodly are in great prosperity, and soon their place knows them no more. How this, as to the righteous, points to the deep character of the suffering One who was forsaken, though the perfection of righteousness! This psalm also helps to show the connection between the disciples and this remnant (see <40505>Matthew 5:5)yet, to show the difference; the Son was there. They could suffer for His name: this brought in heaven (<40512>Matthew 5:12). He could reveal the Father, which He does, in that discourse. The light goes out to the world, as well as being the salt of the earth. Details of grace also are brought in, of which the latter-day remnant know nothing, because of this revelation of the Father, who acts in grace. Still, de facto, it is the same remnant.

**PSALMS** 38 and 39 have, as I have said, a distinct and peculiar character. The deliverance has been sought and looked for by the upright, and forgiveness of sins granted for blessing. But in these psalms the governmental rebuking for sins lies on the remnant; there is the sense of why they suffer from the divine hand. In Psalm 6 the chastening in anger was deprecated as a part of the sorrow that might belong to their position; but here they are under full chastening for sin: the rod has reached the flock outwardly, their soul inwardly. When I say they, it is individual, but still the remnant. Friends shrank from such a case; enemies, without compassion, plot against his life. Still he is before Jehovah, and all his desire and groaning. He is true in heart with God, and owns Himis silent with man. The sorrows are, for his soul, Jehovah's; and to Jehovah he turns. This is all right (see v. 13-16). He will bow under it. His enemies are busy and strong. But though Jehovah smites, he trusts Him; because the smiting is owned by the humble soul to be righteous. But he can look to deliverance from his enemies. They were glad he slipped and rejoiced over him. But he declares and owns his sin: no excuseno hiding in his soul from God. His cry is to Him for speedy help.

It is a beautiful psalm as to the state of soul; for the Spirit provides for every casethe failure of the upright, which may call down severe chastening, and cause joy to the wicked. But he accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and places himself openly before God, owning his sin, but looking to Him against the wicked. However sad such a case may be, nothing more shows truth before God and confidence in Him. How confess one's sin, and look for help from God, when one has been unfaithful, He dishonored, and the enemy triumphing in it? No excuse, no attempt to hidenone: he owns all, and casts himself on God. The picture of the remnant would not have been complete without this, nor the gracious instruction for every soul at every time.

The question then arises, How far does the Spirit of Christ enter into it? Fully, I believe; though of course He never could have been personally there. No doubt it arose from some deep chastening of the writera chastening which was openly manifested. Such cases may in the full extent arise among the remnant. The principle is of universal application. Christ of course could have nothing to be chastened for; but, having the full bearing of sin before Him, and meeting in His path all the sorrow which will beset the people, He can enter, though the green tree, into the judgment which will come upon the dry. * He could not say what is said here, but He can perfectly sympathise with those who have to say it. He has provided the words which will express it by His Spirit in their hearts. Had He not suffered the full anger for these very iniquities which press on their consciences, and from which in its full extent as wrath they escape, it would not have been merely needed chastening in which they plead with Jehovah. Hence He can more than feel it when it has that character. And in all the sorrow of the circumstances He has born the largest part.

> [* Although the dry tree be in the full sense lifeless Israel, yet, as the remnant, so long rejecters of Jesus being the Messiah, are mixed up with the nation, they go through the sorrows in heart and spirit which come upon the nation, though not its final judgment from God. For them Christ had done that; He died for the nation. But all short of that they go through, and feel in bitter sorrow and anguish, in some sort, more than before the judgment comes, because they feel the sin that is bringing it. Hence it was that Christ, who did know the cause and looked forward to the judgment which He did go through (undergoing the oppression without apparent deliverance, for His hour was come to be reckoned with the transgressors), could enter fully into their case. Though He entered into it in love, yet the righteousness which threatened Israel was before Him.]

In Psalm 39, the godly man is still under the stroke of God; but there is more the sense of the emptiness of all flesh under the hand of God than disgrace and shame and fear. He bows before God rather than let his spirit rise and speak foolishly with his tongue. He might have retortedbeen fretted

to do evil; but, restraint, when under the hand of God, was his fitting place. It is ever so. He refrains even from good; and sorrow is stirred up in him. In beautiful language he shows this. At last his heart bursts forth; but it is to present to God the nothingness of which the sense was thus matured. He desires to know his days. How little he is! He sees all is vanity; but he sees his own transgression and sin in the presence of One whose rebuke consumes the beauty of man as a moth. To Jehovah he looks for deliverance. His stroke is what he cares for. He trusts Him not to make him the reproach of the foolish. There is great beauty in vanity finding its level in self-annihilation, and then God trusted in to deliver from the pride of men. He has to say to our transgressions.

Here the moral history of the remnant closes, as in connection on covenant ground with Jehovah (that is, as employing His name, as connected with Him). Hence we have much of Christ personally in the psalms of this first book. His taking the place in which He should be associated with them, according to the counsels of God, is stated in the next psalm. The understanding of this place is then shown to be the really blessed one.

In Psalm 40 then Christ is seen, not only in His passage through the sorrows which beset His way, if He took up the cause of the disobedient and guilty people of His lovesorrows which gave Him the tongue of the learned, and enabled Him to enter into those of the tried and spared ones in the latter days, and give a voice to their cry suited to their condition before God; but primarily the deliverance in which, having waited on Jehovah in these sorrows, Jehovah’s faithfulness was proved, so that He came out from them for the encouragement of many, and then the blessed key to His whole history in His having undertaken to do the will of Jehovah, the whole Jewish system under the law being thus closed and set aside. He has been perfectly faithful to Jehovah in the face of the whole congregation of Israel, yet is in the deepest sorrow and trial. So the psalm closes, and it is important it should, because the thesis of it is complete deliverance. Hence the application of this very deliverance to the sorrows of Christ, which were analogous to that of the remnant, is most precious for the remnant when they are in them.

But this principle is brought out in a very distinct way in the psalm, and makes it one of the most remarkable in this wonderful book. It brings out the connection of Christ with Israel in the remnant in the most striking way possiblelays it down as a foundation for the whole teaching of the Psalms, though the circumstances are altered after Psalm 41. That Christ is personally spoken of in it, I need hardly say, as the apostle quotes it as His words, undertaking that blessed work by which figures and symbols were set aside, and which has perfected, as he tells us, the believer for ever. “Lo,

I come" is the word of the Son's free offering of Himself to accomplish the whole will of God in His work here below according to the everlasting counsels of the Godhead. It is the blessed Lord's undertaking the work. His work was to obey; but He in perfect free voluntariness offers Himself for it in the delight of willingly undertaken obedience. In the great congregation of Israel, in pursuing His service to Jehovah, He had not shrunk (whatever reception He met with) from preaching righteousnesshad not refrained His lips. He had been faithful to His service at all cost; and it was Jehovah He thus proclaimed. His righteousness, His faithfulness, His salvation, His lovingkindness, and His truth, He had not refrained from declaring before the whole body of Israel. Such had been His service.

Then, all changes with this faithful One; for innumerable evils have compassed Him about. He looks for Jehovah's lovingkindness and truth, to whom He had been faithful. Nor is it all that evils had compassed Him, that men sought after His soul to destroy it. "Mine iniquities have taken hold on me." He says, "so that I am not able to look up." Of course, with Christ they were those of othersof all the redeemed, and also particularly of Israel viewed as a nation. In this state He desires that those that seek Jehovah may be able to praise, to say continually, Let Jehovah be magnified; and that the others may be ashamed and confounded. He separates the godly remnant who seek Jehovah from those who, when He is faithfully and lovingly presented, are enemies to Him who manifests His name. Thus Christ closes His experience in this world, poor and needy, yet assured that Jehovah thinks upon Him.

He is not forsaken in what is presented here, but comes into that place, through a life of faithfulness, in which He was to undergo that dreadful moment. It is the cry when, so to speak, He confesses the sins before the victim is consumed or slain. He is in the deep sorrow of the position crying to Jehovah, not in the wrath shown in the time of His not being heard. The psalm depicts not that wrath, but the faithfulness of Christ in waiting for Jehovah when in the sorrow, rather than seek ease, or have twelve legions of angels, or drink the stupefying myrrh, or shrink back from suffering the will of God any more than He did from facing man when He preached it. He waited patiently for Jehovah; and He inclined unto Him and heard His cry. This was His perfection: no outlet from obedience sought, no shrinking, no turning back or aside. He waited for Jehovah's time in the path of perfect obedience, and it came. The time, as said of Joseph, came that His cause was known; it is not said here how or when. The object of the Spirit here was to show to the tried ones that One had gone before them in the path of sorrow and had been heard. We can say that it was fully in resurrection; but even on the cross the dark hour was passed, and with a

loud voice He could commend His own spirit to His Father, and His mother to His beloved disciple.

But these are details history has given us, not prophecy; they would not have been available for the remnant. They want to know that they will be heard when waiting patiently for Jehovah. If killed, the answer will be for them in resurrection; if not, to have Israel's place in blessing, I doubt not with the Lamb on Mount Zion, as having gone through (however feebly or infirmly) like trials and sorrows in faithfulness to Jehovah in the great congregation. Do their iniquities alarm them? they are not left out. They do not yet know atonement, but they know that One, who could say, "Mine iniquities have taken hold of me," waited patiently, was heard and delivered. They wait, trusting the mercy of Jehovah, though peace be not yet known. Their iniquities have taken hold of them, so that they feel: how can they hope Jehovah will deliver them? There is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. And the psalm assures them that One in like depths has been set free. When they look upon Him, they will judge their sins in the light of His having born them and they will find peace; but the foundation of peace is laid in hope for them here. A heart failing under iniquities, laying hold of it, can look for deliverance. It has been found (and however obscure their light, and it will be), the ground of hope is laid. Compare Isaiah 50:10, 11, which describes this very state, consequent, as to the remnant, on Christ's being justified and helped.

But this is not all. Messiah puts Himself in this association with them. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah." Blessed is the man that makes Jehovah his trust and does not trust outward prosperity nor apostatise to lying vanities. So in verse 5, to usward. That is, in verse 1, we have Christ, who has waited on Jehovah, and been heard, and brought up out of a horrible pit and miry clay. I doubt not that David's heart sung it: still it is surely Christ in prophetic purpose. But then Christ identifies Himself (though, as we have seen, distinguishing the remnant) with Israel. Praise, He says, unto our God. The effect of this is that many see it, fear, and trust in Jehovah. It acts on the remnant in the latter day, and leads them to trust in Jehovah. They can trust for deliverance too; many will. His preaching righteousness to the great congregation gathered a little flock. His deliverance as the suffering One will be blessed to many. Who hath begotten me all these? says Zion in that day. This may take in the ten tribes too; still, as a principle, a multitude will be there. It was not so at Christ's first coming. He was to be a despised and rejected One in His own history and trial.

Verse 5. These are the thoughts of Jehovah in blessing. This leads to the great thought, the center and groundwork of it allChrist coming to do Jehovah's will. Now, we can comment, or, still better, the Spirit of God has commented for us, on the value of His doing Jehovah's will. Here we have much more the faithfulness of Christ in doing it, His being overwhelmed with iniquities taking hold of Him in His own spirit, as we see in Gethsemane, but deliverance. We must remember that the confession of sins over the head of the sacrifice was not the slaying, or casting into the fire, of the victim. So Christ's acknowledging thus, or confessing the iniquities with which He was charging Himself as His, was not His enduring the wrath, nor His being cut off out of the land of the living. Dreadful indeed it must have been to Him, as we see in the Gospels, and He saw all that was coming upon Him by reason of it; still it was essentially differentconfessing the sins and bearing the wrath due to them. His confession of sins His people must (I will not say imitate, but) take up in the knowledge that those He confessed were their own; and may, till grace is fully known, do it with dreadful anguish and apprehension of the wrath to come. It is this which particularly, besides outward trials, constitutes the analogy between the Jewish remnant and the Lord. The wrath endured in atonement, we know, He endured that we never might.

In this psalm then we see Christ, according to the eternal counsels of God, come to do God's will in human nature, taking His place in the midst of the great congregation of Israel, suffering most deeply in consequence, getting into the horrible pit, but His trust is firm in Jehovah. He waited patiently for Him, and He is brought up, and a new song put into His mouth. The first three verses state the great fact: Jehovah heard and delivered out of the horrible pit. It is a lesson for all the remnant. How blessed is the man who trusts Jehovah, and does not look at the appearance of persons to turn aside after vanity! Then we get the course of events. Wonderful have been Jehovah's counsels. Christ comes to do His will as a man, delights to do it, declares Jehovah's righteousness before all. This brings Him into the greatest distress. Evils come upon Him unnumbered, and, besides that, His iniquities (those of His people) come upon Him; but patience has its perfect work, and He is perfect and complete in all the will of God; and, as the psalm shows at the beginning, He is delivered, as we well know. But, as already said, the psalm recites His faithfulness especially. Hence we see Him up to the close of the trial still under it. What He asks for is that the ungodly, being found His enemies, may be set aside; but that the poor of the flock may be able to praise, rejoice, and be glad in Jehovah.

It is beautiful to see His perfect patience in the trial, that the whole will of God may be accomplished, and seeking the joy and full blessing of the poor

remnant; yet Himself taking the place of complete dependence on Jehovah, and praying for His coming in as God. Obedience and dependence are the two characteristics of the acting of the divine life in man towards God. It may be remarked here that the testimony in the congregation is closed when the innumerable evils come upon Him. The preface of the psalm speaks of the horrible pit when He is out of it, and we know whereunto He was obedient; but His death is not spoken of here. In the body of the psalm we have, as come to do God's will, His faithfulness in life as witness, and the evils that came upon Him at the close when He had to meet the burden of the iniquity of His people. The fourth verse applies to the remnant the result of Christ's faithfulness for instruction and encouragement.

A few words on the expression, "opened my ears." The word is not the same as in <02Ex21> Exodus 21. There it is attaching the ear with an awl to the door post; the man thus became a servant for ever. Nor is it the same as in <23Is50> Isaiah 50, where it has the signification of being so completely a servant to His Master's will that He received His commands morning by morning. Here it is "digged ears" that is, took the place of a servant). But this He did, as may be seen in <50Ph01> Philippians 2, by becoming a man. Hence the Spirit accepts the interpretation of the LXX"a body hast thou prepared me." Compare <43Jn13> John 13 (which answers in point of time to <02Ex21> Exodus 21); <42Lu12> Luke 12:37, and <46Co15> 1 Corinthians 15:28.

**PSALM** 41 shows the blessedness of the man who understands this position of the poor of the flock and enters into it (compare <40Mt05> Matthew 5:3; <42Lu06> Luke 6:20). It is spoken in the person of one of the suffering remnantdoubtless with the psalmist's own experience. It is one of the psalms in which Christ takes up an expression to show how, in the close of His life, when He entered into their sorrows, He tasted fully their bitterness. Still the poor man is upheld in his integrity, and set before Jehovah's face. The apparent triumph of the wicked is short.

This closes the book. It is the experience, as a whole, of the remnant before they are driven out, or at the least of those who are not so. And the covenant name of Jehovah is used. Hence, the place of Christ is entered into, so far as He came and set Himself amongst the poor of the flock upon earth, and led the life of sorrow and integrity in the midst of evil. Of this last psalm He is not the subject, as verse 4 shows.

We have seen an introduction in the first eight psalms, in which the whole scene is brought before us in its principles and result in the purpose of God; then in Psalms 9, 10, the actual historical circumstances of the Jews in the latter day. Thus, as to historical facts, their state forms the groundwork and subject of the whole book; while the way in which Christ could enter into

their sorrows, and they be encouraged by His example, is fully introduced. His whole life amidst the nation is passed in review; but particularly the close, when, after declaring God's righteousness in the great congregation, He passed into the deep sufferings of the last hours of His passage on earth, going on to His being forsaken of God. Yet it was for Himsurely for us, blessed be Godthe path of life.

**PSALM** 40 has this peculiar interest, that it gives us, not merely the history of Christ, His faithfulness, but His freely offering Himself to accomplish all that the Father's counsels required of Him; and then shows Him waiting in obedience till Jehovah was pleased to come in. And then He has the new song to sing. Of this intervention of God the resurrection was the grand witness; through which, as we have seen in Psalm 22, He has awakened, or rather created, it in so many other hearts As is common, the first three verses give the thesisthe rest all that led up to this: only here it is traced from His first offering Himself to do it.

The reader will remark in Psalm 41 what we have noticed as characterising the remnantthe acknowledgment of sin (v. 4), and the declaration of integrity (v. 12). We have Christ using it as to Himself, showing, though the psalm be not of Him, how He took the place to which the spirit of the whole applies. The proud and wicked could despise and trample upon the meek and lowly, and perhaps chastened, remnant. Here it is more the false and treacherous spirit of those whom he ought to have been able to trust. Blessedness is with those who understand, the meek and lowly ones who are chastened, for they understand the Lord's ways; the meek one himself looks to the Lord when His hand is upon him. The point of the psalm is the blessedness of those who understand and enter into the position of those with whom Jehovah is dealing. This place, Christ fully took, though not chastened with sickness.

# BOOK 2

In the second book, the remnant is viewed as outside Jerusalem, and the city as given up to wickedness. This is seen throughout it. The covenant connection of the Jews with Jehovah is lost, but God is trusted. When Messiah comes in, all is changed. We have further, more distinctly, the exaltation of Christ on high as the means of their deliverance, and His rejection and sorrow when down here. It closes with the millennial reign of Messiah in peace under the figure of Solomon. The spirit of the godly man is tested by these circumstances. And, as all hope of finding good in the people is given up, the soul of the believing remnant is more entirely looking to God Himself and attached to Him. It is with this that the book opens.

The godly man had been going with the multitude to the house of God, but that is all over. He is driven away, and his cry is from Jordanthe land of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar. All God's waves are gone over him. It was terrible to see an enemy in possession of the sanctuary, and the true one of Jehovah cast out and His name blasphemed. The heathen, as stated in Joel, had come in in power, and taunted those who had trusted in Jehovah's faithfulness with the cry, "Where is thy God?" (Joel 2:17). It was, of course, a dreadful trial (so with Christ upon the cross; and with Him yet more, for He declared He was forsaken); so that what God was to them by faith was put to the test. This faith is what this psalm now expresses. The heart of the godly pants after God. It was not merely for His blessings; they were gone. The preciousness of what He Himself was, was only so much the more vividly brought out. The main distress was the cry "Where is thy God?" But if the saint is not in Jerusalem, God is the confidence of the saint. Faith says, "I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." The heart too can appeal to Him (v. 9), and, under the pressure of the repeated taunt, hope in God Himself, and He will be the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. The reader will remark that in verse 5 it is the help of God's countenance: in verse 11 He becomes the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. This making God Himself to become everything by the deprivation of all blessings, and the exercise of faith in it casting the soul entirely on God Himself, is very precious.

The enemy in Psalm 42 is the outward enemy and oppressorthe Gentile. Though in circumstances, of course, and not in the depths of atonement, it is interesting to see the analogy in verse 3 with what the Lord said upon the cross. Psalm 43 is a supplementary psalm to the former: only that here the ungodly nation, the Jews, are before us, and the deceitful and unjust man,

the wicked one; though the Gentile oppressor be yet there (v. 2). We know they will both be there in that day. From the Jewish nation being now in the scene, the return to the holy hill and tabernacle and altar of God are more before the mind of the remnant. Verses 3, 4 form the groundwork of the book.

**PSALM** 44 gives a full and vivid picture of the state of the nation, as in the conscience of the remnant. They had heard with their ears. Faith rested in the memorial of all the old mighty deliverances wrought by God, and how He had put them in possession of the land by His power, not theirs (v. 1-8). In verses 9-16 their present state is recounted. They are cast off and scattered. The enemy and avenger is among them; they scattered among the heathensold of God for no price (v. 17-22). Yet they have, in no wise, swerved from their integrity. On the contrary, it is for His sake they are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter. (Note, the moment Messiah was rejected, this began in principle: compare Romans 8:36). Verses 23-26 contain the appeal to God to wake up to redeem them for His mercies' sake. Why should He forget them for ever? We have still God, not Jehovah, in this psalm; for they are outside.

**PSALM** 45 introduces Messiah, and, as we shall see, changes everything. I know not, interesting and full of bright energy as the psalm is, that I have much to note upon it, by reason of its force being so very plain. It will be remarked that it is Messiah in judgment and taking the throne. He had already proved that He loved righteousness and hated iniquitywas fit to govern. He is saluted as God. Yet His disciples (the remnant) are called His fellows (compare Zechariah 13:7, where He is seen in His humiliation and smitten, but owned to be Jehovah's fellow). I apprehend the queen is Jerusalem. Tyre and others own her with presents. She is gloriously received into the chambers of the king himself. This, I apprehend, is the force of within. She is in the closest relationship with the king. The virgins her companions are, I suppose, the cities of Judah. The glory of Israel is no longer now their fathers. The presence of Messiah (the fulfiller of promise) has eclipsed the depositaries of promise of old. Instead of fathers, they have children to be made princes in all lands. The coming in of Messiah in glory and judgment, brings in the full triumph and glory, amongst the nations, of Jerusalem and the Jewish people. The psalm is full of Messiah, and exclusively, yet as man, and God is only alluded to as his God. But Messiah is God.

**PSALM** 46. The remnant, now that Messiah has appeared in glory, can celebrate what God is in favor of His people, and with the special knowledge acquired through what He has been for them in trouble. There may be yet an assault: indeed according to prophecy I believe there will be.

But as the whole effect of Messiah's coming in blessing was celebrated in Psalm 45, so here the great result in divine government. The spared remnant have Jehovah with them as the God of Israel (v. 7). For here Jehovah is again introduced as a present thing. Here it is specially (and suitably, after what we have been studying, needs not to be said) as refuge and deliverance. Earth, mountains, and waters may tremble, or swell and roar: His people need not fear. God is with them. Nor is this all. He has His city on the earth, where He who is the Most High dwells, and has His tabernacles gladdened by that river which, everywhere in these descriptions, is the sign of blessing; as in the heavenly Jerusalem, and in the earthly in Ezekiel nay, in paradise, and in figures, in the believer, and in the assembly, who calls to the water of life him who thirsts. But even then the river is there. God is therethe sure and best of answers to the taunting demand "Where is thy God?" She shall not be moved, but helped right early.

Verse 6 gives in magnificent abruptness the great result. All is decided. Then they say, "Jehovah Sabaoth is with us." The God of the whole people is the refuge of this feeble remnant (v. 8, 9), they summon the earth to see what the works of Jehovah are, what is come of the impotent rage and violence of men; for He will be exalted among the heathen and exalted in the earth. The place of faith is to be still and wait on Him and know that He is God, as the remnant of Jacob will with joythat Jehovah of hosts, the God of Jacob, is with them.

**PSALM** 47 only pursues this deliverance to its bright results for Israel according to God's glory in the earth. Jehovah is now a great King over all the earth (compare Zechariah 14). He subdues the nations under Israel and Himself chooses their inheritance. This is triumphantly celebrated from verses 5-9, and the association of the princes of the peoples now owning God, with the people of the God of Abraham. He is specially Israel's (the remnant's) King, but if He is, He is King of all the earth. In these verses God Himself is celebrated, but He is the God of Israel. It is the celebration of the earthly part of the millennial glory of God: Israel owned in the delivered remnant being the center. I apprehend verse 9 should be "have joined themselves to the people."

**PSALM** 48 completes this series. Jehovah is fully established as Israel's God in Zion, now the praise of the whole earth, the city of the great King, and in whose palaces God is well known as a refuge. The kings were assembled; they found another sort of power there than they thought of, marvelled, were troubled, and hasted away. The power of the sea was broken by the east wind, and Jehovah's hand manifested there too. The psalm beautifully refers to the beginning of Psalm 44, where they had said in their distress, We have heard with our ears.... the mighty works of the

fathers' days. Now they say, As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of Jehovah Sabaoth, the city of our God. They do not now say, as in Psalm 42, "I had gone with the multitude," but now cry to thee from Jordan; but in sweet and unendangered peace, "we have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." God's name they had trusted, but now His praise was according to it. He had come in in power. It was so to the ends of the earth. He calls on Mount Zion to rejoice because of these judgments, with the joyful assurance that this God is their God for ever and ever; their life long will He guide and bless them. It is an earthly blessing, and death, the last enemy, is not destroyed (v. 11-14).

**PSALM** 49 is a moral conclusion for all, founded on these judgments of God. Wealth, elevation, all that is exalted in man, is nothing. Man expects to endure, gives his own name to his lands, blesses himself, is praised by posterity, and spoken well of as prudent and wise, seeing he has done well to himself. They are laid in sheol like sheep. The hope of the man of the world does not last; he leaves the world he was great in; his reputation, which lives, is nought for him, deception for others. Satan's power is for this life; there is no deceiving after it. Man in honor without understanding is like the beasts that perish, but the righteous remnant trusts in God: his soul is redeemed from the power of the grave. God shall accept him. The preservation on earth, or heavenly blessing is left somewhat vague here. The immediate hope would be of preserving life; but it would meet those that might be slain with the fullest and securest hope. It is even so in ⁴²²¹⁹Luke 21:19, "gain your souls," and in ⁴⁰²⁴³Matthew 24:13. The ambiguity is preserved there too designedly.

In Psalm 50 we enter on new groundGod's judgment of the people. Jehovah the mighty God summons the whole earth; as in Psalm 51 we have their confession of killing Christ.

The introduction of Psalm 50 is magnificent, but requires little comment, God shining out of Zion the perfection of beauty. Only remark that the first two verses are the thesis; from verse 3 is the bringing it about. But heaven is called in to stand by, a witness of righteousness, and the earth; but the judgment is the special judgment of the people. In verses 5, 6, He takes up and accepts and gathers the remnant, His "godly ones," who have now entered into covenant with Him by sacrifice. It is in view, I apprehend, of their seeing Christ whom they had pierced, that these words are uttered. The heavens (though in result God be seated in Zion) bring in their display of the righteousness of God; distinct in itself, note, from His judgment. This is general. It is not in itself the judgment of God. I doubt not, He shines forth in glory therein, but in a particular manner. We can say it is the glorified saints who display this, of course with Christ Himself; yea, so fully that

they shall judge the earth. It is not judgment through secondary causes: God is now judge Himselfhence gathers His saints too. In verse 7 the people are judged. God does not want sacrifice, He wants righteousness. He will not have wickedness, nor, now, the wicked among His people. So we read in the very same way in Isaiah 48 and 57. Man fancies God is such as he himself is; but all shall be set in order before Him. This is God's judgment.

**PSALM** 51 is the true remnant's confession. They have fully entered into the mind of God (see v. 16). There is true and complete humiliation for sin before God, yet confidence in Him. He is looked to to cleanse and deliver, with the true faith of God's people. The whole sin of the heart and nature is acknowledged, and the dreadful crime of Christ's death owned (v. 14). The humiliation is accepted, but with the sense of God's cleansing being perfect. He creates too a clean heart. He prays that that Spirit (which Haggai declares abode with them after all their faults, and in spite of the Babylonish captivity), might not be taken from him, nor he lose the sense of the presence of his God. Persons have found difficulty in this verse; I see not any. No good could have been wrought by the Old Testament saints without the Holy Ghost: withdrawn from them, all their joy and comfort ceased and gave place to darkness. This he prays might not be. There cannot for a moment be a doubt that the Spirit wrought in the Old Testament saints. The question is, whether He was present in the same manner, and dwelling in them, in virtue of Christ's work and glory, uniting them to a risen Head in heaven. This, of course, could not be. The work was not yet wrought, the glory not yet entered into by the man Jesus. The New Testament is clear on this point. He was not; but He must have wrought in and with the saints. He acts in everything good; the agent in all divine action in the creature, as in the creation He moved on the face of the waters, but specially in the hearts of men for any good that is there, and to be the source of joy and strength to the saints. So in the prophets and others.

An intelligent saint now could not say what is said in this psalm (v. 11); he knows God will not take His Spirit from him. He might indeed perhaps in anguish say it, and with a true heart, and be heard; but not intelligently. This repentance of Israel, as so constantly taught in scripture (see <4401>Acts 3), is the path to Zion's blessing there. Will God accept their offerings? In these two psalms we have the separative judgment in Israel connected with wickedness, sin against Jehovaha judgment which is real deliverance for the remnant; and now (when He has appeared) the full confession, and that even of having shed the blood of the Savior.

These two psalms complete the setting, as to circumstances, of the whole scene before us, which forms the groundwork of this book. The series of psalms now commences (as we have seen in other instances), to supply and

unfold the expressions of feeling for the remnant under these circumstances. It will be found, accordingly, that it is not so much trial by being in the midst of evil, as from seeing it dominant and prevailing in the place even that belonged to Jehovah. Hence in general, they are addressed to God and the Most High, the God of promise not to Jehovah, the God of present covenant blessings, for they are out of the place of them. When otherwise, I purpose noticing it in its place. After all this is gone through up to the full inshining of hope, the position of Christ exalted on high, and once suffering in Israel as that in virtue of which He could help and deliver them, is brought out. This (with the application of it to the remnant and the employment of David's last appeal in his sorrow, as now fatigued with years, to Israel's own state at the end) ushers in the millennial reign of Christ under the figure of Solomon.

In Psalm 52 we find faith as regards the power of the wicked man, who was in presence of the godly. The goodness of God endured. God would destroy the proud and deceitful man, while the righteous would abide. It reminds of Shebnanot enemies from without nor even the beast, but within among themselvesthe Antichrist of power.

In Psalm 53 we have the wicked in general, the whole mass of the people, all, save where grace had come in. It is the same as Psalm 14, but does not speak of Jehovah, but of God, for the remnant are no longer in the place of covenant relation. Hence here it is not God is in the generation of the righteous, but the utter ruin of those encamped against themthe public judgment of the external enemies. Those who are in great fear are the ungodly Jews (see Isaiah 33:14; 8:12; and 10:24). In Psalm 14 they despised the poor who trusted in Jehovah. There they were outwardly together. This is not so now. God has put His enemies to shamenot the proud ungodly the poor of the flock. The desire of the full salvation of Israel out of Zion as a center, not merely God's deliverance by judgment from enemies without, is then expressed. The power which comes from heaven and destroys the faithless oppressor, is a distinct thing from the establishment of the result of covenant power in Zion according to promise.

**PSALM** 54 is the cry to God to deliver according to the value of His name, the subject' of trust. The double character of the enemies is spoken ofstrangers, enemies from without; and oppressors, the proud within, who hunt for the life of the poor. When deliverance comes, then the name of Jehovah is introduced (v. 6, 7). The name of God is the revelation of what He is. This is what is trusted. Jehovah's name, that of their covenant God, will be praised when they get back into the place of association with Him.

**PSALM** 55 is a distressing picture of wickedness in Jerusalem. The speaker is outside, but has experienced this wickedness in the treachery of his dearest friends. His resource is in God: Jehovah will save. He is looking back, I judge, at all that he had experienced in Jerusalem. Wickedness went about her walls. Wickedness, deceit, and guile were in her midst, nor departed from her streets. He would fain have fled from it all. The enemy was without, the wicked within; but they charged the godly with wickedness, and utterly hated them; but worst of all was the heartless treachery of those within, those with whom the godly had gone in company to the house of God. Still his trust was in God, for where else should he seek help?

**PSALM** 56 expresses the sense of the bitter and relentless enmity of the wicked, but the tears of the godly are put in God's bottle. God is owned as the Most High, the title of promise but not of covenant (that of covenant is Jehovah); and here the remnant are cast out. But the word of God is a sure trusting place. It carries the truth of God as its basis to the soul, and contains all the expression of His goodness, and ways, and faithfulness, and interest also in His people. Hence there is no fear of man. The soul of the godly was delivered from death; he had escaped and fled, and now he looks to God that his feet may be kept, that he may walk before God in the light of the living. As the expression of the tried heart driven out, but so escaped, it has a most clear and distinct place.

**PSALM** 57 looks more at the evil and the feet being kept, leaning on the word. This psalm, while crying to God in the same spirit and circumstances, and under the same title, is more the expression of confidence in God as a refuge. His wings are a covert till the evil be overpast, and full deliverance is looked for by His gloriously putting an end to the trial. God will send from heaven and deliver. Hence the end of the psalm is more triumphant than that of Psalm 56. He will praise among the peoples and various tribes of the earth, for God's mercy and truth are great. God's publicly exalting Himself above heaven and over all the earth is looked for. No help was on earth, none to be looked for; but this cast more entirely on God, and thus brought out a fuller confidence in His safeguard, and in the final display of power in deliverance. So it ever is. God would send from heaven. How this directs the remnant upwards, and links them with a heavenly deliverance. Then Jehovah is praised.

**PSALM** 58. All righteousness was silent in Israel. The wicked were such and nought else. The godly man looks for judgment on them, for, let favor be shown to them, they will not learn uprightness. In the land of uprightness will they deal unjustly (Isaiah 26:9, 10). They cannot, says David of the same, be taken with hand; one must be fenced with iron to

touch them (2 Samuel 23). Hence the godly looked for judgmentthe only possible means, by God's own testimony, of removing the evil; for patience had been fully exercised towards them, but when even God's hand was lifted up they would not see. And the vengeance of deliverance would come, and men would say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the earth (see <23609>Isaiah 26:9). This is the meaning of these terrible judgments: they establish the government and righteous judgment of God in the earth. Grace has taken us out of the world; we are not of it, as Christ was not of it. Christ will, as to our deliverance, even from suffering, come and take us out of the evil, so that we have in no way need to seek the destruction of our enemies. But for the persecuted remnant, it is the only and promised deliverance; and not only thatit establishes God's government of the earth.

**PSALM** 59 gives more the external enemies. The same wickedness is found there, but the might of human power with it. But they also must be judged, that wickedness may be set aside. Nor was it the sin of Israel against them that brought the heathen on them (however God might chasten them for sin against Him, so that He was justified). The suffering remnant look therefore for the intervention of Jehovah to judge them. And Jehovah shall judge all the heathen. They are not destroyed, but scattered, yet practically, as power, consumed; and many, as we know, slain.

This psalm speaks of no restoration of blessing. It is judgment, and judgment going on and not yet finished. And this judgment of the proud and wicked enemies will go on. Though rising up in rage to a head of wickedness, they will be sore smitten and consumed. All the heathen are concerned in it, but I apprehend that it is especially the apostate power animated of Satanpartially the king of <27801>Daniel 8 perhaps. It will be remarked here that, the moment it is in contrast with the heathen, the name of Jehovah is introduced. The personal address is still under the name of God, for the people are still outside (see v. 3, 5, 8 for Jehovah, and 1, 9, 10, 17 for the personal address). Note, the result is, that God rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Verses 14, 15 are, I apprehend, a challenge. Let the heathen be as hungry dogs about the city, the believer will sing of Jehovah's power. It is at the close of the tribulation.

This psalm presents another phase of the connection of Israel and Messiah, and shows how David became the fitted instrument whom God had attuned to tell Messiah's and the remnant's sufferings. "Slay them not, lest my people forget." * Now, this is not the language of the king, as such, but of Jehovah. The only case where "my people" is used is <10244>2 Samuel 22:44, or <19843>Psalm 18:43, where Christ is the speaker. But when Christ is born, He is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. Now Jesus

was the personal verifying of that which was said of Jehovah. In all their affliction He was afflicted, as in [illegible]Isaiah 63. It is Jehovah who gets the tongue of the learned ([illegible]Isaiah 50). So that “my people,” where not directly of Jehovah which is frequent, is Christ entering into the sorrows of Israel, but in the love of Jehovah to themno doubt as man (or how could He have actually suffered?) but still in the sympathies of Jehovahyet, and because He is Jehovah, perfectly entering into them. It is thus He wept over Jerusalem, saying, “How often would I have gathered thy children together!” But that was Jehovah Hence, though He can say “we,” because He graciously takes a place among the children, yet, in saying “we,” it brings in all His own value and excellency into the cry. “I” and “me” may often take up the case of an individual of the remnant; but in case of such an expression as “my people,” we clearly get One who stands in another positionnot merely David. He says (like Moses) to Jehovah, “thy people” ever, and that is all right, but One who, in whatever sorrow, could say, as Jehovah, when spoken of by the Spirit, “my people,” and enter into their griefs with divine sympathy, and a righteous call for divine judgment. I apprehend that, though the enemies are the heathen, yet their complete intimacy and affinity with the wicked among the Jewish people is clearly intimated here. The same thing is found in Isaiah 66. They are all melted into one system and state of wickedness.

> [* If the title be right, David was not yet king de facto, and the Spirit of Christ in him spoke anticipatively of the title of the anointed one; but evidently in view of another epoch. Note too here all Israel is in view of the desires of faith, though no deliverance even of the Jews be yet accomplished.]

In Psalm 60 the remnant acknowledge God’s having cast them off. Their only hope is, that He will turn to them again. This is exactly the point of Israel’s righteousness as a nation: no going for help elsewhereno spirit of rebellion. They accept the punishment of their iniquity. Still God had put His ensign among the faithful in Israel. He was their Jehovah-nissi. They now look to Him. The end of the psalm is God asserting His title to the land of promise. Victory will be to Israel through Him.

**PSALM** 61. The main point of all these psalms is trust in God when all is against the godly One. The more all circumstances are adverse, the more God is trusted in; but Christ shines through all as taking the dependent godly one’s place. Many of the psalms of this book were, it is very likely, composed when David was driven out through Absalom.

This confidence in God which calls Him to hear is expressed in Psalm 61. It is not an appeal of the godly man against enemies, but the sinking of his heart as cast out; but, when at the end of the earth and his spirit

overwhelmed, he cries to God and looks for a rock higher than himself from this flood. Thus his confidence was restored. It was a known God whom he thus trusted, whatever his then sorrows. In verse 5 he applies it to present certainty of having been heard. The vows he had sent up Godward had reached His ear above; full blessings would rest upon him, and in those blessings he would perform them. Verse 6, doubtless, as to the occasion of it, was David, but it looks, I apprehend, clearly to a greater than he, and the abiding life into which He entered as man; and though the godly remnant be thus driven out and their spirit overwhelmed within them, yet the fact that the King had been so would be a cheer and a security to their hearts: His song would become theirs, His having sung it a relief to them when they might have sunk in despondency. Though the being driven out is the occasion and is felt, the psalm does not refer to wickedness, but to nature, the human heart being overwhelmed.

In Psalm 62 confidence is more expressed. It is not looking from an overwhelmed heart, but a free looking up, so that one is not overwhelmed. His soul waits on God, has none else indeed, but does not desire any other. There is a “how long? as well as a waiting. God will certainly come in at the right time, and then it will be known to whom power belongs. The psalm is spoken individually and may be in the mouth of any one of the godly remnant. How long would they imagine mischief against a man? What was their object? Why have him thus in hatred, and by falsehood seek to root him out of his placethe place of God’s blessing, in which He had placed the godly in Israel? But this, I doubt not, has special application to Christ as the One who was indeed in this place, and against whom all their malice was directed to cast Him down from His excellency. He invites also the people (Jewish) to trust in God, to pour out their hearts before Him, and, putting Himself with them in this place, says, not only, “my refuge is in God,” but He is “a refuge for us.” In saying “my” He shows that He had it; but these maschilim (the wise) shall instruct the many and turn to righteousness many of them. * Above all did that truly understanding One do so. They were not to trust in the great and violent ones of the earth. Power belongs to God, and with Him is mercy. They may trust in Him as a God of righteousness, and walk uprightly and not be turned aside by the prosperity of the wicked; for the Lord (Adonai) will reward every man according to his works. It is the desire to cast down the poor of the flock (because the wicked after all have the consciousness that the excellency of God is with them, and specially with Christ), which draws out this psalm, which expresses the faith of the saint, and the warning to the people to trust God and not the mighty. They are exalted in the earth; but true elevation from God is with Christ, and those who thus walk, who fear God and obey the voice of His servant.

[* Compare <27103>Daniel 12:3 and <23511>Isaiah 53:11; not “justify many,” but turn to righteousness, and bear, etc]

If Psalm 61 has been the cry of depression, Psalm 62 the confidence and encouragement of trust in God, Psalm 63 is the longing of the soul, still as cast out and far from the sanctuary (so we can speak of heaven, for we have seen the power and glory there by faith); but having, by faith in the lovingkindness itself, praise as its portion even in the wilderness, marrow and fatness to feed upon. It is a beautiful psalm in this respect; for it knows God; praise is thus begotten in the soul and for all times. There are two points: first, a most sweet wordbecause God’s lovingkindness is better than life, his lips praise God, though life in the wilderness be sorrow; secondly, because He has been his help, therefore he will rejoice in His protection. Verse 8 describes the practical resulthis soul followed hard after God, and God’s right hand upheld him. There was the longing to see the power and the glory as he had seen it; the present satisfying of the soul as with marrow and fatness, and that in the silent watches of the night, when all outward excitement was hushed and the soul left to itself. Those that sought the soul of the righteous to destroy it should go down into Hades, but the king shall rejoice in God. Those that own His name should glory, but the false ones who departed from Him should be put to shame. It is again the king, and applies to Christ in a higher sense than to the remnant. For Him it was the desire to see the glory from which He was descended; for the Jew it was in the temple; for us, a Christ who has been revealed by faith to us, who have seen the glory and sanctuary into which He is entered.

There is a difference between Psalm 84 and this psalm:that is the desire to revisit the sanctuary of God; this, desire after God Himself. There the tabernacles of Jehovah, a covenant God, are amiable; here God Himself is a delight when there are no tabernacles to go to. *

[* For Christ and for the new man, the world is a desert, without anything in it to refresh the soul. But divine favor being better than life, we can praise while we live; our soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. The saint is not in the sanctuary, but has seen God in it. His desire is after God Himself. Christ could literally say this. “He hath seen the Father”: we have seen Him in Him.]

**PSALM** 64 chiefly speaks of the unceasing crafty hatred of the enemy and cries to God: God will shoot at them suddenly. The result of this judgment will be that all shall fear and declare the work of God, for they shall wisely consider of His doing. Then (for judgment is now come) the righteous shall be glad in Jehovah, for His covenant name is now taken, the judgment having removed the power of evil. The upright in heart glory. Thus judgment introduces the millennium.

In Psalms 65-67 we have the bright side, the bright and joyful confidence of the saint who is conscious of being heard, and who, though not yet in the blessing, counts upon it; whereas up to this it has been the sense of the power of evil, or the cry to God and waiting upon Him. Still in Psalm 65 the door of praise is not yet opened. Praise is silent in Zion; still it surely would not be silent, the vow now made would be performed. There God was the hearer of prayer if praise was yet silent, and all flesh would come to Him. But confidence is very bright here. As to the actual state of the people and the remnant (indeed, the remnant alone enter into their case) iniquities prevailed against them. Still confidence is unshaken, God would purge them away. Blessed the man that Elohim chose (for all was grace) and made to dwell in His courts. They would be satisfied with the goodness of His house. The thing was sure and gave satisfying joy. In verse 5 we have the judgment in favor of the remnant by which the blessing would be introducedterrible things in righteousness. God is the blesser of the earth in every place. The end of the psalm is the celebration of the earth's blessings, when God comes in in judgment in favor of His people. At the door of Zion, as yet eating the fruit of their sins outside, the plea of the remnant is, that as yet praise was silent in Zion, but it was ready; God had only to bring in the judgment and deliverance, and it would wake up; and Elohim would do this, He who was the one blesser and orderer of the whole earth.

**PSALM** 66 celebrates this intervention in righteousness. Men are called to see God's works, but (v. 6) it is the very same God who once delivered Israel before out of Egypt. Verse 8 calls upon the nations brought into connection with God, to bless the God of the remnant, that is, of Israel. They had been brought through every kind of sorrow and oppression, to prove and try them as silver, but now they would go before Him and praise Him. They had cried, been righteous, were heard, and found mercy; their prayer was not turned away, nor God's mercy from them. Thus after the sorrows (seen clearly now as the way and hand of God with them), to the righteous there is arisen up light in the darkness. They can pay the vows uttered in their distress, and tell to others the blessed and sure deliverance of the Lord who cares for the righteous, and has indeed heard their cry. But it is a deliverance by terrible acts of righteousness on God's part, the display of His intervention in judgment in the government of this world. We see, as indeed in so many other psalms, how it is in the Jewish remnant, though not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, that God displays His government of this world; as it is in them, which is the subject of the next psalm, that the blessing of the world takes place.

**PSALM** 67 closes this short series by looking for the blessing of the remnant, not only as the righteous and merciful answer to their cry, but as

the way of spreading the knowledge of God's ways to all nations. "God be merciful to us, that thy way may be known upon earth." Thus all the peoples will praise God, and the earth be judged and governed righteously. The earth will yield her increase, God's blessing will be upon it, and He will, as the own God of the godly remnant that have trusted in Him, bless them. The result is summed up in the last verse"God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." For the repentant Jew is the way of blessing, life from the dead for the world.

**PSALM** 68 follows on these psalms, being the celebration of the introduction of Israel into the position spoken of in them. Still it has a complete and individual character of its own. It begins with the formula employed when the camp broke up in the wilderness under the guidance of God, the pillar rising up and going before them. So it is now. God takes this place at the head of His people. It is thus introduced suddenly with great majesty. Let God ariseso His enemies are scattered before Him: as wag before the fire, the wicked perish at His presence. The righteous may be glad and rejoice before God, yea, exceedingly rejoice. He shall appear to the shame of the mighty wicked, and the righteous poor will be glorified. Thus the purport of this psalm is most clear. But the character of Him who thus interferes is further most beautifully unfolded. He is a father of the fatherless, a judge of widows. He makes the solitary to dwell in families, the rebellious in a dry land. Judgment is the true and gracious deliverance of the blessed God. And now His people can celebrate this goodness.

History is then recapitulated (v. 7). Such was He when He brought forth Israel from Egypt. At Sinai the earth shook at His presence. But He refreshed the heritage of His weary people, when He had prepared of His goodness for the poor. But now present facts told that tale still more to their hearts. Adonai's word went forth. The glad tidings were chanted by Israel's daughters in a great company (v. 11). Kings fled apace. What a sudden and complete deliverance it was! The quietest home-stayer divided the spoil, for it was the Lord's doing. Then Israel came out in all her beauty, though they had been lying in poverty and wretchedness. * In all the pretensions and striving of the nations, this is God's will. God challenges these pretensions of human power; "Why leap ye, ye high hills?"the seats of human power. Zion was God's hill, He would make it His perpetual abode. For the sake of His remnant He scattered the kings. In the midst of them He would dwell. But whence all this deliverance? The Lord had ascended on high, received gifts as man and for men; yea, even for rebellious Israel, who was now in question, that Jehovah might dwell among them.

[* The force of the word is much disputed; its sense, I suppose, is evident. It is used for the stables of sheep or cattle.]

This brings out praises to the God of their salvation; for their God was the God of salvation. Oh! how could Christ witness that? But they were still mortal men down here. The deliverance was earthly and temporal, though of saints. But He would be their guide always, even unto death. But He would destroy the wicked. What was really the occasion of all this burst of joy (of which the heart was too full to tell quietly the occasion) is now however drawn out; yet the exultation still casts its light and joy over it. Israel was set up again in power; her enemies destroyed; the beauty of her temple-order restored. The tribes would come up, the kings bring presents. God had commanded strength, and they look to His strengthening what is wrought. The subjection of every enemy or mighty one follows. Princes would come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God. The kingdoms of the earth are all called upon then to sing praises to Adonai. Strength is to be ascribed to God; but His excellency, that in which He is exalted, is over Israel, and, in the clouds of His dwelling-place is power, His strength watches over His people. It is the full restoration of Israel's blessing and glory, and indeed much more than restoration; and this consequent upon the exaltation of the Lord to receive gifts as man.

But, while it is the intervention of God in the power of judgment, for the blessing of the remnant and putting down human power and every haughtiness of man's will"God's arising" before His earthly people and His enemies fleeingthere are some points in it, which are brought out by this, which it is well to notice. First, the use of Adonai. His name Jah is introduced (v. 4 and 18), but it is always Adonai as spoken of. It is not the covenant name of relationship, though Jah recall it, but power in exercise, Lordshipdivine Lordshipbut still Lordship. It is what Thomas owned when he saw the Lord, it would seem; not, tell my brethren "I ascend unto my Father and your Father," etc. It is God; but as the Lord manifested here in power as Psalm 2:4; only there He is not redescended. Hence here we have His ascension as a past fact. It is not that God gives, but He who is Adonai has gone up and received gifts as, and in respect of, man. In His Adam (last Adam) character He has received them, having led the enemy captive (Acts 2:33-36); here clearly the ascended man, though much more, and as head having received the gifts "in Man"the human head of gloryHe shed forth the gifts (Acts 2, Ephesians 4). But though as, and for, and in, man, yet there was also a special object added, yea, even for the rebellious, that Jah Elohim might dwell among them. Here the remnant, the Israel of our psalm, comes in. Hence the apostle does not quote it, but stops half-way at His receiving them for man.

In the following psalms we find the humiliation of this blessed One. What a contrast! Yet how far indeed from being less glorious or of feebler interest in the eyes of us who have learned and know who He is.

**PSALM** 69. The state of soul of which this most important psalm is the expression demands the utmost attention and patient inquiry. We have all along seen the remnant of Israel before us, or Christ associated with that remnant. It is the case here. He who speaks is doubtless, first of all, David; but evidently a greater than he. The state described is this:He is in the deepest distress, sinking in deep mire, has to weigh before God the foolishness and sins which have been the occasion of it. He is in the midst of numerous and mighty enemies, who are such without a cause. Whatever sins may be dealt with, personally He has been faithful. The zeal even of God's house has eaten Him up, and He is suffering reproach for the God of Israel's sake. Hence He prays that this may not be a stumbling-block to others, seeing that One so faithful to God should find such distress and trouble. Yet He is not forsaken of God. On the contrary His prayer is to Jehovah in an acceptable time. He looks to be heard in the multitude of God's mercies and the truth of His salvation. His complaint is of His enemies; yet He sees Himself smitten of God, and among those whom He has wounded. His desire is for vengeance against men; it is not the testimony of grace.

If we look at the godly man in the remnant of Israel, all this answers perfectly. He acknowledges his sinsall the sins of his nation. Yet he suffers reproach and causeless enmity for the name of the God of Israel: and the more faithful he is, the more he suffers it. Faith yet makes him know that he prays in an acceptable time (we have seen this to be the character of the last psalms) to the God of Israel. Yet he is in the deepest distress. His eyes fail while waiting for God. His care for the good of Israel, his submission to injury, only makes him their scorn. He looks for the destruction of his adversaries and persecutors, for whom no mercy is of avail (they will it not); assured that Jehovah hears the poor and despises not His prisoners. All creation is to praise Him, for God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell therein and have it in possession. The seed also of His servants shall inherit it; and they that love His name shall dwell therein. All this is exactly and precisely the position and feeling of the godly remnantthe maschilim.

But in verse 21, and indeed, though of more general application, in verse 9, we have what has been literally fulfilled in Christ. The use of verse 22 in the epistle to the Romans leads us to the same conclusion; and many other verses, though applicable to others, have their fullest application to Christ. Yet He is not speaking as forsaken of God at all. Yet, though His life is

referred to, His sufferings on the cross, as we have seen, are reached in the description given of them; yet there is no trace of grace and mercy flowing from them. They are man's part in them, not God's forsaking; and judgment on man sought, not righteous grace announced. Yet withal trespasses are confessed before God, and the persecutions are of One whom God has smitten. Hence, I cannot but see in this psalm, after His righteous life, in consequence of which He suffered reproach (and which He rehearses as regards the great principles which had governed it), Christ entering in heart and spirit into the sorrow and distress of Israel, into which, as to God's government, they had brought themselves; yet not the forsaking or the rejectingthat was Christ's alone as bearing and expiating sin. Still, they are smitten of God and wounded by Him; and into this Christ could enter, because He (in the highest and fullest sense, though it be not the general subject of this psalm in general) was smitten of God. The subject is the persecution by the Jews, but the persecuted One was smitten of God, and felt how terrible was the wickedness that taunted and reproached Him who had taken that bitter cup, which we too had filled by our sins. Christ was smitten of God upon the cross, and felt the reproach and dishonor then cast upon Him.

As regards the trespasses recalled to mind in verse 5, * I apprehend they are in connection with the government of God as to Israel; and that, though the fact of smiting is referred to, its expiatory power is not at all treated of in this psalm. Only judgment is sought for; that is not the fruit of expiation (compare Psalm 22). But it gives to us, for that very reason, a fuller apprehension of all the personal sufferings of Christ at that time; not that which stands wholly and entirely aloneHis atoning and expiatory work. Were this only revealed, it is so immensely great, it would have eclipsed His personal sufferings as a man, as such, gone through at that time; and this it is, blessed be God, which we have in this psalmwhat accompanied the great act of the smiting of God.

> [* Further, as already remarked, in no case is the assumption of sins or their confession, on the head of the victim, the act of expiation. It is the assumption of that which had to be expiated.]

**PSALM** 70 embodies the desire of the Spirit of Christ in connection with His sufferings from man, (but expresses itself, as in the remnant in that day); that His enemies may be confoundedthose that say, Aha, aha, as they did when He was on the cross; that those that seek Jehovah may rejoice, and be glad and rejoice, and those who look for His deliverance say, Let God be magnifiedthat is, enjoy that deliverance. For this, He, as on earth, is content to be poor and needy, and nothing else, to the end. Still He trusts in Jehovah; He is His help and deliverer. He is assured He will come. He asks

He may not tarry. Any saint of the remnant could say it doubtless; but it is a summing up of the principle on which the Spirit of Christ speaks in them, and of His personal association with their sorrows, and thus in principle furnishes a key. It will be remarked that from Psalm 69:13 the covenant name of Jehovah is introduced.

**PSALM** 71, founded, I suppose, as much of this book, upon the flight of David on the rebellion of Absalom, presents, I apprehend, the sum of all God's ways with Israel from the commencement of their history, and the display of His faithful care, with the appeal not now to leave them at the last. Christ, I doubt not, in spirit enters into it (see v. 11) as in every case, but it cannot personally apply to Him. The close of His life witnessed exactly similar trials, only faultless and deeper ones; but its application is to the old age of Israel, who will be brought up as from the depths of the earth through the faithful grace of the Holy One of Israel.

**PSALM** 72 introduces us, not to David in suffering and conflict, but to the full reign of peace and royal blessing. It is the Son of David we have here, the source and securer of millennial blessings. I know not that this psalm requires much explanation by reason of its clearness. It is the king to whom God gives His judgments, and who is at the same time the king's Son, the Son of David, in His reign of righteousness and peace, as Solomon or Melchisedec. His kingdom has the full extent of promise, but all kings fall down before Him. Blessings of every kind accompany this reign of righteousness. The expression "prayer shall be made continually for him" shows simply, that the blessings enjoyed through Him raise the desire and request for His glory and continuance in power. While literally spoken of Solomon, I think it would point out Christ reigning as a true man upon earth. Verse 17 shows, I think, it is not uncertainty of duration, but the effects of His rule on the hearts of all that are under it. There will be a prince of the house of David in Jerusalem, I suppose: still this, I think, looks beyond him.

This closes the Book. We have seen in it the godly ones cast out; their distress and confidence in this position; this ending in the certainty and confidence of restoration; and then Messiah's deliverance and exaltation and previous humiliation the glorious and yet humbled person being thus brought outand then the human royal rule established in Israel. This ends the dealings with the remnant in the land, looked at as apart from the rest.

# BOOK 3

In the Third Book we get out into a larger sphere than the state of the residue of the Jews in the last days, whether in Jerusalem or driven out; and hence we find much less of the personal circumstances and feelings and associations of the Lord who, in His day, walked among them. The general interests of Israel are in view, and thus Israel's history is entered into. The whole national position is before us, still distinguishing a true-hearted residue. Remark here that, save one, we have no psalms of David in this book. Asaph, sons of Korah, Ethan, are the professed authors; I know of no reason to reject the alleged authorship. It is still the state of Israel in the last days: only that the general facts are spoken of in reference to the whole nation, not the particular details of the Jewish remnant, and of Christ as taking a place among them. It is much more Israel and general principles; there is more reference to their past history and God's dealings with them.

This the first psalm of it shows. Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a true heart: but the saint was perplexed at the prosperity of the wicked, and his feet almost gone. The prosperous ungodly are then described; the body of the people join them, and the Most High is scorned; whereas the godly is continually chastened, he had cleansed his hands then in vain. But in speaking thus he would offend against the generation of God's children. Man pondering on it, it was too painful. In the sanctuary of God, where His mind was revealed, all became plain. As a dream when one awakes, so all their pretensions would disappear when once God awoke. The godly man complains of his want of divine sense in these thoughts and feelings. Still, after all he was ever before God, and God's right hand upheld him; guided by His counsel in that time of darkness, when the glory shall have been revealed, he will be received (read "after the glory, thou wilt receive me": compare ◁308Zechariah 2:8). The result is blessed. He has. none in heaven but the Lord, none on earth whom he desires beside Him: such is the effect of trial. But his flesh and heart fail: that is nature. It must be so, but God is the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. The last two verses declare the resultthose far from Jehovah, and apostates, perish; but it is good for the godly to draw near to God. He has put his trust in Him when He did not show Himself, that he might declare all His works when deliverance came; for those blessed without trial afterwards will not learn this knowledge of God.

**PSALM** 74 complains of the hostile desolation of the sanctuary, when rebuilt in the land. God's enemies, as faith here calls them, roar in the congregations. Man's ensigns, not God's, are the signs of power. All public

Jewish worship was laid low. Not only thiswhat might have been a comfort in such a time fails. There are no signs from God to meet it, no prophets, none that know how long (know, that is, by the teaching of God, when He will come in in power). Still there is here faith that God will not forsake His people, and that word, How long? if there be no answer as to it, turns into a cry. It cannot be for ever. God's faithfulness is trusted in. Heretofore He had smitten Egypt and delivered His people through a divided sea. All power in creation was His. The enemy had reproached the name of Jehovah. Israel is still held to be, in the remnant, as God's turtledove. He is entreated to have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the earth (or land) are full of the habitations of cruelty. The oppressed, the poor, the needy, are, as ever, presented to the eye and heart of God. We have them ever come before us as those of whom God thinks, in whom Christ delighted in the land. And so it is even as to the spirit we have to be of. He calls on God to arise and plead His own cause. The tumult of those who rose up against Him daily increased. While looked at as the poor and oppressed, it is remarkable how faith identifies the interests of the godly remnant and of God, and pleads their cause with Him. It is spoken of as from without. God is addressed: only God is reminded that His name in Israel has been blasphemed. This name recalls (v. 19, 20) the covenant relationship with, and tender love of Jehovah towards, His people.

In Psalm 75 Messiah is introduced speaking, though the psalm commences with the remnant giving thanks to God for wondrous works already wrought. Then judgments of God introduce Messiah to the kingdom. He receives the congregation of Israel; then upright judgment will be executed. The earth is dissolved in guilt and confusion. Messiah upholds its pillars. In the following verses He warns the wicked and despisers of God not to exalt themselves, for God is the Judge; He puts up and puts down. The wicked should drink the cup of judgment to the dregs; but the despised Messiah would exalt the God of Jacob and cut off the horns of the wicked; the horn of the righteous would be exalted.

**PSALM** 76 is extremely simple in its application to the judgment of the kings, who come up against Jerusalem in their pride, and find, unlooked for, the Lord Himself there (compare Micah 4:11-13 and Zechariah 12:2; 14:3, 4). The judgment of God is rehearsed, and God is now celebrated as having His dwelling-place in Zion. He is the God of Jacob and known in Judah: His judgment was heard from heaven. The long-despised Zion is more glorious than the mountains of prey, the high places of human violence. The earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, and to help all the meek upon the earth.

In Psalm 77 we have spiritual deliverance and restored confidence. He cried with his voice to God, and God gave ear to him. To cry with the voice is more than to have a wish. A cry is the expression of weakness, dependence, recourse had to God, the reference of the soul to God, even of uprightness of heart. In the day of trouble, it was not merely complaint, irritation, anger; but "I sought the Lord," Adonai, not Jehovah. His first thought was whether the Lord would cast off for ever (v. 7-9); for here he, as often remarked in the Psalms, is going through the process which led to the statements of the first verses. * In verse 10 he judges himself in the thought, and remembered those years in which the power of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, the Most High of the fathers, was displayed (compare the remark, verse 5). The way of God is always and necessarily according to His own most blessed and holy nature, and understood in the secret place in which He makes known His thoughts to those in communion with Him. His way is according to that place, in which He judges His people according to His present relationship with them. (Hence the place of the interpreter, one among a thousand). The ways of God are the application of the divine principles of His holy nature, owned as placing Himself in relationship with His people, according to which principles that relationship must be maintained. That is His sanctuary. There is where He is approached. Thence He deals with His people, not merely in outward guidance, but as making good in His majesty the principles of His nature (so far as revealed) in the hidden man of the heart. ** He deals in the holy place of His nature and majesty with us in the truth of our stateour real, moral, inward state. He does not deviate from these ways, nor compromise the majesty they make good. But they (though according to His nature) are carried out in a revealed relationship. They make good His nature and majesty in it, but never infringe it. Man in relationship with Him must suit himself to it, must walk in his inward state with Him in it; but God, if He deals according to it, purifies him for it, shows the evil, hides pride from man in order to bless him, but makes good His own majesty. Hence the heart in the evil turns back to that which formed the relationship in redemption (v. 14-18).

[* This, if noticed, makes many psalms easy to understand, which would otherwise be difficult; because sorrow and distress follow after the confidence, but it is really what the spirit passed through in reaching it.]

[** This supposes, of course, truth in the inward parts, conversion.]

Israel or the godly remnant is not in the enjoyment here of covenant blessings, but, when distressed, looks back by faith to a time which recalls the power of Him who cannot change. The comfort of the soul is, that God's way is in the sanctuary, according to the nature and ways of God

Himself, so far as He is revealed. If I look out to judge as man, His way is in the seaI cannot trace it; His footsteps are not known, for who can follow out Him who disposes of all things with a thought? We do know God's own nature and character in relation to us by faith, and can reckon on it, as to all He does, as faithful and unchangeable; but we cannot know and judge His ways in themselves. Hence the unbeliever is discontented and will blame God; the believer is happy, because he has the key to all, in what the God is whom he knows, and on whose ordering of all things he can count. It must be according to what God is. He does not order all things contrary to what He is; but He is for us and therefore orders all things for usmakes all things work together for good. He leads His people like sheep. In Psalm 73 the tried one learned the end of his outward enemies, who prospered while he was chastened. Here he learns the ways of God with himself.

But this psalm is practically both interesting and instructive. The soul away from the enjoyment of divine blessing, is awakened by grace to cry to God, the sense of the loss of these blessings pressing upon it. He seeks the Lord, and this presses the trouble, as it ever does, on him; he feels where he is, his soul refused comfort; but the thought of God is a source of trouble, for if faith is awakened, conscience is too, which mingled with the loss of blessing, and the spirit overwhelmed; his soul is kept in wakeful consciousness of where he is. He thinks of bright days of old when the "candle of the Lord shone upon" him. Had God given him up, forgotten to be gracious and shut up His lovingkindness in displeasure? Can he think that God has given him up, and he one of His people! This brought God Himself into his mind. How could it be all over with him? It was his own infirmity; and he turns back to the years of the right hand of the Most High. He remembers Jehovah's works. In reaching Jehovah with his own humbled spirit, he reached One who was for His people ever and who had wrought for them and redeemed them of old. He, their God, became the source of his thoughts, not his own state towards Him. Then His being their God made it so dreadful. Then he can think and judge rightly of His ways too. They are in the sea not to be tracked by man's foot, but in the sanctuary always according to His nature and character, and accomplishing His purposes in good.

In Psalm 78 the conduct of Israel is discussed by wisdom, historically as regards the whole people, but with very important principles brought out. There was not only a redemption of old, to which faith recurred, but a testimony given, and a law to guide Israel's ways, that they should make them known to their children. But the fathers had been a stubborn and rebellious generation. Now, the law and the testimony were given that the children might not be like their fathers; but they were, and their history is

here brought out. God, therefore, chastened them; there was direct open government in respect of their ways. For all this they sinned still. At the moment of chastisement they turned to Him. Nevertheless they did but flatter Him with their mouth, their heart was not right with Him, nor they stedfast in His covenant. But He showed compassion, also forgave, remembered they were but flesh. Yet after Egyptian signs they forgat Him; brought into the land, they turned to idolatry. When God heard this, He was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel. On the ground of this government, under law and testimony and compassionate mercy, Israel was wholly given up, the tabernacle forsaken, the ark delivered into captivity and the enemies' hand. The people also were delivered over to judgment. But Jehovah's love to His people in grace was not weakened, and the sorrow they were brought into called out that love. He awoke, as one out of sleep, and smote His enemies, and put them to a perpetual shame. But now He had interfered in grace in His own proper love to His people. It was not governmental blessing on condition of obedience, but the interference of grace, when disobedience had, on the principle of government, brought in complete judgment, in spite of compassion and mercy. Sovereign mercy now had its place. Old blessings had put Joseph as natural heir; he had the rich and double portion. God chose Judah. He chose Zion. This gave it its importance. It is the place of love in grace, when all had failed under law, even with the fullest compassionate patience. He built His sanctuary. That is not directly presented as the subject of electing goodness, but He chose David when in the humblest condition, who then fed His people.

In this most beautiful psalm we have the most important principles possible. Viewing Israel as established on the ground of government in Sinai, on law mixed with compassion, Israel had entirely failed, was abhorred, cast off. A total breach had been made; the ark of the covenant, the link between Israel and God, the place of propitiation, and His throne, given up to the enemy. But God, whose sovereign love to His people had come in in power to deliver, had chosen Judah, Zion, David, and set up a link in grace, and by deliverance after failure. Faith can go back to God's works in redemption, but not to man's conduct under law. Psalm 78 is the converse of Psalm 77. Yet in Israel all this is declared to produce that which grace will effect in the last daythat value for the law in the heart which will make them teach it to their children (compare <01817>Genesis 18:17-19; see <02301>Exodus 34). Mercy put Israel again under the condition of obedience. Here power delivers, after they have failed even under this, and judgment is come, God acting according to His mind of love. Pure law they never were under in fact; the tables never came into the camp (compare <47301>2 Corinthians 3). Moses' face shone only when he had seen God, when he went up the second time accepted in grace; but for Israel, this was putting

them back under law. It is grace, and law brought in after it, which is death and condemnation. This is impossible with substitution; but this place, of course, Moses could not take. “Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your souls.” “Blot me out, I pray you.” No, was the answer; the soul that sins, it will I blot out. This was law and (as we see here, and as is definitely stated in 2 Corinthians 3) ruin.

**PSALM** 79 refers, in the plainest terms, to the inroad of the heathen, especially the northern army (2900Joel 2 refers to a second attack, in which the cry of the psalm is answered; Isaiah speaks of both), who had laid waste Jerusalem and the temple, and shed the blood of the servants of Jehovah. There is the owning of former sins, and mercy looked totender mercies. The plea is the plea called for in Joel 2, and referred to in previous psalms (42 and 43), “why should the heathen say Where is their God?” and it demands that He may be known by the avenging the blood of His servants. Thus His people and the sheep of His pasture would give Him thanks for ever. Jehovah’s anger is seen, and so far there is faith to sayHow long? That is, though covenant mercies are not enjoyed by the remnant (yea, quite the contrary), yet faith looks to them, and sees Jehovah angry with His people; hence if such, and He thus in relationship with them, He cannot give them up. It is only “How long?” Yet the direct cry is to God, even here, not Jehovah. Israel is not restored to his covenant place. There he will be in known covenant relationship, and then in grace, nor will this ever be lost sight of. Here they were not, but cast out on their failure under a conditional covenant, and though faith in promises sustained them, the new covenant was not entered into; they stood outside blessing, looking backward and forward, having nothing now. This is never the Christian’s state. In applying it to himself he makes himself a Jew. For while Christ is hidden on high as to them, the Holy Ghost is come down to us while He is there, and we know that He is accepted and glorified as having stood for us, and that we are in Him.

In Psalm 80 it is remarkable how we are upon the ground of Israel here, their past or future historical associations, not Christ (though all depends on Him, of course) or the godly Jew in the. midst of the apostate assembly. We may have Jerusalem taken, confederacies, ancient deliverances of Israel, in a word, national history or prophecy concerning national circumstances; but all is external, not trials within so that Christ should come personally on the scene, save when He receives the congregation, though the godly in Israel are distinguished. Jehovah also is not referred to, save prospectively, when they enter into the new covenant, until the judgment of the last confederacy, which makes Jehovah known as Most High over all the earth. These psalms do not, I apprehend, exclude the Jewsthey are part of Israel;

and then in Judah, Jehovah will be revealed: only all Israel, including Joseph, is historically brought inthe nation. In this psalm God is addressed as the Shepherd of Israel, who leads Joseph like a flock, and dwells between the cherubim. This is, again, historic Israel. It is not God calling from heaven, nor coming. He is seen by faith only when He is there, having taken His place in Israel.

The psalm is a remarkable one. It sees God in IsraelHis throne of right there, and looks to His shining forth, stirring up His strength to help them; but still, as in Israel of old in the desert, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were immediately next the ark behind the tabernacle, and the sanctuary went immediately before them on the march of the camp (Numbers 10) This was Jehovah, God of hosts. Faith looks for His presence in power with His people as it was then. The touching inquiry is, How longthe urgency of faithwilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? This is also viewed in faith. The vine brought out of Egypt was laid waste; its hedge (as, indeed, Isaiah had threatened them) was broken down. Tears were the drink of Jehovah's people. They beseech God to look down from heaven and visit the vine, the vineyard, and the branch made strong for God HimselfDavid's family, I suppose. Still it was God's rebuke; but further, it looks that the divine hand of power should be upon the man of that powerthe Son of man whom God had made strong for Himself. We can understand from this, and not merely from Daniel 7 (which merely gives a peculiar place to the Son of man), why the Lord gives Himself habitually the title of Son of man. He is the One, then, indeed rejected, but upon whom God's right hand is to be in power. To this the Lord refers, Luke 22:69 (only reading "henceforth" for "hereafter"). Come down in grace, His mission there was closed; from that hour they would only know Him in exalted judicial power. It gives large importance to the name, and taking in Psalm 8 brings the deliverance of the remnant of Israel into the wide scope of His power; for as Son of man He takes manhood up in His own Person according to the counsels of God, only is over all the works of God's hand. He is Lord of all, but as such, and in virtue of His own work for them, effectuates this deliverance of the remnant of Israel. Thus the people of Jehovah would be kept. Such is the cry of this psalmthe coming in of power from Jehovah, the God of Israelpower laid upon the Son of man. The cry is occasioned by the great distress in Israel; still Jehovah is looked for, and faith sets Him in Israel. When He thus visited them, they would not go back from Him; when He quickens them out of the dust, they will call on His name (compare Psalm 2, Messiah).

Verses 3, 7, 19 give the theme of desire: still outward deliverance is looked for. Verse 17 demands special attention in the point of view already noticed,

as showing what was in the Lord's mind when presenting the immense anomaly that this Son of man should suffer. Psalm 8, of course, gives the key, in the purposes of God, as to both humiliation and exaltation, and man's place. It was this humiliation the Lord pressed upon His disciples. Now they look for the display of divine power in Him. The assembly, and its union with Christ, and adoption individually known, are the only things I am aware of not revealed in the Old Testament; all as to Christ was. Perhaps we may add His present position as priest. Neither of these is mentioned in the titles given to Christ in the first chapter of John's Gospel, nor His being the Christ.

**PSALM** 81, while celebrating in figure the restoration of Israel, again returns to historical ground, specially introducing Joseph, who represents the ten tribes (see Ezekiel 37:16). Otherwise Judah, the Jews, might have claimed everything. But in the restoration (although there are special events connected with the Jews, and it was amongst them that Jesus was conversant, entering especially into their circumstances in the latter day, producing the association, so profoundly interesting, which we have been studying in the first two books) yet it is evident that in the full purposes of God the stick of Joseph must have its place and become one in the Son of man's hand, and as all Israel. Now the new moon was the symbol of the reappearance of Israel in the sun's light, hailed with joy by the people and connected with redemption in the thought of faith (see v. 5 of the psalm). Then Israel called in trouble, and God delivered him; but then another important principle comes in. God answered them when in trouble; but He proved them also. They tempted God then, doubting His care and power. He was putting them to the test by difficulties, which seemed to say there was want of care or power; and they said, Is Jehovah among us! But Jehovah answered in grace (Exodus 17). This, I apprehend, is the case referred to. But even in the second Meribahcalled so because Israel strove again with Jehovah, when Moses (Numbers 20) spake unadvisedly with his lips and was shut out from Canaan (for, from Sinai on, they were under legal though gracious government) Jehovah was sanctified in giving them water in a grace which was above even Moses' failure. Still, while grace and faithfulness to His promises to His people were found in the government of God (Exodus 34:6, 7), they were put to the test legally on the very terms of that mercy. It was a testing government though a merciful one, and so indeed in some sense is the divine government. God puts this test to themif faithful to God, no strange God among them (He was Jehovah their God, which brought them out of the land of Egypt), blessing was prepared. They had only to open their mouth wide, and He would fill it. But Israel would not hearken, and they were given up to their own hearts' lusts. Still we see Gods yearning love over them and the delight He would

have had in blessing them and putting aside all their enemies His righteous government would have been manifested in them (compare <4023>Matthew 23:37; <4219>Luke 19:42). Oh that they had hearkened! Thus we get the ground of Israel's ruin. They were placed as redeemed from Egypt under the test of obedience and fidelity to God. They had failed. Still they would appear again, to reflect the light of Jehovah's countenance. Thus love of Jehovah for the people breaks out even in their failure.

A very important principle for every soul is brought before us here. Redemption, with conditional blessing after it, only ends in the loss of the blessing, just as creation did. It is the same thing or worse. It depends on us to secure the blessing; and now as fallen beings (instead of innocent and free ones), grace alone can keep us, and so it will be with Israel. The gracious and tender character and thoughts of God towards His people come out most beautifully in this psalm. The passages I have referred to in the Gospels show the same tenderness, but, further, that Jesus is this very Jehovah.

**PSALM** 82. We find God assuming the government into His own hands. He had set up authority in the earth and especially in Israel. Directed by His word in judgment and armed with His authority, the judges in Israel had born the name of God (Elohim). But none would understand or deal righteously. All the foundations of the earth were out of course. All magistrates had received power and authority of Godthe Jewish, His word also; but even these would not know or understand. They were men, and would die like men, and fall like one of the uncircumcised princes of this world. God who had given the authority judged among the gods He must have righteousness. This judgment the Spirit of prophecy then calls for in the understanding one. "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

**PSALM** 83 requires only to call attention to its subject. It is the last confederacy of the nations surrounding Canaan, with Assur helping them. At the close of the psalm, though the cry be to God as such (for Israel is not yet established in covenant blessing), Jehovah's name is brought in. Judgment is to be executed, that the rebellious nations may seek Jehovah's name. It is not, know the Father, nor, know there is a God; but, know Jehovah. When His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Men will know that He whose name alone is Jehovah (He who is, and was, and is to come) is the Most High over all the earth; that is, Jehovah (the one true God), the God of Israel, is the One above all, the One supreme over the earth. It is in this name He takes possession of the earth, as Melchisedec pronounces the blessing in the name of the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. And

Nebuchadnezzar, the humbled head of the Gentiles, praises and blesses the Most High. It is His millennial name in which He takes to Him His great power and reigns, and the true Melchisedec is priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace between both. This establishes prophetically Jehovah, the God of Israel, supreme in the earth. His people, now restored to relationship, look for a full blessing and the name of Jehovah is again used. Up to this, save as looking back or looking forward, the cry of the people is addressed to God, the people not being in possession of covenant blessings.

**PSALM** 84 contemplates the blessedness of going up to the courts of Jehovah, yet, in the figurative allusion to the road thither, refers to the path of tears which His people have had to tread towards their blessings. Thus it has a full moral force, and is instructive for Christians as for Jews. In Psalm 63 the people cast out were longing for God Himself, and found, in spite of all, even in the dry and thirsty land, marrow and fatness in Him. In this psalm it is the joys of His house that occupy their soul, as entering into the enjoyment of covenant blessings. Not but that the living God is longed for; but it is in His courts. “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee.” Brought in there, such is the blessing. They will have nought to do but praise. This is the first great theme of blessing. It is blessing, perfect and complete in its nature. It is at the end.

But there is the way. “Blessed is he whose strength is in Jehovah”in whose heart are the known ways that lead to the house. This characterizes the state of soultheir strength in Jehovahtheir heart in the ways that lead to Him. This path of blessing is through trial; for hence is the need of strength. And the way is loved and taken, whatever it may be, that leads to Him. They pass through the vale of tearsit becomes a well to them; for by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit. Besides, from on high the rain fills the pools in that thirsty land. They use their strength, no doubt. It is put to the test; but they renew itgo from strength to strength, till all appear before God in Zion. They are a praying people. Dependence is exercised in confidence in grace.

The covenant name here is again introducedJehovah of hostsGod of Jacob. He is His people’s shield: they seek that He should look upon His anointed. This was now the link between Jehovah and His people, not the law they had broken. They appear before God in Zion. But that is the place of royal deliverance in grace. Nor can the interests of the people and the anointed be now separated. The blessing rested on Him, and on them because of Him. The heart’s interest in the kind of blessing is then sweetly and strongly expressed, and the sum of what Jehovah is, which makes it such, is declared from the heart. He is light, protection, gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing from them who walk uprightly. The thought of

what Jehovah is makes him resume all in one conscious word. “O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in thee.”

It is a most beautiful returning celebration of Jehovah their covenant God with their heart, when the way, though through sorrow, is now opened to them into His known presence. Psalm 63 was joy in God in the desert, when they had nothing elsethe real character of one enhancing the depth and sweetness of the blessing of the other. This is joy in Him when brought, or going up, to the enjoyment of Him in the midst of what surrounds His presence. The following psalm takes up the blessing of the land, and delivered people. In those that follow after we shall find Christ Himself, as far as connected with the people, still with a view to the covenant relation subsisting between Jehovah and His people.

I have long hesitated, in reading Psalm 85, whether the first part referred to external deliverance and the grace shown in it, and the following to the causing the people to enter into the enjoyment of it by the restoration of their own souls; or, as we have seen is often the case, the statement of the great result as the theme of the psalm, and then going through the sorrows of the remnant and divine workings which led to this result. There will be a restoring work in the souls of the people after their outward deliverance. Nor do I now speak of this psalm with very great certainty on this point. On the whole, I am disposed to think that they look for their enjoyment of divine favor in it, as between themselves and God, when delivered from all their enemies, and shown to be forgiven by that deliverance. Thus the first three verses lay this ground, that God has been favorable to His land, and brought back the captivity of Jacob. This was the great public truth. But in verse 4 the restored people have need of other blessing in the reality of their own relationship with God. “Turn us, O God of our salvation.” Jehovah was the God of their salvation; but they needed His blessing in the midst of the land. They would that His people should rejoice in Him. How true this is often of the soul which knows forgiveness! It looks for Jehovah’s mercy and salvation, being thus restored to Him, and listens to know what Elohim Jehovah will speak; for they reckon on mercy. He will speak peace to His peopletheir public characterand to His saintsthe remnant who are to enjoy it. Faith has then the certainty in every way that His salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that the glory of Jehovah may dwell in the land. The last verses celebrate, in remarkable terms, the divine principles on which their blessings are then established. God’s mercy and truth had now met. His promises, always true, had now been fulfilled by mercy. It is to be remarked that in the psalms mercy always precedes righteousness and truth. For Israel had forfeited all title to promise in rejecting the Lordhad come under full guilthad no righteousness on which to leanhad been concluded in

unbelief, that they also might be objects of mere mercy. But then through Christ's work these promises would now be fulfilled, and mercy and truth met. But more than this. Jehovah was their righteousness, through grace; and hence that righteousness was peace for them; and that which in judgment would have been their ruin, was in grace their peacerighteousness and peace kissed each other. I need hardly say how true these great principles are for any sinner for yet better and heavenly blessings; here they are applied to earthly ones. Truth shall spring out of the earth (that is, the full fruit and effect of God's truth and faithfulness shall be manifest in blessings, full blessings, on the earth). But it was not by a righteousness that man had wrought legally here below. Righteousness looked down from heaven. It was God's righteousness, Jehovah their righteousness. But this made it stable. Jehovah gives that which is good, and the land is blessed. Righteousness traces the path of blessing for Jehovah and Himself in the landHis own no doubt. Still His rule shall be so characterized. A king shall reign in righteousness"no more oppression. Justice is no longer fallen in the streets, as Isa 59:14Isaiah 59:14 speaks; judgment is returned to it, and the government has this character. "And the fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." This last, indeed, is practical; but it is the result of righteousness having looked down from heaven, yea, of its being established on the earth (compare Psa 72:1-7Psalm 72:1-7, where this state is described).

**PSALM** 86. This psalm is the meek yet confiding and confident appeal of a soul conscious of its godly feelings towards Jehovah and looking to the results of relationship with Him. We have had Jehovah since Psalm 84, which is founded on these covenant relationships in which the remnant feel themselves to be, though awaiting full blessing in the land. Still it is yet in distress, for the people are not revived nor set in their covenant blessings in the land. Holy (v. 2) is pious or gracious (chasid, not kodesh, holy). The three requests of the psalm are, "Bow down thine ear and hear me" (v. 1). The gracious attention of Jehovah is called for to give ear to the prayer of the suppliant; then to attend to the voice of his supplication (v. 6); that is, he looks for his request being granted; thirdly, to be taught in the way of truth (v. 11). Jehovah's mercies in the terrible conflict of the remnant are then owned; but he who thus cried, still looked for His interference in his behalf, that they that hate him may be ashamed, because Jehovah has helped and comforted him. How the state of the remnant, like Job, brings out the great conflict between the power of Satan and divine deliverance, but in which, however low he may be brought, the godly soul owns the source of all to be Jehovah, though his feet may well nigh slip in seeing the prosperity of the ungodly! It is not a psalm of complaint nor bitterness of soul, but of one

who is yet poor and needy, but has tasted the comfort of Jehovah's goodness.

It is to be remarked that, save the cases noticed, Lord is Adonai, not Jehovah. This is not the same as Jehovah, that is, the covenant name of God with Israel in eternal faithfulnesshere Adonai, one who has taken power and is in the relationship of lordship to those who call. Hence in fact we own Christ to be in this place"our Lord Jesus Christ"; and so it will be for Jews, though, till they see Him, they will not own Him fully thus. This Adonai is Elohim. Death and human power were before the thoughts of the godly, but the comfort of a known Jehovah as a support. They had found deliverance, but it was not complete in blessing. The psalm is essentially the pious appeal to Jehovah of the returned. remnant of Israel in the land; but in the main its spirit is that into which Christ fully entered, but it is not directly applicable to Him.

**PSALM** 87 views Zion as founded of God, a city which has foundations. Men had cities, and boasted of them; but God had a city He founded in the holy mountains. Even here it was not Joseph or the richness of nature; God was its riches, its place the holy mountains, what was consecrated to Himself. In the power of the Spirit the godly is not ashamed of it (glorious things are spoken of it), nay, not in the presence of all the earth's seats of boasting. Egypt and Babylon in vain vaunted themselves; Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, who had all had their day. The godly could talk of them without fear of comparison. It was accounted the birthplace of the man of God; the birthplace of the beloved ones of Jehovah. The Highest established her. When Jehovah made the registry of the people, He reckoned this man as born there. Joy and the celebration of His praise was found there, and all the fresh springs of Jehovah. I have little doubt that "this man" refers to Christ. Zion boasts of her heroes. The word translated "man" (v. 5), refers to great men, not the poor and miserable. They are the children of the once desolate (compare Isaiah 49:21, 22).

**PSALM** 88 puts the remnant under the deep and dreadful sense of a broken law, and God's fierce wrath, which, in justice comes upon those who have done so. It is not now outward sorrows or oppression of enemies, but that which is far, far deeper between the soul and God. And though the judgments of God have brought him into lowliness, (and so it ever is morally with the soul when thus visited of God, for what can man then do, if he would help?) yet this was only a part of the trouble, viewing it as a full expression of God's wrath; but death and wrath are the true burden of the psalmGod's terrors on the soul. Nor is there, as a present thing, any comfort, or a prospect of deliverance as from human oppression however dark for faith. The psalm closes in distress; its dealings are wholly with

God; and so God must he known, till grace is known. Israel under law must come under a sense of divine wrath for a broken law; it is right it should But remark further, it is still a God with whom they are in relationship. They have been delivered, brought back into the land, nearer to God, and hence into the sense of what their deserved position is in respect of this relationship. This is much to be observed, and observed for ourselves too; for a God of salvation may be really known in a general way, and truly, without the conscience being searched out, and divine wrath known in, and removed from, the conscience. “O Jehovah, God of my salvation!” is the address of this psalm. This gives it its weight and true character, and makes it much more terrible. The full blessing of liberty in grace may not be known, but the relationship with the God of salvationHe Himselfthe consciousness of having to say to Him is sufficiently known to make the privation of His favor and the sense of His wrath dreadful beyond allthe one dreadful thing.

With the Jews, under the law, circumstances and government may more enter into this case, because their relationship with Jehovah is connected with them. Still Jehovah’s fierce wrath is the great and terrible burden; and this terror of the Almighty, or more accurately, of Jehovah, drinking up the spirit, is the subject of this psalmthe sense the remnant will have of wrath, under a broken law, in that day. Sorrow had visited them before. They had been afflicted and ready to die from youth; for such indeed had been their portion as cast off but now restored, and so far brought into connection with Jehovah, the God of their salvation, they must feel the depths of their moral position between Himself and them alonethe wrath of Jehovah that was due to them. The real recovery, the righteous bringing into blessing, could not be without this. Not that, indeed, the wrath would abide on them. Hence there is faith, hope, though no comfort, in the psalm; for it is when mercy has been shown and known, that this distress comes on them; when they have entered on the relationship by that mercy that its value, as has been said, may be felt; just like Job already blest, and then made to know himselfwhat man was, as between him and Jehovah, when the question of acceptance, of righteousness, was raised. The wrath will not abide upon them because the true cup of it has been drunk by Christ; but they must enter into the understanding of it, as under law, for they had been under law, and pretended to righteousness under itat least, that question was not solved for them. How truly Christ entered into this in the closing epoch of His life, I need not say. It is the great fact of His history.

It is to be remarked that, even as to the direct subject of the psalm, the terrors have not been always on the sufferer. Afflicted and ready to die he had been; * such had been his life; but now he felt his soul cast off, and

lover and friend even, whom he previously had had, put far from him by the hand of God. So, indeed, it was with Christ. His disciples could not then continue with Him in His temptations. He bore witness to them, that till then they had; but now, sifted as wheat, desertion or denial was the part of the best of them. Such was our Savior's portion: only that, unspared and then undelivered, He indeed drank the cup which shall make the remnant escape the death they are fearing. It may press upon them as a lesson to know righteousness and deliverance, but the cup of wrath they will not drink. They are heard and set free on the earth. This psalm then is wrath under law; the next, mercy and favor in Christ, but as yet resting in promise. Actual deliverance is in the next book, by the full bringing in of Jehovah-Messiah for the world, and Israel's sabbath.

[* Some, as Venema, translate, "because of my casting away or down" instead of "from my youth." Rosenmller gives both. Compare Psalm 129.]

**PSALM** 89. We have seen that Psalm 88 puts Israel in the presence of Jehovah (when guilty of having been unfaithful to Him), under the judgment of Jehovah, with the sense of wrath, yet in faith in Jehovah Himselfa place Christ most especially took, though of course for others, in particular for Israel, but not for that nation only. Psalm 89 takes the other side of Jehovah's relationship with Israel; not the nation's, Israel's, which was under law, but Jehovah's promises to David. It is not, remark here, guilt which is brought forwardsurely in both cases it was the ground of the state spoken ofbut wrath, instead of salvation. For Jehovah had been Israel's Savior, and so faith viewed Him still; yet instead of the fulfillment of promise, as made to David, there was desertion of him. There is no trace of confession of sin. Psalm 88 is complaint of death and wrath; and this (89), when mercy was to be built up for ever, shows the covenant made void and the crown profaned. Isaiah (40-58) pleads against Israel to convict them of guilt: first, against Jehovah, by having idols; secondly, by rejecting Christ (40-48, 49-58). But here the plaint is Israel's against Jehovah Himself, not unholily, I apprehend, as blame, but as an appeal to Himself on the ground of what He had been for Israel. Jehovah is establishing these relationships here, as indeed we have seen. Israel is Israel, and in the land (Psalm 85). The heathen are thereall is not restored; the last confederacy is in view, but it is against Israel. God is standing in the congregation of the mighty, judging among the gods (Psalm 82). Jehovah has been Himself recalling His former mercies (Psalm 81:10-16). The ark is remembered, and God as the dweller between the cherubim, as once in the wilderness (Psalm 80). In a word, the whole book is the condition of a restored people in the land, but attacked, destroyed; the temple which exists again ruined and broken down (Psalms 74-76, 79). Not a mere Jewish remnant complaining of antichristian wickedness within, with which they were

associated externally, or which had cast them out; but Israel the nation (represented by the remnant) with enemies who destroy what is dear to them, with encouraging prophecies of the result, having instruction as to sovereign grace in David when they had failed in their own faithfulness as a nation (Psalms 78, 79), which looks to God (Elohim) as such in contrast with manto the Most High, but returns to Jehovah (as His own out of Egypt) with prayer, and demand that His hand might be on the Son of man, the branch * made so strong for Himself (Psalm 80). The whole book, in a word, is Israel taking the ground of being a people, and actually in the land, and with a temple, entering into the relationship by faith, but subject to the destructive inroads of hostile powersthe Assyrian and allies, to whom indeed, because of success, the people return (<19730>Psalm 73:10; for <23005>Isaiah 10:5-23 is not yet fulfilled. Compare <23180>Isaiah 18, particularly v. 5-7).

[* Compare the connection and remarkable contrast with <43150>John 15.]

Now these two last psalms of the book present the whole pressure of this state of things on the spirit of the faithful. Instead of a blessed people, it is loneliness under wrath. Yet Jehovah is the God of their salvation. The throne cast down and profaned, though immutable promises in mercy, not to be set aside by faults, had been given to David. The result is in the next book, in the manifestation of Jehovah, the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. In all this book we are on prophetic ground with Israel; not the special condition in which the Jewish remnant will be with Antichrist, because they rejected Christtheir sorrows therefore coming much more fully out when that condition is treated of. This, we have seen, is in the first and second books. Hence, in the following books we get to the recognition of Jehovah having been their dwelling-place in all generations. It is their history which ends by the appearing of Jehovah-Messiah in glory.

A few words now on Psalm 89 in detail. Its subject is the mercies of Jehovah (His graciousness, chasdee, towards Israel), and their unchangeablenessthe sure mercies. There was faith to say, “for ever,” for it was grace. This gave the appeal, elsewhere noticed. How long should it be otherwise, and even apparently for ever? Jehovah was faithful. For he had said in faith, Mercy, manifested goodness, shall be built up for ever, and faithfulness was established where nothing could reach it. And so it will be, Satan being cast down. It is the very description of the millennium. He then recites the covenant originally made with David, which is the expression of mercy, and that to which Jehovah was to be faithful, the sure mercies of David. He turns then, and continues his praises of Jehovah (v. 5-18), recalling the ancient deliverance from Egypt, and looking to the praise necessarily flowing from what He was, and the blessedness of the people that know the joyful sound. In His name they would rejoice all the day, in

His (for we are in grace here) righteousness be exalted. He was the glory of their strength; and in His favor their horn will be exalted.

Such was the blessedness of association with Jehovah in favor. But this blessing was in the faithful mercy to David. And where was this? (v. 18). Jehovah, the Holy One (kodesh) of Israel, is their King. But, then, He had spoken of, not a kodesh, but a chasid, in whom all the chasdee (the same word in the plural as chesed, mercy), all the mercies, were to be concentrated, and to whom the unchangeable faithfulness was to be shownthe sure mercies of David. Read “of thy holy One” (chasid) in verse 19. Here he returns to the covenant made with David, showing it never to be altered (v. 34-37). But all was different. But there was faith, founded on this promise, to say, How long, Jehovah? If He hides for ever, and His wrath burns like fire, what is man to abide it, and not go down into death? (v. 48).

The former loving-kindness to David is appealed to, as in the person of David himself, but, I doubt not from verse 50, applicable to all the faithful. Still, the Spirit of Christ falls in here, as He did with the wrath, to take the whole reality of the burden. He of course in that day will suffer nothing. But He has anticipated that day of suffering, that His Spirit might speak as with His voice in His people; for the reproach of the mighty ones and apostates in that day will reproach the footsteps of God’s anointed. And if the faithful walk in them, they will share the reproach from the enemies of Jehovah. Such is their then positionwalking in His footsteps, looking for Israelitish covenant blessings, feeling wrath, yet in faith, but looking to God’s promise in mercy to David (which was already pure grace, for the ark of the covenant was gone, and Israel Ichabod), and yet waiting for the answer. This is in the following book. We are here, as I have said, in prophetic times, in Isaiah’s scenes with the Assyrian and a devastated temple. The wicked are there: people flock with them in prosperity. If we are in Daniel, it is chapter 8, not 7. The beast and the Antichrist are not on the scene, but the land, guilty Israel, promisesnot the question of a rejected Christ. This psalm closes the third Book.

# BOOK 4

The fourth Book is not so markedly separated from the third, as the preceding three from one another; and specially the third from the first two, because the third, while prophetically announcing the blessing, describes a state of things which leaves the expectation of divine interference to bring in the blessing in full play. The first had given the great principles of the position of the Jewish remnant in connection with the history of Christ; in the second, they are viewed as outside Jerusalem; the third turns to the condition of Israel as a nation restored to their land, but not yet in the full blessing of Jehovah; the fourth, as I have said, completes this by the coming of Messiah. This connects the nation and Christ, as well as the nation and Jehovah. Thus the book is introduced with the nation's connection with Jehovah, looking to His returning and finally blessing them, that His beauty may be upon them. The second psalm of the book shows Christ's connection with the nation as man in this world; the third psalm (92) gives, in prophetic celebration, the great result, into the whole establishment of which the Psalms 93 to 100 enter; then some deeply interesting details as to Christ (Psalms 101, 102); while the general result, as displaying Jehovah's ways, is treated in the praises of Psalms 103, 104, as to Israel and the earth; Jehovah's dealings from the beginning, and Israel's ways, on the contrary, with Him, in Psalms 105, 106, which close the book.

The first psalm (90) of the book places the peoplethat is, the godly believing part of iton the ground of faith in Jehovah, and expresses the desire of deliverance and blessing from His hand. First, the godly Israelite owns Jehovah to have been the dwelling-place of Israel for all generations, their shelter and their home; next, He was the everlasting God before the world was, and turned and returned man in a moment, as seemed to Him good: time was no time to Him. Now Israel was consumed by His anger. But this was not all. Though His power was absolute, its use was not arbitrary. It was true and holy moral government; and unfeigned confession is made, not merely of open faults, but of that holy government of God which sets secret sins in the light of His countenance (for so, blessed be God, He does). Their days were passed in this wrath. They look that the pride of their heart may be so broken, their feeble mortality remembered, that the self-sufficiency, so natural to our heart, might be done away with, and that heart applied to wisdom the fear of God. This putting of man in his place and God in His, connected with faith, as Israel's in Jehovah, is full of instruction as to the moral position suited for the remnant in that dayin its

principle ever true. Thus Jehovah is looked to to return for deliverance, with the word of faithhow long? and, as regards His servants, that His work might appear, as the affliction came from Him; and that the beauty of Jehovah their God might be upon them, and their work established by Him. It is the true faith of relationship, but of relationship with the supreme God in His holy government upon earth. But, if so, Jehovah is the God of Israel.

We have now (Psalm 91) another most important principle introduced; Messiah's taking His place with Israel, the place of trust in Jehovah, so as to afford the channel for the full blessing of the people. Three names of Elohim (God) come before us in this psalm: one that by which He was in relationship with Abraham, the Almighty; another which Abraham through the testimony of Melchisedec may have known prophetically, the millennial title of Elohim when He takes His full title over the earth (compare <0114>Genesis 14:18-20), the Most High. Both, as all the names of God, have their proper meaning: one complete power; the other absolute supremacy. The question then arises, Who is the God who has this place? Who is this supreme God over all to the earth? Who shall find His secret place to dwell in? He who has found this shall be completely protected by almighty power. Messiah (Jesus) says, I will take the God of Israel as that place, Jehovah. In verses 3-8 we have the answer. Doubtless it is true of every godly Israelite, and they are in view, but led by the Spirit of Jesus, the one perfect faithful One who took this place indeed.

In verse 9 I apprehend Israel speaks (that is, the Spirit personifying Israel addressing Messiah): "Because thou hast taken Jehovah, which is my refuge,... as thy habitation," almighty power shall guard thee. This continues to verse 13. In verse 14 Jehovah Himself speaks of Him as the One who has set His love upon Him. The form of the psalm is striking. The Spirit of God proposes the problem. He who finds the secret place of the supreme God (of the millennium) will have all the full blessing of Abraham's God, the Almighty. Messiah says, I take Jehovah the God of Israel. Then the answer; so it was and He (v. 3-8) would enjoy the fruit of it. In verse 9 Israel speaks and declares by the Spirit He would have the blessings. In verse 14 Jehovah sets His seal on all this, and the solver of the great riddle of God will find the full blessing of Jehovah, on whom He had set His love, whose name He had knowneven Jehovah the God of Israel. It is a very interesting psalm in this way. But we have to remark that all is viewed on earth, the character of God in all respects. How Christ, as a present thing, relinquished the title to deliverance flowing from this, for perfect obedience, trusting His Father absolutely, belongs to deeper views of the purposes of God and of the paths of the blessed One Himself. Satan would have just used this to take Him out of the path of obedience, and into

that of distrust and His own will: blessed be God, in vain, as we know. The sure mercies of David were to be in an obedient and risen Onethis point is treated in a psalm of unexampled beauty farther onand thus deeper blessings and higher glories brought out. But He who went in that perfect path of submission, has not the less made good all the fruit of all that is here, for those who shall walk after Him in the place of this trust in Jehovah upon earth. This principle we see indeed, in various forms, all through the Psalms. Indeed the atonement of Christ was needed, which implied His resigning personally this blessing, in order that others might walk in that path in which He could personally walk, of course, without it. Psalm 21 gives a divine revelation as to the way in which the promise of life was fulfilled to the Lord.

**PSALM** 92 takes up these names of God, Jehovah and Most High; only it is no longer a secret place, known only to fidelity and faith. Almighty power secured blessing and answers faith; verses 7, 8 explain how. What is celebrated is not the disciplinary exercise of faith, but the answer to it, showing that Jehovah (v. 15) is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him. Psalms go, 91, 92 go together as an introduction to the great theme that follows, Jehovah reigns. Already power had been displayed; and the full result in the judgment of all enemies and abiding blessing is looked for now, not merely as hope, but as founded on the manifested intervention of God. It is spoken in the place which Messiah had taken in the previous psalm, identified there in spirit with Israel in the latter days, Israel restored by divine power, but not yet in the full peaceful enjoyment of divine blessing, just as we have seen in Book 3. Messiah takes therefore the lead in praises, and looks to His horn being exalted with honor (compare 1951Psalm 75:10). But Jehovah's thoughts are deeper. He sees far, even the end from the beginning, and accomplishes all His purposes and His word. This is what faith has to remember.

**PSALM** 93 states the grand and blessed results. Jehovah reigns. Ever indeed was His throne established, but the floods had lifted up their voice. The waves of ungodly men had risen up high. Jehovah on high was mightier. Two other great principles complete this short but remarkable summary of the whole history of God and man in government. Jehovah's testimonies are very sure. Faith could count upon them, come what would; but, further, another great truth came out as to the character of God. There could be no peace to the wicked. Holiness became His house. But I apprehend this last phrase describes the comely holiness of God's house for the now lasting period for which the earth was established.

We have now the details of the coming in of the Only begotten into the world to establish the glory and divine order in the world, introduced by the cry of the remnant in Israel.

**PSALM** 94 gives us this cry, which is at the same time the expression of the fullest intelligence of their position, of the dealings of God, of the position of the wicked, and the result about to be produced, and, as all the psalms in this book, founded on known relationship with Jehovah. We have seen that Psalm 91 is Christ's taking this place with the people, that full blessing may come on them as thus associated with Him. Psalm 94 addresses itself to Jehovah as the God of vengeance, and demands that He should show Himselflift Himself up as Judge of the earth and give a reward to the proud. The "how long" is made pressing and urgent. The conduct and impiety of the wicked is stated. Verses 4-11 address the unbelieving Israelites on the folly of this. Verses 12-15 give a most instructive explanation of the ways of Jehovah Blessed is the man whom Jehovah chastens and teaches out of His law. This is the position of the suffering remnant, to give him quiet from the days of evil until the pit be digged for the ungodly.

No doubt, as indeed is expressed in the Psalms, the godly had sometimes well-nigh forgotten this (Psalm 73), not always (1905Psalm 27:5); but faith does not, and this is the true meaning of the remnant's sorrowsof ours too under our Father. The heart in the midst of evil has to say to God, not only in submission, but as a cup given of Jehovah (of our Father). Hence the distraction and distress felt in meeting man's will in our will without resource is gone; and God, the will being subdued (the great hindrance), teaches the submissive heart, which is in a true position before Him. * For faith it was withal a settled thing that Jehovah would never cast off His people But judgment would return to righteousness, and the upright in heart would follow it. This is the great and all-important principle of the change which takes place in these psalms. Judgment, long separated from righteousness, now returns to it. Judgment was in Pilate, righteousness in Christ. There the opposition was perfectmore or less everywhere else. Suffering for righteousness' sake and divine righteousness established in the heavens may be, and assuredly is, a yet better portion. It is Christ's as man, now glorified, but it is not the maintenance of righteousness on the earth. This will now be effectually maintained. But who shall be found to make it good? Who will take up the cause of the godly one, or stand up for the remnant against the mighty workers of iniquity? If Jehovah had not, their souls had soon gone down to silence. How true this was (as to men) of Christ, how fully He can enter into this, I need hardly say. Even when the remnant feared falling, Jehovah helped them. And in the overwhelming of thought, where all the power of evil was, Jehovah's comforts delighted

his soul. In verse 20 a most remarkable appeal is made. Were the throne of iniquity and Jehovah's throne about to join together? If not, the days of the throne of iniquity were numbered. That wickedness was there, was now patent. But Jehovah, the defence of the godly, the Judge of the wicked, whose iniquity He would bring on themselvesJehovah would cut them off. Thus the fullest review, as I have said, of the whole position and of Jehovah's ways is remarkably given to us in this psalm.

> [* Christ, however deeply feeling what was before Him, was just the opposite of this struggling of will, being perfect in subjection (John 12 and Gethsemane). Peter would have resisted, but Christ took the cup as His Father's will.]

From Psalms 95 to 100 we have the progress of the introduction of the Only-begotten into the world most distinctly brought out; but here, all through, seen as Jehovah coming from heaven in judgment, and at length taking His place between the cherubim, and calling up the world to worship Him there. It puts the setting up of Israel in blessing by power, in contrast with their old failure when first delivered.

**PSALM** 95 summons Israel to come with joyful songs and thanksgiving before Jehovah (verses 3, 4 describing His excellency above the gods and as Creator). But Jehovah is Israel's Maker, his God also; and now they may look for rest even after so long time and continued failure. Till power comes in to judgment, while it is called todayfor in that great tomorrow no evil and no rebellious will be allowedthey are called upon not to harden their hearts as of old in the wilderness, when God swear that they should not enter into His rest. But now, after all, grace says Today, and invites to come before His presence who is the rock of their salvation.

**PSALM** 96 summons all the earth to come in, in the spirit of the everlasting gospel. They are to own Jehovah; the gods of the nations are mere vanity. Psalm 95 invites as of the company"Come, let us sing." Now it is said to those who are afar off, Sing unto Jehovah, and His glory is to be declared among the nations. Jehovah is Creator (v. 5). His excellency is then spoken of, but He is known in the sanctuary in Israel on the earth (v. 7, 8). They are again summoned to own Him there, to worship Him according to the order of His house on the earth, for Jehovah reigns and the world is established, and Jehovah will judge the peoples righteously. This introduces a summons to a chorus of celebration of all this created world to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the world with righteousness and His people with truth; for Israel had the place of promise and the revelation of His ways.

In Psalm 97 the coming itself is celebrated; Jehovah has taken to Him His great power and His reign. The earth and the multitude of isles are to

rejoice. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, for it is the revelation of His judgments in power, not of Himself. Righteousness and judgment ever characterize His throne. The fire of judgment goes before Him and consumes His enemies. Jehovah, the Lord of the whole earth, comes forth out of His place. The heavens (for on earth there is none) in power declare His righteousness. The peoples see His glory. The effect of the judgment is then stated. Idol worship is confounded before Him, and all power and authority, from angels downwards, are now to own Him. But another fact comes outthis was joy and deliverance to Zion. The judgment of evil was her deliverance, for it was the glorious exaltation of Jehovah, her God. * In verses 10-12 we see the blessed objects of the deliverancethe godly remnant. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. It is a very complete statement of the character of the Lord's coming to earth.

[* This in Isaiah 30:32, where the grounded staff, that is the decreed rod, was to pass, it was with tabrets and harps.]

**PSALM** 98 is the result celebrated by Israel on earth. Jehovah has made known His salvation, and remembered His mercy and truth towards Israel. All the land (or earth) is summoned to celebrate Jehovah as king. The heavens are not summoned here, as in Psalm 96. They are already filled with His glory, and the angels have been called to worship; but the sea and its fullness, and the world and its inhabitants are to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the earth and the whole world.

**PSALM** 99, though simple in its character, embraces some important principles. Jehovah now reigns, not only in making manifest heavenly power, but in the establishment of that power as king upon the earth. He now sits between the cherubim as heretofore in Israel. He is great in Zion and high above all peoples. I have no doubt this word people (ammim), generally translated "people" in the Authorised Version, which confounds it with Israel, is used, not as goim (Psalm 98:2 and often) in opposition with Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah, but for nations not Israel, but brought into relationship with Israel, and so with Jehovah Himself. Israel is called goi (Psalm 43) when judged and rejected. Further, the King (Messiah, but still Jehovah) loves judgment, and establishes equity, executing judgment and righteousness in Jacob. Thus Jehovah, the God of Jacob, was to be exalted, and in Jerusalem.

But another touching and important principle is then brought out: Israel had utterly failed, cast off Jehovah, rejected Messiah, was judged and cast off. But Jehovah had never given up His faithfulness and grace. Hence the Spirit turns back here to recognise the saints under the old covenant who had,

through grace, been faithful (the remnant was always acknowledged; in one aspect we are it still, all children of Jerusalem the desolate, and waiting under discipline and government, only a Father's). Moses and Aaron among His priests, Samuel among those who called on His name, the true prophets with no office, whatever their measurethese called on Jehovah, and He heard them. The relationship of faith was there. Jehovah answered them, but governed His people, taking vengeance of their inventions. So, at the end, whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved; but how surely are their inventions punished! These are the two hinges of all God's waysgrace and the ear of goodness to the cry of the meek and needy, and government as holy and true. So with us: only we have a Father's government (still God's) after salvation and adoption. Thus new-born Israel is identified with the faithful Israel of old. The child of Ruth and Boaz is a son born to Naomi. Mara is known no more.

**PSALM** 100 is the summons to universal worship of Jehovah with gladness and praise. Jehovah is good. Verse 5 gives in principle the great truth so often laid down as Israel's hopeHis mercy endureth for everwhich gave them too to say, How long? "All ye lands" is free as a translation; it is rather "all the land" (of Israel) or "all the earth." The claim of Israel to be His people and the sheep of His pasture seems to extend it to the earth. It is, however, to me very doubtful if it is not simply "all the land of Israel." This closes the remarkable series picturing the coming of Jehovah (Christ) to establish righteousness and judgment in the earth and His throne in Israel.

**PSALM** 101 states the principles on which the King will govern His house and the land when He takes the kingdom in the name of Jehovah.

**PSALM** 93 is the thesis, Jehovah reigns: the rage of men, the supreme authority of Jehovah, the holiness that becomes His house. Psalm 94 begins the series with the cry of the remnant when iniquity is still on the throne. Psalm 95 Israel (the remnant) summoned in the closing day. Psalm 96 the Gentiles called, Jehovah coming to judge the earth. Psalm 97 Jehovah is on His way. Psalm 98 He has executed judgment on the earth and remembered Israel. Psalm 99 He has taken His throne on earth in Zion. Psalm 100 Israel is there as His people; but it is a call to worship Jehovah. Still a house of prayer for all the earth: for Israel, mercy, for they had sinned; truth, for God had promised, and, as said elsewhere, they had now met together. Psalm 101 when the earthly throne is taken up, it is mercy and judgment.

**PSALM** 102 is one of the most, perhaps the most, remarkable of all the psalms, and presents Christ in a way divinely admirable. Verse 10 gives the occasion of the cry with which the psalm begins. Christ is fully looked at as man chosen out of the people and exalted to be Messiah, and now, instead

of taking the kingdom, He is rejected and cast off. * The time is the immediate approach of the cross, but was, we know, perhaps often, anticipated in thought, as John 12. He looks to Jehovah, who cast down Him whom He had called to the place of Messiah, but who now meets indignation and wrath. We are far, here, beyond looking at sufferings as coming from man. They did, and were felt, but men are not before Him in judgment; nor is it His expiatory work, though that which wrought it is here if we take it in its full effect on the crossthe indignation and wrath. It is HimselfHis own being cut off as man. He is in trouble; His heart smitten like a pelican of the wilderness and an owl of the desert; His days as a shadow that declines, withered like grass. Such was Messiah, to whom all the promises were. Jehovah endured for ever. His promises were certain. He would arise, and have mercy on Zion, and the set time was come.

> [* Note, there is no bringing in of ‘me’ in connection with indignation and wrath, as in Psalm 22, though Christ realizes it in spirit. But personally He is lifted up and cast down. It is a key which opens up much in the psalms.]

The whole scene, from Christ on earth to the remnant in the last days, is one. When Zion was restored, the heathen would fear the name of Jehovah. Jehovah will appear, and, when He builds up Zion, hear and answer the poor remnant, and thus declare His name in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when all nations would be gathered together there. But where was Messiah then? His strength had been weakened in His journey, His days shortened. He had cried to Him able to deliver, to save from death. Was Zion to be restored and no MessiahHe weakened and cut off? Then comes the wondrous and glorious answer: He was Himself the creator of the heavens and the earth. He was ever the same. His years would not fail when the created universe was rolled up like a garment. The children of His servants would continue and their seed be established before Him. The Christ, the despised and rejected Jesus, is Jehovah the Creator. The Jehovah we have heard of coming, is the Christ that came. The Ancient of days comes, and Christ is He, though Son of man. This contrast of the extreme humiliation and isolation of Christ, and His divine nature, is incomparably striking.

But it is Christ’s personal sense of rejection, and that in connection with the remnant, not His bearing the judgment of sin in His soul for men. Look at the difference of the consequences in Psalm 22, though that perfect work was needed for “the nation,” too, or their deliverance could not have taken place.

**PSALMS** 103-106 give us the resultsand the covenantin grace and in responsibility, of Israel’s history.

**PSALM** 103 is the voice of Messiah in Israel in praise according to God's dealing with them; Psalm 104, the same in creation; Psalm 105, God's ways in grace, from Abraham up to the giving of the land (now to be possessed in peace); Psalm 106, the acknowledgment of Israel's ways from first to last, but owning Jehovah's mercy, and looking for it, for it endures for ever. Grace and favor are the one foundation on which hope can be built leading to obedience. This closes the book.

**PSALMS** 103, 104 call for a few observations on the details No doubt the Spirit of Christ leads these praises, for His praise shall be of Jehovah in the great congregation; but it is in the name of all Israel the psalm is spoken. They have forgiveness and mercy through the tender compassions and mercy of Jehovah. As for man, he is as grass; and the people had been as grass and withered (Isaiah 40). But the mercy of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, the obedient ones. Thus all is ascribed to goodness, yet faithfulness, from the very nature and name of Jehovah; but to the obedient ones, the godly remnant. Now Jehovah owned them with lovingkindness and tender mercies. All their sins were utterly removed from them. Jehovah's throne was prepared in the heavensthe only possible means of securing blessing. And now His kingdom ruled over all It was not only His title, but established in fact. It is Israel's praise, consequent on the intervention of Jehovah, of which the previous psalms have spoken. [4000]Matthew 9:1-6 marks Jesus out as the Jehovah who now at the close healed all Israel (v. 3). The more intimately we know scripture, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

**PSALM** 104, which celebrates Jehovah as Creator requires very few remarks. It will be noticed that it is occupied almost entirely with the earth. He is clothed with the glory of the heavens, which is described in most beautiful language; but the earth is the subject. It is looked at as existing as the abode of men, as it is, but all depended on Jehovah's sovereign will. It is not the earth which is celebrated, but Jehovah, the Creator of it. It is not paradise, but this earth, as we see it in man's hand. But the psalm looks to sinners being consumed out of it, and the wicked being no more. This gives the psalm, evidently, a peculiar character, and connects it with the introduction of the first-begotten into the world.

**PSALM** 105 offers thanksgiving to Jehovah, and calls on the seed of Abraham and Jacob to remember Him and glory in His name. Verses 7, 8 give the occasion. He is Jehovah, their God. His judgments are in all the earth. And He has remembered His covenant for ever. It was to be permanent. It was commanded to a thousand generations. He had now remembered it. The psalm then recites how God had cared for the fathers,

and judged Egypt for the deliverance of His people; and, in spite of bondage, there was not a feeble person among their tribes. “He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant, * and he brought forth his people with joy and his chosen with gladness, and gave them the lands of the heathen, that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws.” All their subsequent failure is not touched on. For now again (v. 8) He had remembered His covenant with Abraham and had delivered His people by judgments; for it is the accomplishment of promise. And the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The following psalm will tell us Israel’s ways, but only so to bring out His mercy and never-failing goodness; for this is the theme.

[* The difference of a reference to the promises to Abraham, and those to Moses, the blessings of which depended on the faithfulness of the people, is a marked feature in all the renewals of mercy to the people and the faith that referred to one or the other.]

**PSALM** 106. “Hallelujah. Give thanks to Jehovah, for it is good (or He is good). His mercy endureth for ever.” This last we have often seenthe expression of this unfailing faithful mercy of Jehovah, which secures Israel. It then recites the character of those that are blessed; and personally looks, as in the mouth of a godly Israelite at the close, to be remembered with the favor Jehovah shows His peopledesiring withal to see the good of Jehovah’s chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of His nation and glory with His inheritance. It is the expression of genuine piety, which then turns to confess the sinfulness of the peoplenot they have sinned, though that is owned, as showing how Jehovah’s mercy has endured; but “we have sinned with our fathers.” It is the practical piety which proves, in its own confession, enduring mercy. It then goes through all the history of Israel with this view; and at the close shows that, in spite of all, Jehovah, remembering His covenant, thought on their affliction, and caused them to be pitied of the heathen, among whom they were. For this mercy he now looks, that they may triumph in the praise of Jehovah. This closes the fourth Book.

It will be remarked that, as we had seen in the third, the fourth also speaks of all Israel, and, though the humiliation of Christ is brought out and His eternal divinity contrasted with it in a remarkable way, yet it does not enter into Jewish circumstances particularly, nor the association of Christ with them, though His Spirit be in it all. In Psalm 104 Antichrist is presented to us, but it is for his destruction by the coming in of Messiah the King, as Jehovah the Judge.

# BOOK 5

In the fifth Book the people are looked at as brought back, and a general survey of God's ways taken, with a kind of divine commentary on it all, ending, as all His ways surely will, in praise.

**PSALM** 107 is a kind of heading or introduction to all this. It celebrates the enduring of God's mercy for everthat blessed formula of faithin the unchanging goodness of Jehovah in all ages from the display of grace in David's time. It is restored Israel's part especially to chant it. The psalm celebrates the two parts of that deliverance in which the mercy has been shown. They are redeemed from the hand of the enemy; they are gathered back from east, west, north, and south. This is the double character of the restoration of Israeldeliverance in the land, and the gathering from amongst the heathen on every side. But the proper theme of the psalm is the goodness of Jehovah. The various circumstances of deliverance of every kind (and that as an answer to the cry of distress of man who has brought himself low by his folly) are gone through, with the desire that men would praise Jehovah for His goodness, His wonderful works for the children of men. Israel is he in whom it may be fully learnt. It goes on to their chastisement in the land after their return, but adds the complete ruin of the pride of men as the result. He pours contempt on princes, and sets the poor on high from affliction, giving him families like a flock. The great result of God's government is then shown: the righteous rejoice; all iniquity has its mouth stopped. Whoso is wise and will consider these ways of God will understand the lovingkindness of Jehovah. It is to be remarked how entirely the goodness of God, here rehearsed, is shown in temporal things. It does not for that cease to be His goodness and to have its sweetness, but it gives very clearly the character of the ground on which these teachings go.

**PSALM** 108 is a psalm of a peculiar character, being composed of the ends of two others, the earlier and the latter parts of which, the cry of deep distress, and the answer to the cry in faith and hope, have been here put together. The former part of this, the end of Psalm 57, expresses the fixed assurance of the godly heart, who can now give praise and will praise among the peoples (ammin), united now in relation with Israel and in the various races of people. But all the results of God's favor are not yet produced, and the same faith, taking up Psalm 60, leaving out the cry of distress, celebrates the going out of Him whose mercy is above the heavens, to bring into subjection all those who are yet in possession of different parts of the territory of Israel.

It may be remarked here that the general character of this, as indeed of the previous book, as far as regards the position of Israel, is that of the people being restored by God to the land and delivered, but not free yet from attack, nor in possession of all the promised land; so that there is thanksgiving and praise, for God has interfered, and the state of Israel is changed; but there remains the need of help and securing against enemies yet undestroyed, and the full blessing of God in peace. A very few psalms at the end are of unmingled praise, and only praise called for. This state of deliverance, and yet full security waited for, is expressed at the end of Psalm 107; as to final deliverance, the fact only is stated.

The connection of the two parts of this psalm is not without interest. The first part praises Jehovah for what He is as known to the heart in faith; but God in contrast with man. His mercy is great above the heavens and His truth reaches to the clouds, mercy being as ever first as the root of all. The second part begins with looking for Jehovah to rise up as God above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. He is to take His place and vindicate His name as God, that His beloved may be delivered. Verse 7 brings out the answer of God, taking up in detail all Israel's rights as His. Thus Jehovah has war with the nations possessing their land, but it is in Israel, and through God they will do valiantly. Hence here it is God, not Jehovah, because it is not the covenant relation, but what He, who is so, is in contrast with man whose help is vain.

**PSALM** 109. It is certain that this psalm applies to Judas; but we shall see, in reading it, that we cannot apply all of it exclusively to him. And this is a help to us, to understand the way in which the psalms are written. There is the general condition of the saints in the latter day, and that even in a way which cannot apply to Christ personally at all, as Psalm 118:10, 11passages of general application to the righteous, and others which may be, and some with prophetical purpose and exactitude, applied to Christ, and the circumstances in which He was. All this has to be before the mind, and divine teaching sought. I have said that the application of the psalm was not exclusively to Judas. The greater part of it is in the plural number. Up to verse 5 from the outset, the enmity of the wicked, of the band of Jews hostile to Christ, and hostile to the godly remnant, is spoken of. Judas was a special instance of this wicked hatred against Christ. But I have no doubt of the general application of even this part, and that the judgments called for are general, and no prophetic revelation that Judas had wife and children or anything of the sort. Verse 20 makes indeed the generalisation of the application of these deprecations certain. So we can have no doubt that the blessed Lord stood in this sorrow, but I have none the less, that it is merely as taking in grace the place of the remnant, and that the psalm applies to the

remnant, who go through similar sorrows Verses 30, 31 show it. Still it is most certain Christ entered fully into itand this is of the deepest interest to usnay, that His being in it gave it its true character.

**PSALM** 110, though of the very highest interest, is in application so simple that it needs but brief comment. The despised and poor man, hated for his love, is David's Lord, and called to sit at the right hand of Jehovah. It is of deep interest to see how in <23601>Isaiah 6 Adonai is Jehovah of hosts in the fullest sense, and in this psalm, being David's Son, sits at the right hand of Jehovah, and strikes through kings in the day of His wrath. Compare Psalm 2. All the truth, in regard to the assembly of association with Him on high is passed over, and the psalm passes from the session of Christ at God's right hand to the sending the rod of His strength out of Zion. This shows how entirely all is Jewish in these psalms. Note, further, it is the answer to His rejection on earth. It is not His coming from heaven to destroy Antichrist. What is in view is His having already taken possession of Zion, and the rod of His strength goes out thence. This answers to the whole position of this book, where we have seen the Jews restored, but the dominion of Israel or of Christ in Zion not yet made good. But the people are now willing (Amminadib) in the day of His power (see <22612>Song of Songs 6:12). Alas! how different in the day of His humiliation! That was depicted in Psalm 109. But this is the morning of a new day, in which we have not fathers, but the children of grace. Then we have the certain oath of Jehovah for Christ sitting thus a priest on His throne on earth. This is promise and prophecy. The day too of His wrath is looked forward to. Adonai, who is at Jehovah's right hand, has a coming day of wrathone already noticed, when His enemies are made His footstool. While sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, it is not so. It is then the time of mercy, the accepted time. Christ has been heard and exalted, and His work amongst men is the result of His atonement in grace. Now the time of wrath is come, in which the judgment written will be executed. I suppose in verse 6 it is "the head over a great country" the head of power in the earth, not Antichrist, nor even the beast. These are destroyed on His coming from heaven. Self-exalting man is brought low. Christ, who in humble dependence on His Father took the refreshment given Him according to God's will on the way, shall have His head high exalted in the earth. These psalms give the groundwork of the whole scene. What now follows is a review of the circumstances, and indeed from of old, and such as are to come, with reflections (so to speak) on them, and praise as to the result.

**PSALMS** 111-113 go together as a hallelujah in reference to Jehovah's ways with Israel in their deliverance. First, Psalm 111, the works of Jehovah, glorious in themselves, He has made to be remembered by His mighty

intervention in righteousness; yet showing Him full of compassion, mindful of His covenant also. He has shown His people the power of His works, to give them the heritage of the heathen: moreover, His works last. The occasion of the praise, a knowledge of His name, is that He has sent redemption to His people. Jehovah being such, the fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom. This gives good understanding in our walk. Faith knows this. The Lord's appearing in judgment will indeed prove it to the world. Psalm 112, on the other hand, gives the character of those who fear Jehovah, and the blessing that comes upon such when the government of God is made good. This shows how impossible it is to apply these psalms to the position of the saints now, though the exercise of faith and piety may be often in the spring of it the same. Still then, it is the deliverance of Israel which brings out Jehovah's name (v. 9, 10).

**PSALM** 113 is more general and full universal praise, but on the same occasion. It is from this time forth for evermore. It is now wide spread over all the earth; but He is Israel's God who dwells on high, yet looks down so low, but to exalt those He loves, to set them with the princes of His people, and fill the hopeless with joy in their habitation.

**PSALM** 114 is of the highest style of poetry, but is important to us as directly connecting the ancient deliverance of Israel out of Egypt with the present deliverance of the people, and seeing the same Jehovah in both calling the earth to tremble at the presence of Jehovah. It was right in those days. At Jacob's deliverance then, the sea fled and Jordan was driven back. What was this? Was it affright before the presence of man? The earth was now to tremble before Him who appeared for the deliverance of His people then, and for their sakes turned the sea into dry land, and the flint stone into a springing well.

**PSALM** 115 gives the true and full ground of this deliverance as seen in the heart of faith. It is not that they, but that Jehovah may be praised, specially in His mercy, and then His faithfulness to promise. The godly one, that is, the Spirit, then refers to that cry which was the bitter grief spoken of in Joel, and referred to in Psalms 42,43. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? So in the same spirit Moses"the Egyptians shall hear of it, and what wilt thou do to thy great name?" What a blessed boldness of faith! This character of sorrow shows, how it was on the cross and in those last sorrows that Christ came into this character of sorrow. For the Jews practically said this to Him then, but never could have done so before. The believing Israelite's answer is, Our God is in heaven.

He then contrasts Him with idols. And Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that fear Jehovah, are called to trust Him. This last would open the door to

all Gentiles who sought Jacob's face. It then recites, what we have seen to be the ground these psalms go on, that He had been mindful of, and would bless them; yea, increase them more and more, them and their children. They were the blessed of Jehovah, the maker of heaven and earth. Heaven was His, the earth had He given to men. This marks how distinctly the earthly blessing is the scene before us, for He has not given us the earth, but the cross in it; and heaven, and what is there, as our own things. We seek the things which are above, not the things which are on the earth. So, in even almost a stronger manner, the dead do not praise Jehovah; but we (says the Spirit in them) will praise from this, the time of their final deliverance, for evermore. We say "to depart and to be with Christ is far better."

**PSALM** 116 celebrates this deliverance when they were at the very point of death. Jehovah had heard them, and they would walk before the Lord in the land of the living. In this view it is a continual recital of the gracious mercy of Jehovah: they were brought low and He helped them. It drew out their love to Him. Such was Jehovah's character. He preserves the simple. The soul so sorely tried could return to its rest. The death of His saints was precious in His sight; and now, before all His people, in the courts of Jehovah's house, in the midst of Jerusalem, he would pay the vows made in his distress when he called on Jehovah. He would offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The quotation of the apostle shows how these psalms can be used as containing holy principles of life for every saint. In spite of suffering and trial, trust in Jehovah opened the mouth of the believer. The passage does not apply to Paul, nor did he say in his haste that all men were liars, though there be something like it in "all seek their own;" but the general and important principle the apostle can adopt. The word, translated "haste," is not haste in the sense of moral defect, hastiness, but in distressrather sudden distress or alarm from the pressure of circumstances, and hence hasting away.

**PSALM** 117 is the calling the other nations and peoples to come and praise Jehovah, who will be now King over all the earth. They join and are brought happily into this relationship, Jehovah being made known to them by His ways with Israel. Merciful kindness is here, as ever, first; and truth enduring for ever, which no failure has made to fail. This, as the last, is a hallelujah.

**PSALM** 118 is also, though not formally so, rendering praise and thanksgiving as promised, connected with, or rather founded on, the known formulaHis mercy endureth for ever. The same that in Psalm 115 were called to trust in Jehovah are now called to praise Him. From verse 5 the Holy Spirit speaks in the person of delivered Israel, and speaks of this

faithfulness of Jehovah, and now, He being on their side, man need not be feared; Jehovah is better than man, Jehovah better than princes. Verses 10-18 unfold the circumstances and dealings through which Israel has passed. All nations had compassed them; in Jehovah's name he would destroy them. They are quenched as fire. Verse 13, the enemy had thrust sore at them that they might fall; Jehovah helped them. The result in rejoicing and joy is chanted in verses 14-17. Another aspect of their trial is given in verse 18. It was withal Jehovah's chastening, and He had chastened them sore, but not given them over to death, which was the power of the enemy for them. Thus we have the full character of trial, as we have seen it even in Job: instruments, men, even all nations; next, the enemy by them, and acting on the spirit, thrusting sore at the soul; but behind it, and before it too, is God chastening, but not giving over. This is full of instruction for us in many circumstances we pass through, where all these elements are found in what we are passing through.

Now the gates of righteousness are open before Israel. The turning to this at once, as the result of trial, is beautiful: he will go in and praise Jehovah. It is withal the gate of Jehovah, and the righteous enter into it. Israel there will praise, for Jehovah has heard him and become his salvation; but further and deeper truth comes out here. There is no restoration of Israel without Messiah, and Israel now owns Him once despised. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is Jehovah's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." We see, in the expression "our eyes," who is the real speaker, and, though the voice had been one, who they are that now take part in the psalm of praise. This is the day Jehovah has made; it is His day, the blessing of His people in connection with Messiah, and His people rejoice in it. And now they cry, Hosanna to the Son of David, the Jehovah of Israel; and say, Blessed be he that comes in His name. This gives us the witness from the Lord's own teaching, who it is that speaks in the psalms, and to what time it applies; for the house was left desolate, and they were not to see Him again till they said, Blessed be he that cometh. So that it is Israel, that is, the remnant, who speak, and in the day of their repentance, under grace, when they are to see Messiah again. They bless Him that comes out of the house of Jehovah. Jehovah is the God of strength, He has given Israel light; and now worship and sacrifice are offered to Him that has delivered and blessed. Now they say, Thou art my God, and praise and exalt Him.

The psalm closes with the well-known verse of Israel's thankful praise: "Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever," with which it had commenced. Thus the spiritual apprehension of God's dealings, the coming to worship Jehovah in righteousness, and the owning

the despised and rejected Messiah, are all unfolded in connection with the deliverance and blessing of Israel, and the full manifestation of Jehovah's nature and character. Various verses of this psalm are quoted at the close of the Savior's trials; no psalm indeed so often, as connecting Him with the sorrows of, and promises to, Israel.

**PSALM** 119 is in general the law written in the heart. This gives it an important place in the series of psalms. It is found distinctly connected too with Israel's sorrows in the last days and their previous departure from God. The different divisions of the psalm show, I think, each a different phase of the exercises of heart connected with the law being written on it, though the general principle runs of course through it. I will very briefly notice the main bearing of each.

The first part presents to us naturally the great general principle. It is the third general "Blessed is the man"the return of the soul in trial and distress to the great truth of Psalm 1, where the effect is seen under the immediate government of God. Psalm 32 gives the blessedness of forgiveness; this, of the walk with God on the return of the wanderer in spite of all difficulties and contempt. We have indeed another special blessing at the end of the first book, where Christ is so fully brought in. In the last psalm of that book he is pronounced blessed who understands His position, be it in Himself or in those who walk in His footsteps; for the first psalm supposed blessedness under the government of God, making good all His will towards the just, and the reverse seemed to be true. In fact, as we know, to man's eye this wholly failed (bringing in a heavenly and divine righteousness and redemption). Hence true blessedness was shown in discerning, in understanding, the position in which that true blessed One was as rejected by menthat true poor mantaking Himself practically the place He describes as blessed, as we have seen in the sermon on the mount, while the great truth of the law in the heart is laid down. Yet the circumstances also come out in this first part"forsake me not utterly."

Secondly the word associates with God. Not only is one blessed who keeps it, but it is cleansing: the desire of the heart is positively fixed on it (see the connection of Jehovah and His word, v. 10, 11).

In the third part we find very distinctly the leaning on divine mercy in trial, connected with the law in the heart. The godly Israelite looks to Jehovah's bountiful dealing, but with a view to hearty obedience (v. 17). Verse 19 shows his state; verse 21, as we have seen in all this book, Jehovah's intervention, already known in deliverance, though not in complete blessing; verses 22, 23, the contempt the poor remnant undergo. Jehovah's law had been his delight and comfort under it.

In the fourth part the trial is more inward. His soul is cleaving to the dust, but he looks to divine relief according to the word. His desire looks to the effect of that living water from God. He has been open before Godhas declared his own ways: so it ever is. He desires all way of evil to be removed by God from him. He has held fast by the wordlooks that God should not put him to shame. But he is looking for enlargement of heart, that he may run freely in God's ways. Such is the sure effect when under the discipline of God. A soul who has found delight in His will and holiness is yet looking to run in liberty. Though in the heart, the word here referred to is more of an outwardly expressed will, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, a beautiful moral expression of the remnant. With the Christian it will be more absolute and inward, more holiness than testimonies (though it may begin by them perhaps), whether in his first divine calling or under discipline. It is for him walking in the light as God is in the lightnot the "ordinances and commandments of Jehovah." Yet it is in principle essentially the same. To apply this psalm directly is to lower the divine standard of thought for the saint now. But the nature of the moral exercise may be most instructively used; just as subjection and confidence in trial is always right, though the forms of it in the Jew are wholly below the Christian's (compare with this Philippians, where we have Christian experience).

The fifth part looks for divine guidance and teaching in the ways and law of God; the sixth, for manifest mercies in that path, that he may have courage before adversaries and hold fast the law of God. In the seventh, having been quickened by the word, he reckons on it, for God had caused him to trust it as His; so that now he leans on all its assurances. In troubles, when there was no outward cheering of nature, it sustained his heart. This brings him to the eighth. Jehovah was thus his portion. He had sought Him, judged himself, turned his feet to Jehovah's testimonies. He reckoned on Him, and would thank Him in the secret watches of the night, when his heart was left to itself. He was the companion of those that feared Jehovah. This brightens up his thoughts, and he sees His power in mercy around. This is a beautiful picture of the working of the heart.

The ninth brings out the circumstances of the psalm. In the comfort of the last part he can look with God's eye and mind at these circumstances. These are much before our view (that is, feelings about them) in this part of the psalm. Jehovah has already dealt well with him according to His word, and he looks for divine teaching to understand the mind of God well. He had been under discipline: but before this he had gone astray, but now had got into the spirit and path of obedience. He sees the proud lying against him, and their heart fat as grease (no link in state or obedience with Jehovah); and

sees how good it was to have been afflicted, that he might learn Jehovah's statutes. Nothing marks more the setting right of the soul than thisthe turning to Jehovah's will"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"and counting all good that leads to this, and gives God's will as authority, and morally its place in the heart.

The tenth part has two main thoughts. Jehovah is his Creatorhas formed him. He looks to Him to guide His own poor creature as a faithful Creator. Those that fear Jehovah will be glad when they see Him, because they hope in His word. Secondly, he knows that thus in very faithfulness He has caused him to be afflicted, and now looks for mercies to come unto him, and the proud to be ashamed, and that those that fear Jehovah may turn to him. All this is linked with soundness in Jehovah's statutes.

In the eleventh the cry becomes more urgent. He is under the pressure of trial, his soul fainting for deliverancelooking for Jehovah to execute judgment, for he is walking in Jehovah's precepts. And the proud persecute him wrongfullythey heed not Jehovah nor His law.

But, twelfth, creation is a witness to the abiding faithfulness of God; His word is settled in heaven, where nothing can reach or shake it. But for Jehovah's law, which sustained his heart, he had perished in the pressure of affliction. In truth, how precious to have the word in such a world! We have more than commandments. But we can say, I have seen an end of all perfection. Another and more confident thought grows up out of all this exercise"I am thine."

In the thirteenth he expresses his own internal delight in Jehovah's law, and its effect in spiritual intelligence.

In the fourteenth it guides his path. Afflicted and oppressed, he looks for comfort to Him whose judgments he has taken as his path in spite of enemies and their snares.

The fifteenth gives the horror of vain thoughts, and looking to God as his hiding-place, with his rejection of evildoers. He looks to Jehovah to uphold him, that he may not be ashamed in his hope; and looks with solemn trembling on the sure judgment of the wicked.

In the sixteenth he presses more earnestly the interference of Jehovah in deliverance. The way in which the wicked have made void Jehovah's law only makes him cling the closer to it. It was time for Jehovah to work.

The following parts all bring out the effects of his strong attachment to Jehovah's law and testimonies, its value in every aspect for his heart; the trial he was in still in this path of righteousness; and how he would walk in

Jehovah's ways when set free; his grief at transgressors. He looks for teaching, quickening, keeping; and recalls the everlasting character of God's testimonies; so that he held fast, though oppressed by the wicked.

The last part is more general as a closing one, though in the same spirit. It sums up, so to speak, the whole. It desires that the cry of the oppressed delighter in the law may come up before Jehovah; asks for understanding according to His word for deliverance according to it; and assures praise when taught His statutes. His tongue will speak of His word. He has the sense of their righteousnesslooks for the hand of Jehovah to help, because he has chosen His precepts. Jehovah's salvation has been longed for (man not trusted in). Jehovah's law has been his delight, not his own will, nor the prosperous man's ways. He looks for life, that he may praise, and that Jehovah's judgment may help him; for the power of death and evil was before him. He owns finally his having gone astray, and looks for Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel to seek him, for he has not forgotten His commandments. Such is the moral state of Israel in the last days when (in their land, I apprehend) the law is written in their heart, but full deliverance and final blessing are not come. The psalm is, in fact, the moral development of the hearts of those that fear God in the circumstances prophetically brought out in Psalm 118.

We now come, Psalms 120-134, to the songs of degrees, which depict, I doubt not, the outward circumstances of the same period, when Israel is in the land, but the power of Gog not yet destroyed. The first of this series begins with the statement of the cry sent up by the godly in his distress to Jehovah who heard. The special charge here is deceit and falsehood. Judgment should come on it. But it is against the godly himself, not the violence and oppression done to Jerusalem, or the apostate oppression of the people. His woe is to dwell in Mesech, and among the tents of Kedar. Wrong is in their hearts; and, when the godly spoke of peace, they prepared for battle. It does not seem to me to be the oppression of Antichrist, or the beast at Jerusalem, but to apply to those who in the land found themselves where the last hostile power which had pretended to favor them, * and had led many to apostatise for quietness and prosperity, now showed himself as only a deceitful oppressor.

[* I do not refer here to Daniel 9 but to Daniel 8.]

In Psalm 121 Jehovah is assuredly declared to be his protection. He who never slumbers nor sleepsHe will not suffer his foot to be moved. The general intention is plain. I am not quite sure what is the force of verse 1, unless to identify Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, with the hill of Zion, * and the city of the great King. However this may be, Jehovah (as

the great security) is the subject of the psalm. This is very distinct, and His name reiterated for the purpose. He is referred to in the double character, Creator of heaven and earth, and the Keeper of Israel, especially of the godly: Jehovah would preserve him in all circumstances and for ever.

> [* A hill is used as a symbol of exalted strength, a high hill as the hill of Bashan. This is the Lord's hill.]

**PSALM** 122 celebrates Jerusalem. The saint is glad to go there. The tribes go there; the thrones of judgment, of the house of David, are there. His brethren and companions and the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel, their God, made his heart cling to it. It is a restoring of the associations with Jerusalem, recalling the old and establishing the new ones.

The series then returns (Psalm 123) to their sorrows and resource. Blessing is not fully come; but Jehovah is looked to in the heavens, but as the God of Israel; the remnant say "our God" now. But they are filled yet with the contempt of those that are at ease and of the proud.

The power of the enemy had been just now (Psalm 124) fully displayed against themthe godly in the land who trusted in Jehovah. But they had escaped, but only by Jehovah being on their side, or they had been utterly swallowed up, by the last power of the enemy, I apprehend, when the apostate beast and Antichrist were gone from the scene.

**PSALM** 125. The position of those who trust in Jehovah is celebrated, in virtue of this intervention of Jehovah, who would now protect them for ever, and they abide for ever. Peace would be on Israel. Those that turned to their crooked waysJehovah would lead them forth with the open evildoers in judgment. The rod of wickedness would not rest upon the lot of the righteous. There would be an exclusion of the rod of wickedness (what represented the wicked as a tribe), separation from its mischief, that the righteous might not go astray. All this, I apprehend, refers to the last inroad of the final power of Gog, or the last condition of the Assyrian, perhaps to Daniel 8 (only that that gives its whole character, not merely its final one); also to the final king of the north, who comes in after the wilful king in Daniel 11.

**PSALM** 126. The heart of the godly now finds its center in Zion, when deliverance has been learnt; for so it will be (compare <23294>Isaiah 29:4,7). How low she was brought, according to Psalm 124! (<23294>Isaiah 29:4. Compare <23172>Isaiah 17:12-14, and other passages). It was a dreamso full, so unlooked-for, the joy. The very heathen now owned Jehovah's hand. But the godly look for the full blessing, and the captivity to be turned again in the fullness of possessed blessing. Still God had manifested Himself; and

to the faithful, who had taken up His testimony in sorrow, and when it was shame and reproach, it was now a harvest of joy. So it ever is; for full joy only comes through sorrow: for the testimony of God is in a world of evil.

These full blessings thus sought, the building the house, the keeping the city, the desired abundance of children, are all (Psalm 127) Jehovah's doing and gift, or man labors and watches in vain. The blessing is distinctly Jewish.

A numerous progeny are distinctly God's gift: happy the man that has his quiver full of them (Psalm 128). The blessings spoken of are declared to be the portion of whoever fears Jehovah. It is present temporal blessingblessings out of Zion; and, the desire of the godly's heart, Jerusalem in prosperity all their days. Although the direct object be the remnant, the godly Gentile, so fearing Jehovah, owning Israel's God, would, as a principle, enjoy the blessing, and rejoice with His people.

**PSALM** 129 recurs now with joy to the sorrows and trials through which the children of Zion have gone. But Jehovah is righteous, and has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. The haters of Zion (for Zion is here always the central thought) are withered, without resource, and without being desired.

**PSALM** 130 takes up another subject, of the place of which we have found clear traces beforethe sins of Israel as between the people and God. It is not, however, now merely legal distress. Confidence in Jehovah characterizes it, though accompanied by depth of distress and humiliation. This is the effect of the connection of the sense of sin and of mercy in the soul. Mere legal distress is more selfish in its terror, though admirable for destroying confidence in self and throwing on mercy; conviction with the sense of mercy is more the sense of wronging the God of goodness. It is a deeper work after all. Here there is forgiveness with Jehovah that He might be feared, and the soul waits on Jehovah, though it has cried out of the depths. There is desire, grace being looked to, as well as waiting for Jehovah, verse 6. The groundwork is stated in verse 7, while verse 8 shows confidence in the full results. Verse 4 is the upright acknowledgment of where the need came from, grace meeting that need; verse 7, that which can be reckoned on in Jehovah; verse 8, the full counting on it for Israel, that is, redemption, not from troubles, but from iniquities.

**PSALM** 131 briefly states the humble absence of all self-confidence, that so he has walked. Israel is now to trust in Jehovah and for ever.

**PSALM** 132 is, in some respects, a very interesting psalm. It is the restoration of the ark of the covenant to its resting-place, and the promises of Jehovah, in answer to the supplication of His servant. It is founded on

David's bringing the ark up to Zion. This, as we have seen in the historical books, has a very important place. It was grace acting by power when Israel had so completely failed that the bond of the people with God, so far as it was founded on the people's responsibility, was wholly broken, and the ark gone into captivity, and Ichabod written on all. * But now, in a fuller and more lasting sense, a habitation was found for the mighty God of Jacob, where the godly would worship low before His footstool. The fruit of David's body, the Messiah of Jehovah, was to sit on His throne, and that for evermore. Jehovah was entering into His restHe and the ark of His strength. Before (Numbers 10:35, 36), if He arose it was to scatter His enemies, and then He returned to the many thousands of Israel. But now, and this is what characterizes the psalm, the enemies were scattered, and Jehovah arose to take His rest in Israel. The sovereign election of God is seen, verse 13; and, then, it will be remarked, that the promise, in answer to the supplication, goes each time beyond the request (compare verses 14, 15, 8; 16, 9; 17, 18, 10). This is of the highest interest as showing the grace of the Lord, and how His love surpasses all the hopes of His people, His interest in them.

[* The three principles of government had been brought out in Israel. First, direct responsibility to God under priesthood. That had failed under Eli, and that was Ichabod. It was over with Israel on the ground of their own responsibility. Then God intervened by a prophet. That He could still do; it was a sovereign act. But that failed; so did royalty as set up by the people. Then we have royalty as power in grace, as it will be in Christ, and the lost ark brought back. This is what we have in this psalm.]

**PSALM** 133. The people are now dwelling together in unity. It is as the anointing of Aaron, which, poured on the head, gave the odours of divine favor on all, as the abundant dew of the lofty hills, but which brought, however high its source, its refreshing power where God had ordained blessing and life for evermore. * I see no need to seek for any mountain of a like name near Hermon, but the contrary.

[* This is one of the two places where life for evermore, life eternal, is spoken of in the Old Testament; the other is Daniel 12; both as accomplished in the time of blessing to come. In the New Testament, I need not say, it is fully revealed in Christ, and he that believes in Him has everlasting life.]

**PSALM** 134 closes the series by calling on the servants of Jehovah to bless Him. Night and day should furnish praise to Him, and in the holy place holy hands be lifted up to bless. Jehovah was there, His servants there to praise Him. Jehovah, who made heaven and earth, blessed now (not simply from heaven, but) out of Zion. It is the place of blessing Jehovah, and Jehovah blessing. I should be disposed to count the last verse rather the

voice of Christ as the Son of David, something in the character of Melchisedec, who said, Blessed be the most high God, and blessed be Abraham of the most high God, only specially in connection with Jehovah (as Zechariah 6:13) blessing the godly remnant out of Zion. The last verse is a kind of answer to the call of the preceding ones; the Spirit of Christ in the remnant calls on Jehovah's servants to bless Him, and they from Him bless the godly one.

**PSALMS** 135 and 136 celebrate Jehovah, who has delivered Israel and now dwells in Jerusalem, and give thanks to Him whose mercy has endured for everthe Creator of all things in goodness who first delivered them, and remembered them to redeem them when brought low.

**PSALM** 135 is a very characteristic Psalm, giving a remarkable key to the interpretation of the book, and linking it with the early statements of Jehovah as to His relationship to Israel, so as to bind together their history in one whole. The subject is Hallelujahpraise the name of Jehovah. He is good: it is pleasant to do it; for He has chosen Jacob and Israel for His peculiar treasure. He is then (v. 6) celebrated as the Almighty God, doing what He pleased, daily disposing of creation; then as He who executed judgment on the oppressors of Israel, and freed them, and drove out the heathen and gave them their land. Now comes His name in connection with Israel and in contrast with idols; and the two passages, in one of which He first took up Israel for ever under the name of Jehovah, and, in the other, prophetically announced their deliverance when they should have wholly and utterly failed, are cited from Exodus 3:15, Deuteronomy 32:36. The first takes the name of the Lord God of their fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when He sends Moses to deliver them, and declares this is His name for ever, His memorial to all generations, and then promises deliverance and bringing into the land; then He takes the name of Jehovah. The second is in the prophetic song of Moses, when he has drawn out to them their picture as apostate, their spot not the spot of God's children, when they forsook God who made them, and provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, and Jehovah hid His face from them, and, but for the fear of man's pride, had made the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Then, when they should be helpless and hopeless in themselves, Jehovah would judge His people, and repent Himself concerning His servants, execute judgments on the heathen, and then make them rejoice with His people. So that these two verses give the first deliverance and purpose of God, and the judgment and ways of God in the last days, to which the psalms have brought us. Thus they give a clear key to the application of the psalms themselves. Then we have (v. 15-18) the present judgment of the idols spoken of in Deuteronomy 32, and to which

they had fallen away. The psalm closes with the summons to those already generally specifiedthe divers parts of Israel and all that fear Jehovahto bless Jehovah; the house of Israel, of Aaron, of Levi, and all that fear Jehovah; and this now out of Zion, even Jehovah, of whom now they could say that He dwelt in Jerusalem.

**PSALM** 136 may be considered as the answer to this summons. It is characterized by the formulary, as often noticed, the expression of Jehovah's unchanging goodness to Israel in spite of all: "His mercy endureth for ever." It celebrates Him as Creator, God of gods, the Deliverer of Israel, who had led them through the wilderness, as Him who by power slaying mighty kings had given them the inheritance of the land; and who, finally, remembering them in their low estate, had redeemed them from it, and now supplied every living thing with food, the God of heaven. This, in a certain sense, closes the historical psalms.

We have then a kind of supplementary series:first, of their characteristic sorrows and Jehovah's ways in the latter days, and then of millennial praises. These sorrows are from Psalm 137 to Psalm 144the latter, however, being the expectation of deliverance and blessing. Psalm 139 also has a peculiar character, as will be at once seen.

**PSALM** 137 refers, and alone doesto give the full history of Israel's sorrowsto Babylon, which has only a mystic fulfillment in the latter days, but has its importance, because at that time was the closing of the period of the divine presence in Jerusalem, and the setting up of the power of the Gentiles. But faith could not content itself in a strange land nor sing the Lord's songs there; for they were not a heavenly peoplehence they turn to Jerusalem, which faith never forgets. Babylon is to be destroyed and her judgment is desired; Edom's enmity not forgotten. The object of the psalm is to bring out their attachment to Zion in their captivity; there was no separation of heart from it in the strange land.

**PSALM** 138 gives the ground of faithGod's word; and now the godly turns to own it in worship; and when that word reaches the kings of the earth, they shall turn and praise Jehovah and sing in His ways. Nor is His truth all. Though so high, He has respect to the lowly; He revives, protects, and perfects all that concerns the believing righteous. "His mercy endureth for ever."

**PSALM** 139 shows the complete exercise of heart that belongs to God's ways. Though the faithfulness of God perfects all His purposed blessing, not a thought escapes God. There is, morally speaking, no staying in His presence; but there is no getting out of His presence, nor where He sees not, though conscience might be glad to flee. But this brings in another aspect.

He knows all, because also He has formed all. This connects us with the taking perfect notice of us in goodness. He cares for us, watches over every member that is formed, as He knows our every thought; if He does, He has His own too, and these are precious to us. This is just the change and working of faith. It begins necessarily by conscience under God's eye; for it brings us into His presence, and then gets at God's thoughts, who has formed us for Himself, and then unfolded boundless spheres of His own blessing and ways. God watches over him in the silence of sleep: waking, therefore, he finds himself with God.

But, further, this connection with God is a perfect breaking with the wicked: God will slay them. And he calls on them to depart from him. Therefore he looks at the wicked with horror, because of what they are to Godfor himself, that he may be searched throughout, that no wickedness may remain in him. This psalm goes far in the relationship of man's spirit with God, though it looks to the external judgment of the wicked and uses language which becomes verified in the assembly figuratively, and which is so also in the resurrection. The great direct point in it is the full searching out of man's heart, as it will be then, as it must be ever. But this searching, when we are under our own responsibility, is, Whither shall I flee from Him? But when we are God's workmanship (that is, when grace and power have come in), God's thoughts become precious to us, and we can ask to be searched, known, and triedthe more the better, that, emptied of self, we may be able to enjoy God. Then also we look for leading. The will is broken, as the thoughts are judged, and our desire is to be led of God. We see at the same time the character of the psalm connects it with the latter day. "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked." It looks for judgment, and has hatred and horror of the haters of God.

The five following psalms go over ground which we have trodden over in detail: only they apply to a restored Israel, still in conflict, and not fully blessed.

**PSALM** 140 looks for deliverance from the evil and violent man. Israel is in connection with Jehovah, but compassed about by the proud.

**PSALM** 141. Having learnt the government of Jehovah, the godly looks for his words and thoughts to be kept of Jehovah, that Jehovah may bless him. Smiting he will accept as discipline. He looks for acceptance for his prayers. And even in the judgment coming upon the proud (Israel, I apprehend), he looks to it as breaking them down so as to hear His word. It is such a psalm as David might have penned when pursued by Saul. He looks for judgment on the wicked, but that calamities may arrest some.

**PSALM** 142 looks to Jehovah alone as a refuge.

**PSALM** 143 specially for mercy and goodness, that in the midst of the persecution of the enemy, and the pressure on the godly, Jehovah would not enter into judgment with him, but show His lovingkindness. As the servant of Jehovah, he begs; to be taught and guided. Thus these psalms are all of one in deep distress; but they look, in relationship with Jehovah (not cast out, and knowing Him only as God), for the cutting off of the enemies.

**PSALM** 144 blesses Jehovah as the source of strength. Its plea for the destruction of the enemies is, What is man? Why should Jehovah make account * of such a worm, and delay bringing in blessing by thus lingering in judgment? Deliverance is thus looked for, for the full true final blessing of Israel. Happy the people in such a case: happy the people who have Jehovah for their God! Directly, the psalm applies to David himself, who is named in it, and owns God, as subduing his (David's) people under him, as the source of royal power. I do not see that it brings in any personally in the latter day. Did it so, it would be "the prince"; for there will be a human house of David on the earth. But it is the bringing in of the people into that state of subjection under Christ, when they will be willing in the day of His power, when in the day of Jezreel they will appoint themselves one head, when the day will be great, when Jehovah will utterly scatter the power of the enemies of Israel, give them a new song, and bless them. Messiah will surely be their head; but it is prophetically spoken of by David in person. The true Beloved will be their sure head.

[* Compare Psalm 8, grace's view of it, and Job's impatience (chap. 7:17, 18) against discipline, God's taking notice of men's ways in government.]

**PSALM** 145 goes on in thought into the millennium, after the distress is over, and the full deliverance can be celebrated. It is Christ in spiritperhaps even in personas in the midst of Israel, leading the praises of Jehovah, and awakening them amongst men. Hence, though only expressing purpose, it is a dialogue in its character. First, he expresses his own purpose of praising Jehovah, and for ever and ever. One generation should do it to another. "I will speak." One sees his heart is full of praise, and he speaks of it (v. 5). "And men shall speak of the might of Jehovah's terrible acts. And I will declare thy greatness. They shall speak of the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness." Then he breaks off most beautifully to speak of the goodness: for still out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. All Jehovah's works shall praise Him. The saints bless Him. Their subject shall be the glory of Jehovah's kingdom and His power, to make known to the mass of mankind His acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom, and that an everlasting one. Then in verses 14-20 His character is spoken of. Verse 21 returns to the purpose of heart of the

leader of praise. It is as man Christ speaks here"my God." Jehovah is looked at as King. In general, the outward acts and greatness are more in the mouth of the restwhat Jehovah is in the leader's, though he does celebrate His wondrous works. Still the greatness and excellency and majesty of Jehovah are that which we see his heart full of, as verses 3, 5,8-10; and so, in general, His gracious ways and character (v. 14-19). It is to be remarked that there is the leader who speaks in the psalm, the saints (the Jewish remnant), and the world in general, the sons of Adam. It is of the highest interest in this way; because we have Messiah fulfilling the word, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation." And how full in heart He is of His praises! Jehovah's kingdom is set up; the Messiah in the midst of Israel first, then the preserved saints, and then, through their leading, all the world join in His praises, for His greatness, goodness, and wonderful works.

**PSALM** 146 introduces the full final praises: the first, the outpouring of the heart in praise to Him as the God of Jacob, celebrating what He is, and the comfort of trusting Him, the Creator, the Helper of the oppressed, the Comforter of the lowly, the Lover of the righteous, who turns the way of the wicked upside down. He shall reign for ever, even Zion's God to all generations. The character of this praise, after what we have gone through, is most simple.

In Psalm 147 the saints take their place now in Jerusalem and Zion to say what He is. He is their God; He builds up Jerusalem and gathers together the outcasts of Israel, healing the broken in heart and binding up their wounds. In verses 4,5 His greatness is celebrated and His goodness and judgment; in verses 7-9, His goodness in blessing the earth; in verses 1, His pleasure, not in animal strength, but in them that fear Him. In verse 12, the song of praise returns to celebrate His ways towards Jerusalem again; in verses 15-18, His dealings with the seasons in power; in verses 19, 20, His showing His word and judgments to Jacob as He had not done to any nation. They might have seen the creative and providential power of Jacob's God, but His mind and laws were His people's.

**PSALM** 148 calls first on heaven, and all in it, to take their part in the great Hallelujah, and praise Jehovah who had created and sustains them in their place; and then on the earth, with all in it, to join in praising Him whose name alone is excellent, and His glory above the earth and heaven, but who exalts the horn of His people, the praise of His saints (the godly ones we have seen throughout, but who now are fully Israel), a people near to Him. The great Creator whom heaven and earth must praise is the God of Israel, and Israel His people.

**PSALM** 149 calls upon Israel to praise. The creation and Israel we have seen all through to be co-ordinate (the new creation and the assembly), and to form the sphere of the Psalms. Still it is now in the congregation of the saints. Israel's relationship is double: Jehovah has formed him for His praise; He is King in Zion. The reasons of praise are then given. Jehovah takes pleasure in His people; but we learn who have this place. He beautifies the meek with salvation. Then he can say, Let the saints be joyful in glory; but if the high praises of God are in their mouths, the sword of earthly judgment and vengeance is in their hands to execute it on the nations and peoples, to bind the mighty ones who had once oppressed them. It was the judgment written. Such honor have all His saints. The persons here in view are thus evident, as is their position: the meek in Israel now delivered, and the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, execute judgment on those who had oppressed them. Such is indeed, as said, the judgment written, and confirms the view I have taken of the last two books: only now it is complete in its statements. The millennium itself is not described. The Psalms are the introduction to it, and by their connection of Christ, as seen in the Gospels, and the remnant of Israel, with the last days, throw the greatest light on the Gospels themselves.

**PSALM** 150 is a general closing summons to praise Jehovahonly, remark, it is now freely in His sanctuary, as well as in the firmament of His powerin His sanctuary, with all the various instruments of the templepraise for His mighty acts, praise for His own excellent greatness: everything that has breath is called to praise Him. It is a loud and chorus-like termination, full of power and energy, suited to the Jewish state and temple service.

Here we close this most interesting and instructive study, as to which I could hope only to give the outline of general principles, which might enable the reader to use the book; not its varied and beautiful contents in detailthis would have required volumes, both on the prophetic connection of its contents, and on the exercises and feelings of faith, so far as we can apply them to saints now.

# PROVERBS

The Book of Proverbs gives us the application of that wisdom which created the heavens and the earth to the details of life in this world of confusion and evil. This thought brings out the immensity of grace unfolded here. God deigns to apply His wisdom to the circumstances of our practical life, and to show us, with His own intelligence, the consequences of all the ways in which man may walk. For it is often in the way of knowledge, not of precept, that the statements made in the Book of Proverbs are presented. It is a great blessing to be provided for in the labyrinth of this world, in which a false step may lead to such bitter consequences, with a book that sets forth the path of prudence and of life; and that in connection with a wisdom which comes from God.

It is well to remember that the Book of Proverbs treats of this world, and of God's government, according to which man reaps that which he has sown. This is always true, whatever may be the sovereign grace that bestows on us things beyond and infinitely above this world.

Solomon was filled with wisdom from above, but which had its exercise in this world, and its application to it; that is to say, which applied to it God's way of viewing all things, discerning the truth of all that, day by day, is developed in it. We have here the ways of God, the divine path of human conduct, the discernment of that which the heart of man produces, and of its consequences; and alsofor one who is subject to the wordthe means of avoiding the path of his own will and of his own foolish heart (which is unable to understand the bearing of a multitude of actions that it suggests to him), and this, not by bringing him back to moral perfectionfor that is not the object of the Proverbs; but to that wisdom and prudence which enable him to avoid many errors, and to maintain a serious walk before God, and an habitual submission to His mind. The precepts of this book establish practical happiness in this world by maintaining earthly relationships in their integrity according to God. Now it is not human prudence and sagacity that are enjoined. The fear of the Lord, * which is the beginning of wisdom, is the subject here.

[* I have left "Lord" here as an expression of general application, but Jehovah is always His name in Israel, and that of government, save in a few cases where Adonai (Lord, in the proper appellative use of it) is employed. But it is to be noted that Jehovah is used in Proverbs, because it is authoritatively instructive in known relationship; never in Ecclesiastes, where it is God in contrast with man, having his own experience as such on

earth. “God” abstractedly is only once used in Proverbs (Pro 25:2). We have “her God” in chapter Pro 2:17.]

There are two very distinct parts in this book. The first nine chapters, which give the great general principles; and the proverbs, properly so called, or moral aphorisms or sentences, which indicate the path in which the wise man should walk. At the end of the book is a collection of such made by Hezekiah.

Let us examine the first part. The grand principle is laid down at the outsetthe fear of the Lord on the one side, and on the other the madness of self-will, which despises the wisdom and instruction that restrain it. For, besides the knowledge of good and evil in respect of which the fear of the Lord will operate, there is that exercise of authority in God’s created order which is a check on will (the origin of all disorder), as that confided to parents and the like. And these are carefully insisted on, in contrast with independence, as the basis of happiness and moral order in the world. It is not simply God’s authority giving precepts, nor even His statements of the consequence of actions, but the order He has set up in the relationships He has established amongst men, especially of parents, subjection to them is really owning God in His order. It is the first commandment with promise.

There are two forms in which sin, or the activity of man’s will, manifests itselfviolence and corruption. This was seen at the time of the deluge. The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Satan is a liar and murderer. In man, corrupt lusts are even a more abundant source of evil.

In **CHAPTER** 1 violence is pointed out as the infringement of those obligations which the will of God has laid upon us. But wisdom cries aloud that her voice may be heard, proclaiming the judgment of those who despise her ways.

**CHAPTER** 2 gives us the result of subjection of heart to the words of wisdom, and an earnest search after the knowledge of the fear of Jehovah, and the knowledge of God Himself. He who applies himself to this shall be kept: he shall not only have no part with the wicked man, but he shall be delivered from the deceitful womanfrom corruption. The judgment of the earth and the prosperity of the righteous are declared.

The latter principle being established, chapter 3 shows that it is not human sagacity or the prudence of man which imparts the wisdom here spoken of. Neither is it the ardent desire after prosperity and happiness, manifesting itself in crooked ways; but the fear of Jehovah and subjection to His word

supply the one clue to guide us safely through a world of wickedness which He governs.

**CHAPTER** 4 insists on the necessity of pursuing wisdom at whatever cost; it is a path of sure reward. It warns against all association that would lead the contrary way and into ruin, adding that the heart, the lips, and the feet are to be watched.

**CHAPTER** 5 returns in detail to the corruption of heart that leads a man to forsake the wife of his youth for another. This path demoralises the whole man. But the eyes of Jehovah are upon the ways of man.

In **CHAPTER** 6 wisdom will not be surety for another. It is neither slothful, nor violent, nor deceitful. The strange woman should be avoided as fire: there is no reparation for adultery.

In **CHAPTER** 7 the house of the strange woman is the path to the grave. To curb oneself, to be firm in resisting allurements, looking to Jehovah and hearkening to the words of the wisesuch are the principles of life given in these chapters.

**CHAPTER** 8. The wisdom of God is active. It cries aloud; it invites men. Three principles distinguish itdiscretion, or the right consideration of circumstances, instead of following self-will; hatred of evil, which evidences the fear of Jehovah; and detestation of arrogance and hypocrisy in man. It is by wisdom that kings and princes rule; strength, counsel, and sound wisdom, and durable riches, are found in it. Moreover Jehovah Himself has acted according to His own perfect discernment of the right relations of all things to each other; that is to say, He created them according to the perfection of His own thoughts. But this leads us farther; for Christ is the wisdom of God. He is the center of all relations, according to the perfections of God; and is in Himself the object of God's eternal delight. The everlasting wisdom of God is revealed and unfolded in Him. But this is not the only link. If Christ was the object of God the Father's delight, as the center and fulness of all wisdom, men have been the delight of Christ, and the habitable parts of Jehovah's earth. It is in connection with men that Christ is seen, when considered as uniting and developing in Himself every feature of the wisdom and the counsels of God. The life that was in Him was the light of men. Christ is then the object of God the Father's delight. Christ ever found His joy in God the Father, and His delight with the sons of men, * and in the earth inhabited by men. Here then must this wisdom be displayed. Here must the perfection of God's ways be manifested. Here must divine wisdom be a guide to the conduct of a being subject to its direction. Now it is in Christ, the wisdom of God, that this is found. Whoso hearkens to Him finds life. Observe here that, all-important as this

revelation is of the display of God's wisdom in connection with men, we do not find man's new place in Christ, nor the assembly here. She is called away from this present evil age to belong to Jesus in heaven. Christ cannot actually yet rejoice in the sons of men, if we take their state into account. When He takes possession of the earth, this will be fully accomplishedthis will be the millennium. Meantime He calls on men to hear His voice. The principle of a path to be followed by hearkening to the words of wisdom is one of the greatest importance for this world, and of the most extensive bearing. There is the path of God, in which He is known. There is but one. If we do not walk in it, we shall suffer the consequences, even if really loving the Lord.

> [* So He became a man, and the unjealous testimony of the angels on His birth is, glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men. Man would not have Him, and the special relationship of His risen place as man with God, "my Father and your Father, my God and your God," and that of the assembly was formed, but His delight was in that race; for the time it was not peace on earth but division, but even after the millennium the tabernacle of God will be with men, where we have both the special relationship and the general blessing.]

But in fact (chap. 9) wisdom has done more than this; it has formed a system, established a house of its own, upheld by the perfection of well-regulated and co-ordinate solidity. It is furnished with meat and wine; the table is spread; and, in the most public manner, wisdom invites the simple to come and partake, while pointing out to them the right way in which life is found. There is another woman; but before speaking of her, the Spirit teaches that instruction is wasted on the scorner; he will but hate his reprover. Wisdom is wise even in relation to its enemies. There is progress for the wise and the upright, but the beginning of it is the fear of Jehovah. This is its fundamental principle.

But scoffing is not the only character of evil. There is the foolish woman. This is not the activity of love which seeks the good of those who are ignorant of good. She is clamorous, sitting in the high places, at the door of her house, seeking to turn aside those who go right on their ways, and alluring those that have no understanding into the paths of deceit and sin; and they know not that her guests are the victims of death. Such are the general instructions which God's warning wisdom gives us.

In **CHAPTER** 10 begin the details which teach those who give ear how to avoid the snares into which the simple might fall, the path to be followed in many cases, and the consequences of men's actions: in short, that which characterises wisdom in detail, what may be prudence for man, divine discretion for the children of God; and also, the result of God's

government, whatever appearances may be for awhile. It is well to observe, that there is no question of redemption or propitiation in this book; it proposes a walk according to the wisdom of God's government.

In the final chapter we have the character of a king according to wisdom, and that of the woman in her own housethe king who does not allow himself that which, by darkening his moral discernment through the indulgence of his lusts, would make him unfit to govern. In the woman we see the persevering and devoted industry which fills the house with riches, brings honor to its inhabitants, and removes all the cares and anxieties produced by sloth. The typical application of these two specific characters is too evident to need explanation. The example of the woman is very useful, as to the spirit of the thing, to one who labors in the assembly.

Although in this book the wisdom produced by the fear of Jehovah is only applied to this world, it is on that very account of great use to the Christian, who, in view of his heavenly privileges, might, more or less, forget the continual government of God. It is very important for the Christian to remember the fear of the Lord, and the effect of God's presence on the details of his conduct; and I repeat that which I said at the beginning, that it is great grace which deigns to apply divine wisdom to all the details of the life of man in the midst of the confusion brought in by sin. Occupied with heavenly things, the Christian is less in the way of discovering, by his own experience, the clue to the labyrinth of evil through which he is passing. God has considered this, and He has laid down this first principle, "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Thus the Christian may be ignorant of evil (if a worldling were so, he would fall into it), and yet avoid it through his knowledge of good. The wisdom of God gives him the latter; the government of God provides for all the rest. Now, in the Proverbs, we have these things in principle and in detail. I have not dwelt on the figurative character of the forms of evil. They are rather principles than figures. But the violent man of the last days is continually found in the Psalms; and Babylon is the full accomplishment of the woman who takes the simple in her snares and leads them down to death; just as Christ is the perfect wisdom of God which leads to life. But these two things which manifest evil proceed from the heart of man at all times since the fall: only we have seen that there is an active development of the wiles of the evil woman, who has her own house and her own arrangements. It is not simply the principle of corruption, but an organised system, as is that of sovereign wisdom.

# ECCLESIASTES

The Book of Ecclesiastes is, up to a certain point, the converse of the Book of Proverbs. * It is the experience of a man whoretaining wisdom, that he may judge of allmakes trial of everything under the sun that could be supposed capable of rendering men happy, through the enjoyment of everything that human capacity can entertain as a means of joy. The effect of this trial was the discovery that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that every effort to be happy in possessing the earth, in whatever way it may be, ends in nothing. There is a cankerworm at the root. The greater the capacity of enjoyment, the deeper and wider is the experience of disappointment and vexation of spirit. Pleasure does not satisfy, and even the idea of securing happiness in this world by an unusual degree of righteousness, cannot be realised. Evil is there, and the government of God in such a world as this, is not in exercise to secure happiness to man here belowa happiness drawn from the things below and resting on their stability; though as a general rule it protects those who walk with God: “Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” ** There is no allusion to the truth that we are dead in sins and offenses. It is the result in the mind of the writer of the experience which he has gone through, and which he sets before us. As to the things around us, there is nothing better than to enjoy the things which God has given us; and finally, the fear of Jehovah is the whole of man, as the rule of his walk on earth. His own capacities do not make him happy nor the gratifying of his own will, even when he has everything at command. “For what can the man do that cometh after the king?” Man fails to secure joy; and permanent joy is not to be found for man. Consequently, if there be any joy, it is with the sense that it cannot be retained.

[* See the first note to Proverbs]

[** Peter’s epistles, after laying the foundation of redemption and being born again, are occupied with the degree in which what was immediate (in promise) among the Jews is applicable now. The first epistle, its application to saints; the second, to the world and the wicked here below: hence he goes on to the new heavens and the new earth.]

The moral of this book goes even farther than that of the Proverbson one side at least; for we must remember that it is this world that is in question (under the sun). Wisdom avails no more than folly. The difference between them is as great as that between light and darkness. But one event happens to all men, and much reflection only makes us hate life. The heart becomes weary of research, and after all one dies like another. The world is ruined as a system, and death cuts the thread of thoughts and projects, and annihilates

all connection between the most skilful workman and the fruit of his labors. What profit has been to him? There is a time for all things, and man must do each in its season, and enjoy that which God gives on his way. But God is the same in all His works, that men should fear before Him. He knows that God will judge the righteous and the wicked; but, as far as man's knowledge extends, he dies as the beast dies, and who can tell what becomes of him afterwards? There is no question here of the revelation of the world to come, but only of the conclusions drawn from experience of what takes place in this world. The knowledge of God teaches that there is a judgment; to man all is darkness beyond the present life.

**CHAPTER** 4 expresses the deep sorrow caused by the crying injustice of a sinful world, the unredressed wrongs which compose the history of our race, and which, in fact, make the history of man insupportable to one who has a sense of natural justice, and creates the desire to put an end to it. Labor and sloth alike bring their quota of distress. Nevertheless, in the midst of this quicksand in which there is no standing, we see the thought of God arise, giving a firm foundation to heart and mind.

This is in the beginning of chapter 5. He demands respect from man. The folly of the heart is indeed folly in His presence. From thence onward we find that that which takes away the vain hope of earthly happiness gives a more true joy to the heart that becomes wise, and therefore joyful, in separating itself from the world. There is therefore the grace also of patience. The self-sufficient effort to be righteous only ends in shame; to be active in evil ends in death. Finally, to strive after wisdom by the knowledge of things below is labor in vain. He has found two things: first, with respect to woman, judged by the experience of the world, he has found none good; amongst men, one in a thousand; and, in a word, that God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions apart from God.

God must be honored, and the king also, to whom God has given authority. We see too in chapters 9 and 10, how little everything here meets the apparent capacity of man; and, even when this capacity is real, how little it is esteemed. Nevertheless the wisdom of the upright, and the folly of the fool, have each its own consequences, and, after all, God judges. To sum up the whole, God must be remembered, and that before weakness and old age overtake us. For the manifest conclusion of all that has been said is "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man."

The chief subject, then, of this Book is the folly of all man's efforts in seeking happiness here below, and that the wisdom which judges all this only renders man still more unhappy. And then all this experience, on the part of one who possessed the highest capacity, is put in contrast with the

simple principle of all true wisdomsubmission and obedience to God, who knows all things, and who governs all things, because “God shall bring every work into judgment.”

If we remember that this Book gives us the experience of man, and the reasonings of man, on all that happens under the sun, there is no difficulty in those passages that have the semblance of infidelity. The experience of man is necessarily infidel. He confesses his ignorance; for beyond that which is seen, experience can know nothing. But the solution of all moral problems is above and beyond that which is seen. The Book of Ecclesiastes makes this manifest. The only rule of life then is to fear the God who disposes of our life, who judges every action all the days of the life of our vanity. There is no question, in this book, of grace or of redemption, but only of the experience of this present life, and of that which God has said with respect to itnamely, His law, His commandments, and the consequent judgmentthat which is decreed to man.

A Jew under the law might say these things, after having had the experience of all that God could give man to favor him in this position, and in view of the judgment of God that is connected with it.

In Proverbs we have practical moral guidance through the world; in Ecclesiastes the result of all efforts of man’s will to find happiness, with all means at his disposal. But in the whole inquiry in Ecclesiastes there is no covenant relationship, no revelation. It is man with his natural faculties, and such as he is, conscious indeed he has to say to God, but seeking by his own thoughts where happiness is to be found. Only that conscience has its part in the matter, and the fear of God is owned at the end. It is God owned indeed, but man in the world with full experience of all in it.

# THE SONG OF SONGS

This Book takes up the Jew, or at least the remnant, in quite another aspect. It tells of the affections that the King can create in their heart, and by which He draws them to Himself. However strong these affections may be. they are not developed according to the position in which christian affections, properly so called, are formed. They differ in this respect. They do not possess the profound repose and sweetness of an affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated, the bonds of which are formed and recognised, that counts upon the full and constant acknowledgment of the relationship, and that each party enjoys, as a certain thing, in the heart of the other. The desire of one who loves, and is seeking the affections of the beloved object, is not the sweet, entire, and established affection of the wife, with whom marriage has formed an indissoluble union. To the former the relationship is only in desire, the consequence of the state of heart; to the latter the state of heart is the consequence of the relationship. Now, although the marriage of the Lamb is not yet come, nevertheless, on account of the revelation which has been made to us, and of the accomplishment of our salvation, this latter character of affection is that which is proper to the assembly. Praise and glory be to God for it! We know whom we have believed. The strength and energy of desire is, however, still maintained, because glory and the marriage of the Lamb are yet future. What a position is that of the assembly! The entire confidence of the relationship on the one hand, the ardent expectation of the betrothed of the Lord on the other, whose love, however, is well known; an expectation that is linked with the glory in which He will come to receive her to Himself, to be for ever with Him.

This is not the position of the Jew. The point for him is to know that his Beloved is his. That is the question. That there is a principle in common is true. Christ loves His assembly, He loves His earthly people, He loves the soul that He draws to Himself. So that there is a moral application to ourselves which is very precious. Nevertheless it is important that we distinguish and do not apply to the assembly that which relates to Israel. Otherwise we shall not have the right character of affection, and shall fail in that which is due to Christ.

The Song of Songs gives then the re-establishment of the relations between Christ and the remnant, in order that by exercise of heartnecessary on account of their positionthey may be confirmed in the assurance of His love, and in the knowledge that all is of grace, and a grace that can never

fail. Then is He fully known as Solomon. His heart becomes like the chariot of His willing people (Ammi-nadib), which carries Him away.

**CHAPTER** <2801>8:1 affords us a passage which may serve to express the state of mind treated in the book. “Oh that thou wert as my brother! when I should find thee without I would kiss thee!” Nevertheless, the Spirit of God desiring to assure the heart of the remnant of the Savior’s love, we see that the expression of the heart’s desire to possess its Beloved does not cease until it has gained its object. The heart assures itself according to the operation of the Spirit of prophecy; for in fact Christ is for the remnant, and the remnant is for Him. The whole is based on this. But the heart needs to be reassured, as in a similar case we observe in other passages.

Having thus given the general idea, we shall point out some features that are developed in the course of this book, and that possess a moral import of great interest to ourselves.

**CHAPTER** 1 presents in the most clear and simple manner the assurance of the full enjoyment of blessing; but still, though affection be there, all is more characterised by desire than by peace. And after this we find exercises of heart, that lead to a full understanding of the Beloved One’s affection. There is progress in this intelligence, and that in spite of the faults and slothfulness of heart, which gives a fresh value to the affection that is in exercise. This mode of instruction is found in the Psalms, in which the first verses frequently give the thesis and the result, which is reached through circumstances that are afterwards detailed. Besides the peacefulness of the affection which subsists in a known relation, there is another sign of an affection in exercise when the relation is not formally established. The heart is occupied with the qualities, with the features, of the Beloved One. When, on the contrary, the object is possessed, it is with that object itself the heart is occupied. No doubt the qualities are a source of happiness; but while the position gives the enjoyment of these, it is the person who manifests them that is thought of. The grace, the kindness, or similar qualities, may attract the heart, and it is occupied with them. But, the relationship once formed, it is the person we think of, whose qualities are now, so to say, our own.

The loved one speaks much here of the qualities of her Beloved; she loves to speak of them, and to others. It may be said that the Beloved does so yet more, although He knows the relation in which He stands to her. This is true; but, as she is not yet in it, He is fain to reassure her with respect to her value in His eyes. He therefore speaks constantly of it to herself. Moreover, this is suitable to the position of man and of woman, and so much the more as it is really Christ Himself in question. Christ, in a certain sense, suffices to Himself. He needs not to go and talk to others of that which is in His

heart. His love is a love of grace. But it is infinitely precious to uswhen, in our utter unworthiness, we might doubt the possibility of His affection, even because it is so inestimableand very affecting, as well as precious, to see Him manifesting His sense of her value, that her beauty is perfect in His eyes, that He has observed all her features, that one look has ravished His heart, that His dove, His undefiled, is the only one, that there is no spot in her. There is perfect grace in this reassuring testimony of the Bridegroom's part. It is the chief subject of His discourse. It is that which her heart needed.

There is much more variety in the exercises of her heart; there are even failures and sorrows arising from her faults. There is also an evident progress in her assurance. The song commences with the bride's declaration that her heart needs this testimony. She acknowledges that she is black, because of the scorching rays of the sun of affliction. She seeks shelter in the presence of her Beloved, who makes His flock to rest at noon. She would belong to Him only. She fears now to wander among the shepherds of Israel. But if the Spirit of the Lord reminds her of those former testimonies of the law and the prophets, her heart is not silent, and the heart of the Beloved overflows in the testimony of her value in His eyes. The suitability of all this to the remnant in the last days is evident. The rest of the chapter contains testimonies of affection, which present the idea that is the thesis of the book.

The first six verses (omitting the second) of chapter 2 appear to me to be the voice of the bride. They have been differently understood, but (I think) wrongly. Observe here that Christ is the apple-tree. This will help us afterwards. Moreover the bride speaks of herself. In theory she apprehends her relationship, and speaks chiefly of herself; but there is real affection. The Bridegroom will not allow her to be disturbed * when she rests with full confidence in His love. His own voice, the only one to which she now hearkens, shall waken her. He Himself tells her to arise, that the winter is paststhe time of mourning and sorrow. He desires also to hear her voice. Thus her heart is re-assured: her Beloved is hers. How truly all this gives the awakening of divine affections and confidence in the remnant which had so long learned what it was to have Jehovah's face hidden, and how fully the inextinguishable love of Him who wept over Jerusalem is in the blessedest way in exercise to awaken this confidence and assure the heart of the afflicted people! It is to me singularly beautiful, not instruction as to circumstances nor in connection with responsibility, but graceChrist's (Jehovah's) own relationship with Israel.

[* Lit. "nor awaken love till it please," see New Translation.]

In **CHAPTER** 3 we have another attitude, another state of heart. She is alone and in darkness. She seeks her Beloved, but finds Him not. There is affection, but no joy. She questions the watchmen in Jerusalem who go about the city. As soon as she passes from them, she finds Him. Again He will have her rest in His love. But all this is only prophetically and in testimony, for the comfort of those who have not yet found Him, by showing them what He is for them. The Spirit of prophecy then exhibits the Bridegroom coming up out of the wilderness with His bride, where (like Moses) He had been with her in spirit. The chapter confirms the application to Israel. In her solitary state she seeks the Messiah, and, after inquiring of those who watched, soon found Him her soul loved, and brought Him into the place of Israel, for to Israel the Son was born, * though in a new relationship. There He maintains her rest, and there, the other side of the picture, the true Solomon comes up out of the wilderness, crowned now in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart, by the Israel that had rejected Him.

[* So Naomi, and Revelation 12.]

And now, chapter 4, He declares all that she is in His sight, although she has been in the lion's den. From thence He calls her, all fair and without spot in His eyes; His heart expressing His delight in her. It is, I judge, a fine moral perfectness of thought that the bride never speaks of the Bridegroom's perfections to Himself as if she was to approve Him; she speaks of Him fully as expressive of her own feelings and to others, but not to Him. He speaks freely and fully of her to herself as assuring her of His delight in her. When we think of Christ and our relation with Him, this is beautifully appropriate.

**CHAPTER** 5 gives us another experience. Intimacy was formed through the testimony of the Bridegroom's affection. The reassured heart, certain of His love, exhibits its slothfulness. Alas, what hearts are ours! We turn again to ourselves as soon as we are comforted by the testimony of the Lord's love. The Bridegroom's sensitive and righteous heart acts upon her word, and He retires from one who does not listen to His voice. She arises to learn her own folly, and the just delicacy, with respect to herself, of His ways whom she had slighted. How often, alas! do we act in the same manner with regard to the voice of His Spirit and the manifestations of His love! What a dreadful loss, but, through grace, what a lesson! She is chastised by those who watch for the peace of Jerusalem. What had she to do in the streets at night, she whom the Bridegroom had sought at home? And now her very affection exposes her to reproof, the expression of its energy placing her in a position that proved she had slighted her Beloved. If we are not in the peaceful enjoyment of the love of Christ, where He meets with us in grace,

the very strength of our affection and our self-condemnation causes us to exhibit this affection out of its place, in a certain sense, and bring us into connection with those who judge our position. It was right discipline for a watchman to use towards a woman who was wandering without, whatever might be the cause. Testimonies of her affection to her Beloved at home, the love of her own heart, do not concern the watchman. Affection may exist; but he has to do with order and a becoming walk. Nevertheless her affection was real and led to an ardent expression of all that her Beloved was to heran expression addressed to others, who ought to understand her; not to the watchman, but to her own companions. But if sloth had prevented her receiving Him in the visitations of His love, her heart, now disciplined by the watchman and turned again to her Beloved, overflowing with His praises, being taught of God, knows where to find Him.

And this experience makes her understand through grace another aspect of her relationship, proving a real progress in the intelligence of grace and condition of heart. It is no longer the desire that seeks possession of the object for herself, it is the consciousness that she belongs to Him. “I am my Beloved’s.” This is a very important progress. The soul that seeks salvation, that seeks to satisfy newly-awakened affections, exclaims, as soon as it is assured of it, “My Beloved is mine.” When there has been a deeper experience of self, it recognises itself as being His. Thus, with respect to ourselves, it is not “We have found him of whom the prophets did write”; but “We are not our own, for we are bought with a price.” To belong in this manner to Christ, no longer thinking of self, is the happiness of the soul. It is not that we lose the sense of the blessedness of possessing the Savior, but the other thought, the thought of being His, occupies the first place.

Again the Beloved testifies to the preciousness of the bride in His eyes. But here also there is a difference. Before, when speaking of her, He added to the gentleness and beauty of her aspect all the graces which were seen in her, the honey that flowed from her lips, the pleasant fruits that were found in her, the sweet odours which He called on the breath of the Spirit to bring forth. He does not now repeat these things. He speaks of that which she is for Him. Having described her personal beauty, His heart dwells on what she is for Himself. “My dove, my undefiled, is but one.” His affection can see no other: none can be compared with her. There are many others, but they are not the one whom He loves. The person of the Lord fills the heart that has been brought back to Him. The look and the graces of the bride are the subject of the Bridegroom’s testimony. Moreover for Him there is no one but her, the only one of her mother. Thus will it be with the remnant of Israel in the last days, even as in spirit it is now with us.

The reception of Christ and His union with this remnant at Jerusalem are represented in a very striking manner in that which follows. It is no longer the Beloved coming up out of the wildernesswhere He had associated His people with Himselfin glory and in love. It is the bride, fair as the moon and radiant with glory, who appears on the scene, like an army with banners displayed. The Beloved had come down to look upon the ripening fruits of the valley, and to see if His vine flourished. Before He is aware, His love makes Him like the chariots of His willing people (compare <19003>Psalm 110:3). He leads them in glory and triumph. He had sought the fruits of grace among them; but, having come down for this, He exalts them in glory. It is only when His people are fully established in grace that everything in them will be beauty and perfection, and that they will recognise that they belong entirely to Christ, and at the same time that they will entirely possess His affection.

This last thought is the rest of their heart. This is thus expressed in the third formulary of the experience of this divine song, if I may coldly so speak, and which gives the full happiness of the bride, “I am my Beloved’s, and his desire is toward me”the consciousness of belonging to Christ and that His affections rest on usthe consciousness that we are the objects of His own affections and delight. This is most deep and perfect joy.

The reader will do well to weigh these three expressions of satisfaction of heart: the possessing Christ; our belonging to Him; and this last, with the unspeakable knowledge that His heart’s delight is in us, however muchand it is surely then it will be feltall is grace.

But (to return to the text) they can now go forth with Him to enjoy all the blessings of the earth in the certainty and the communion of His love. What fruits of gratitude, what peculiar feelings, will be those which the people of Israel have kept for the Lord alone, which they could never have for any other, and which, after all, none but themselves could have towards the Lord, viewed as come on earth.

**CHAPTER** 8 stands by itself, and appears to me to recapitulate the principles of the whole book. It returns to the foundation of that which gave rise to all these exercises. The full satisfaction of all the desires of the remnant is prophetically announced, and the path of their affections is marked out. But this picture is drawn for the encouragement of those who are not yet enjoying it, and expresses the desire for its accomplishment (giving thus the sanction of God to the ardent desire of the remnant to possess Christ, and to have full liberty of communion with Him). The reply teaches, with a clearness that is very precious, the manner of its accomplishment. The ardent affection of the loved one is manifested, and the Beloved desires that

she may rest in His love, and enjoy it as long as she will without being disturbed. Afterwards she comes up out of the wilderness, leaning upon Him. And where did the Lord awaken her from her sleep? Under an apple-tree (see chap. 2:3). From Christ alone she derives her life. Thus only can Israel give birth to this living remnant, which, at Jerusalem, shall become the earthly bride of the great King, which desires to be, and shall be, as a seal upon His heart, according to the power of a love that is strong as deaththat spares nothing, and yields nothing.

The “little sister” appears to me to be Ephraim, which has never had the same development that Judah received through the manifestation of Christ, and through all that took place after the captivity of the ten tribes. For all the moral affections of Judah were formed on their relationship to Christ, on His rejection, and on the sentiments which this produced when the Spirit caused it to be felt (Isaiah 50-53). Ephraim has gone through none of this, but will enter into the enjoyment of its results. Judah, when perfected, will enjoy the full favor of the Messiah; their affections having been formed for Him by all the exercises of heart which they have had with respect to Him.

Christ, in His Solomon character, the glorious King, the Son of David, and after the order of Melchisedec, has a vineyard as Lord of the nations or multitudes. He has intrusted it to others, who are to make Him a suitable return. The vineyard of the bride was at her own disposal, but all its proceeds shall be for Solomon; and there shall be a portion for those that kept its fruitsa touching expression of her relationship to the King. She will have all to be His; and then there are others who shall profit by it also.

The last two verses express the bride’s desire that the Bridegroom may come without delay.

It is to be observed, that there is no question in this book of the purification of the conscience. That question is not touched upon. But it speaks of those affections of the heart which cannot be too ardent when the Lord is their object Consequently the faults, that manifest forgetfulness of Him and of His grace, serve only to produce such exercises of heart with respect to Him as recall all the attractions of His Person, and the consciousness of belonging entirely to Himexercises that form the heart to a much deeper appreciation of Himself, because guilt before a judge is not the question, but a fault of the heart towards a frienda fault which, meeting with a love too strong to be turned away from its object, only deepens her own affection, and infinitely exalts in her eyes the affection of her Beloved (thus forming her heart, by inward exercise, to the appreciation of His love, and to the capability of loving and estimating all that He is). It is all-important to form

our heart in this portion of the christian life. It is thus that Christ is truly known; for, with respect to divine persons, he who loves not knows not. The heart indeed is imperfect; it cannot love as it ought; and therefore all these exercises are necessary. I do not say that faults are necessary. But, as has been said, it is love that causes the fault to be felt when it exists, and the strength of the love that exposes to the watchman's blows, whose business it is, not to measure love, but to maintain moral order. He takes away the veilsad and painful discipline, which proves that, even while loving much, there was not love enough; or, at least, that this love was deposited in a weak vessel which, if listened to, is a traitor to itself.

I have said that in its interpretation this book does not apply to the assembly. Nevertheless I have spoken of ourselves and of our hearts, and with reason; because, although the interpretation of the book presents Israel as its object, it is the heart and the feelings that are in question; so that morally it can be applied to us. But, then, the modification already noticed must be introduced. We have the full knowledge of accomplished redemption, we know that we are sitting in the heavenly places in Christ. Our conscience is for ever purged. God will remember our sins and our iniquities no more. But the effect of this work is, that we are entirely His, according to the love that is shown in the sacrifice that accomplished it. Morally therefore Christ is the all of our souls. It is evident that, if He loved us, if He gave Himself for us, when in us there was no good thing, it is in having absolutely done with ourselves that we have life, happiness, and the knowledge of God. It is in Him alone that we find the source, the strength, and the perfection of this. Now, as to justification, this truth makes our position perfect. In us there is no good thing. We are accepted in the Belovedperfectly accepted in His acceptance, our sins being entirely put away by His death. But, then, as to life, Jesus becomes the one object, the all of our souls. In Him alone the heart finds that which can be its objectin Him who has so loved us and given Himself for usin Him who is entire perfection for the heart. As to conscience, the question is settled in peace through His blood: we are righteous in Him before God, while exercised daily on that ground. But the heart needs to love such an object, and in principle will have none but Him, in whom all grace, devotedness to us, and every grace, according to God's own heart, is found. It is here that the Christian is in unison with the Song of Songs.

The assembly loved, redeemed, and belonging to Himhaving by the Spirit understood His perfections, having known Him in the work of His love, does not yet possess Him as she knows Him. She sighs for the day when she will see Him as He is. Meanwhile He manifests Himself to her, awakens her affections, and seeks to possess her love, by testifying all His

delight in her. She learns also that which is in herselfthat slothfulness of heart which loses opportunities of communion with Him. But this teaches her to judge all that in herself which weakens the effect on her heart of the perfections of her Beloved. Thus she is morally prepared, and has capacity for the full enjoyment of communion with Him; when she shall see Him as He is, she will be like Him. It is not the effort to obtain Him; but we seek to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended by Christ. We have an object that we do not yet fully possess, which alone can satisfy all our desiresan object whose affection we need to realise in our heartsan end which He in grace pursues, by the testimony of His perfect love towards us, thereby cultivating our love to Him, comforting us even by the sense of our weakness, and by the revelation of His own perfection, and thus showing us all that in our own hearts prevents our enjoying it. He delivers us from it, in that we discover it in the presence of His love.

It is not my object to trace here in detail the working of these affections in the heart, because I am interpreting and not exhorting. But it was necessary to speak a little on the subject, that the Book may be understood. Moreover, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of cultivating these holy affections which attach us to Christ, and cause us to know His love, and to know Himself. For, I repeat, when God is in question, and His dealings with respect to us, he who loves not knows not.

Only remark with what earnestness, with what tenderness, He tells His loved one of all her preciousness in His sight, and of the perfection which He beholds in her. If Jesus sees perfection in us, we need nothing more. He reassures her heart by speaking to her of this, when she had been justly rebuked and disciplined by the watchmen, and her heart compelled to seek relief by declaring to others, to her friends, all that He was to her. He reproaches her with nothing, but makes her feel that she is perfect in His eyes.

Practically, what deep perfection of love was in that look which the Lord gave Peter when he had denied Him! What a moment was that when, without reproach, although instructing him, He testified His confidence in Peter by committing to him, who had thus denied Him, the sheep and the lambs so dear to His heart, for whom He had just giver His life!

Now this love of Christ’s, in its superiority to evila superiority that proves it divinereproduces itself as a new creation in the heart of every one who receives its testimony, uniting him to the Lord who has so loved him.

Is the Lord anything else than this for us? No, my brethren, we learn His love; we learn in these exercises of heart to know Him Himself.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS

We enter, now, dear reader, on the field of prophecy; a vast and important one, whether in view of the moral instruction that it contains, or on account of the great events that are announced in it, or through its development of God's government, and, by this means, its revelation of that which He Himself is in His ways with men. Jehovah and His dealings, and the Messiah, shine through the whole. Israel always forms the inner circle, or chief platform, on which these dealings are developed, and with which the Messiah is immediately in relation. Outside of, and behind this, the nations are gathered, instruments and objects of the judgments of God, and finally, the subjects of His universal government made subject to the Messiah, who however will assert His especial claim to Israel as His own people.

It is evident that the assembly and the Christian's individual place is outside this whole scene. In it there is neither Jew nor Gentile; in it the Father knows the objects of His eternal election, as His beloved children; and Christ, glorified on high, knows it as His body and His bride. Prophecy treats of the earth, and of the government of God. For after personal salvation is settled, there are two great subjects in scripture, the government of this world, and the sovereign grace which has taken poor sinners and put them into the same place as God's own Son as the exalted man, and as adopted into sonshipthe divine glory, and that in Christ, being of course the center of all. If we measure things not by our importance, but by the importance of the manifestation of God, whatever develops His ways as unfolded in His government will have much importance in our eyes. There can be no doubt that the assembly, and the individual Christian, are a still more elevated subject, because God has there displayed the whole secret of His eternal love, and deepest present divine affections. But if we remember that it is not only the sphere of action that is in question, but He who acts therein, the dealings of God with Israel and the earth will then assume their true importance in our eyes. And these are the subjects of prophecy. For the others we must specially look to Paul and John.

This portion of the word is divided into two parts. The prophecies that refer to Israel during the time that Israel is owned of God, and consequently that concern the future glory also, form one part. The other consists of those prophecies which make known that which happens during God's rejection of His people, but which make it known in view of the final blessing of this very people. This distinction flows from the fact that the throne of God, sitting between the cherubim, has been taken away from Jerusalem, and the dominion of the earth committed to the Gentiles. The period of this

dominion is called “the times of the Gentiles.” The former class of prophecies applies to that which precedes and that which is subsequent to this period. The latter refers to this period itself. There is a moment of transition, during which the restoration of the people is in question, when the end of the times of the Gentiles draws neara moment especially in view in those prophecies which relate to this period, and to which the psalms, as we have seen, largely apply, connecting it with the first coming of the Lord and His rejection by the Jews. As He says, “Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye say, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” But the general history of the period itself is given in diverse forms. The interval between the return from the Babylonish captivity and the coming of Jesus has a special character. For the Gentiles had the dominion; and nevertheless Judah was at Jerusalem expecting the Messiah. God favored His people with the testimony of prophets, who addressed themselves especially to this state of things, namely, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Their prophecies have consequently an especial character, suited to the position in which the people are then found and to God’s ways towards them.

There is another prophet who holds a peculiar place, that is, Jonah. His was the last testimony addressed immediately to the Gentiles, to show that God still bore them in mind, and governed all things supremely, although He had already called Israel to be a separate people unto Himself. *

> [* The character of this prophet in other respects will be considered hereafter.]

Christ is the center of all these prophecies, whatever their character may be. It is the Spirit of Christ that speaks in them. One of the two divisions I have mentioned is of much greater extent than the other. Daniel alone in the Old Testament gives us the detail of “the times of the Gentiles,” with the exception of some particular revelations in Zechariah. There is a very striking difference between the two classes of prophecies. That which belongs to the time when Israel is acknowledged is addressed to the people, to their conscience and to their heart. That which gives the history of “the times of the Gentiles,” while it is a revelation for the people, is not addressed to them. In the books of the three prophets who prophesied after the captivity, neither Israel nor Judah is ever called the people of God, except in promises for the future, when the Messiah will re-establish blessing.

There is yet another principle, simple but important to our understanding of the prophets. Whatever figures the Spirit of God may use in depicting the ways of God or those of the enemy, the subject of the prophecy is never a figure. I am not speaking of those prophecies in which all is symbol; this

remark could not be applied to them. Moreover a symbol is not the same thing as a figure. It is a collection of the moral or historical qualities, or of both, which belong to the prophetic object, in order to present God’s idea of that object. Certain elements which compose this symbol may be figures; but the symbol itself, correctly speaking, is not a figure, but a striking whole, made up of the qualities that morally compose the thing described. Accordingly nothing is more instructive than a well-understood symbol. It is the perfect idea which God gives us of the way in which He looks upon the object represented by the symbolHis view of its moral character.

Let us now consider the writings of the prophets.

# ISAIAH

Isaiah takes the first place; and in fact he is the most complete of all the prophets, and perhaps the most rich. The whole circle of God's thoughts with respect to Israel is more given here. Other prophets are occupied with certain portions only of the history of this people.

We will give here the division of this book into subjects. There is in the beginning an appearance of confusion; nevertheless it helps to explain the moral bearing of the book.

And here what a scene presents itself to our view!sorrowful in one aspect, yet at the same time lovely and glorious, like the first glimmerings of dawn after a long and cold night of darkness, telling of the bright day which soon will rise over a scene, the beauties of which are faintly perceived, mingled with the darkness that still obscures thema scene that shall be vivified by the sun that will soon enlighten it. One rejoices in this partial light: it tells of the goodness, the energy, and the intentions of that God who has created all things for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace and glory. But one longs for the manifestation of the fulness of this accomplishment, when all will repose in the effects of this goodness.

Such is prophecy. It is sorrowful, because it unveils the sin, the ungrateful folly, of God's people. But it reveals the heart of One who is unwearied in love, who loves this people, who seeks their good, although He feels their sin according to His love. It is the heart of God that speaks. These two characters of prophecy throw light upon the two-fold end it has in view, and help us to understand its bearing. First of all, it addresses itself to the actual state of the people, and shows them their sin; it always therefore supposes the people to be in a fallen condition. When they peacefully enjoy the blessings of God, there is no need of displaying their condition to them. But, in the second place, during the period in which the people are still acknowledged, it speaks of present restoration on their repentance, to encourage them to return to Jehovah; and it proclaims deliverance. And in this, the law and so the blessings connected with it, have their place as that to which they should return. Of this the last prophetic word from God (Malachi 4) is an expressive instance. But God well knew the hearts of His people, and that they would not yield to His call. To sustain the faith of the remnant, faithful amidst this unbelief, and for the instruction of His people at all times, He adds promises which will assuredly be fulfilled by the coming of Messiah. These promises are sometimes connected with the circumstances of a near and partial deliverance, sometimes with the

consummation of the people's iniquity in the rejection of Christ come in humiliation. It is important to be able to distinguish between that part of a passage which refers to those circumstances which were near at hand, and that which speaks of full deliverance shown in perspective through those circumstances. This is the difficult part of the interpretation of prophecy.

I would add that, although the subject of prophecy is not a figure, yet figures are not only largely used, but they are often intermingled with literal expressions; so that in explaining the prophetic books one cannot make an exact rule to distinguish between figure and letter. The aid of the Holy Ghost is necessary, as is always the case in the study of the sacred word, to find the true sense of the passage. What I have said is equally applicable to other parts of scripture, and in the most solemn circumstances. Psalm 22, for instance, is a continual mixture of figures, which represent the moral character of certain facts, with other facts recited in the simplicity of the letter. There is no difficulty in understanding it. "Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me, they pierced my hands and my feet." The word dogs gives the character of those present. This way of speaking is found in all languages. For instance, it would be said, "He drew a fine picture of virtue." Drew a picture is a figure. I say this in order that a difficulty may not be made of that which belongs to the nature of human language.

I come now to the contents of this important book of prophecy. It is thus divided:The first four chapters are apart, forming a kind of introduction. The fifth also in itself stands alone. It judges the people in view of the care that God has bestowed upon them. But we shall find this judgment resumed in detail in verse 8 of chapter 9. In chapter 6 we have the judgment of the people in view of the Messiah's coming glory; consequently there is a remnant acknowledged. * Chapter 7 formally introduces the Messiah, Immanuel, the Son of David, and the judgment upon the house of David after the flesh; so that there is an assured hope in sovereign grace, but at the same time judgment upon the last human support of the people. In chapter 8 we have the desolating Assyrian who overruns the land, but also Immanuel (previously announced in chap. 7) who finally brings his schemes to nought. Meantime there is a remnant, separate from the people, and attached to this Immanuel; ** and the circumstances of anguish through which the apostate people must pass are alluded to, which terminate in the full blessing flowing from Immanuel's presence. This closes with verse 7 of chapter 9; so that we have here in fact the whole history of the Jews in relationship with Christ. In verse 8 of chapter 9 the Spirit resumes the general national history from chapter 5, interrupted by this essential episode of the introduction of Immanuel. He resumes it from the time then present,

pointing out the different judgments of Jehovah, until He introduces the last instrument of these judgmentsthe Assyrian, the rod of Jehovah. And here the immediate deliverance is presented as an encouragement to faith, and as prefiguring the final destruction of the power that will be the rod of Jehovah in the last days. Jehovah, having smitten the desolator, presents (chap. 11) the Offspring of David, at first in His intrinsic moral character, and then in the results of His reign as to full blessing, and the presence of Jehovah established again in Zion in the midst of Israel. Thus the whole history of the people is given us in its grand features, until their establishment in blessing as the people of God, having Jehovah in their midst. Only that it is to be remarked that nothing is given of Antichrist, nor of the power of the beast, nor of the time of tribulation as such, because that is the period during which the Jews are not owned, though they be dealt with, while our prophecy speaks of the time when they are owned. It is stated in general terms that God would hide His face from the house of Jacob, and the righteous in spirit wait for Him.

> [* Note here, the two great dealings of God with the conscience to convict it of sin exemplified in these two chapters. First, the state of blessing in which God had first set the person judged, and his departure from it (so man in his innocence); and second, the meeting of the Lord in glory. Are we in a state to do so?]

> [** This is largely brought out in the Gospel of Matthew. The passage itself is quoted in Hebrews 2. What is spoken of in <scripRef passage="Isaiah 8:13-18" /> is in fact the gospel history breaking in upon the scene. Peter quotes verse 14; Paul (<scripRef passage="Romans 9" />) the stumbling stone; Matthew quotes chap. <scripRef passage="4" /> 9:1, 2 for Christ’s apparition in Galilee.]

From chapter 13 to the end of chapter 27 we find the judgment of the Gentiles; whether Babylon or the other nations, especially of those which were at all times in relationship with Israel; the position of Israel, not only in the midst of them, but of all the nations in the last days (this is chap. 18); and, finally, the judgment of the whole world (chap. 24), and the full millennial blessing of Israel (chaps. 25-27). From chapters 28 to 35 we have the detail of all that happens to the Jews in the last days. Each revelation closes with a testimony to the glory of God in Israel.

In chapters 36 to 39 the Spirit relates the history of a part of Hezekiah’s reign. It contains three principal subjects:the resurrection of the Son of David as from death; the destruction of the Assyrian, without his having been able to attack Jerusalem; and the captivity in Babylon. These are the three grand foundations of the whole history and state of the Jews in the last days.

From chapter 40 to the end is a very distinct part of the prophecy, in which God reveals the consolation of His people and their moral relations with Himself, and the double ground of His controversy with them, whether in view of the position in which He has placed the nation as His elect servantthe witness of Jehovah the one true God, in the presence of the Gentiles, and their idolatrous failureor in respect to their rejection of Christ the only true elect Servant * who has fulfilled His will. This gives occasion to the revelation of a remnant who hearken to this true Servant, as well as to the history of the circumstances that this remnant pass through, and therefore at the same time to that of the people's condition in the last days, ending with the manifestation of Jehovah in judgment. The position of Israel with respect to the idolatrous nations gives occasion also to the introduction of Babylon, of its destruction, and the deliverance of captive Judah by Cyrus. This idolatry is one of the subjects on which Jehovah pleads with His people. The other and yet graver subject is that of the rejection of Christ. For more detail we must wait till these chapters come under examination.

[* This term "servant" is a kind of key to this whole prophecy: first Israel, then in chapter 49 the Lord takes Israel's place, at the end the remnant. But of this more hereafter.]

Prophecy supposes that the people of God are in a bad condition, even when they are still acknowledged, and prophecy addressed to them. There is no need of addressing powerful testimony to a people who are walking happily in the ways of the Lord, nor of sustaining the faith of a tried remnant by hopes founded on the unchangeable faithfulness and the purposes of God, when all are enjoying in perfect peace the fruits of His present goodnessattached, as a consequence, to the faithfulness of the people. The proof of this simple and easily understood principle is found in each of the prophets. It does not appear that the prophets, whose prophecies we possess in the inspired volume, wrought any miracles. * For the law was then in force, its authority outwardly acknowledged; there was nothing to establish; and Jehovah's authority was the basis of the public system of religion in the land according to the institutions appointed by Himself in connection with the temple. It was on practical duty that the prophets insisted. In the midst of the ten apostate tribes Elijah and Elisha wrought miracles to re-establish the authority of Jehovah. Such is the faithfulness of Jehovah, and His patience towards His people. A new object of faith requires miracles. That which is founded on the already acknowledged word, and which does not demand; the reception of it as a new object, requires none, whatever the increase of light or claim on conscience may be. The word commends itself to the conscience in those who are taught of God; and if there are new revelations, they are to the comfort of those who

have received the practical testimony, and have thus recognised the authority of one who speaks on the part of God.

> [* The dial of Ahaz in this prophet may be thought an exception, but Ahaz was really departed from God. It is also noteworthy that the apostles never wrought miracles for their own comfort. Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick. Epaphroditus "was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but on me also."]

We will now examine the contents of the prophecy itself in a more detailed way.

Isaiah 1 begins with a testimony to the sad condition of the people. They were all wounds and corruption. It was useless to chastise them any more. Their ceremonies were an abomination to Jehovah. He desired righteousness. Nevertheless the people are called to repentance, and are assured that blessing should follow repentance. Such is the position which prophecy gives them. But God knew the people who, with their princes, were wicked and corrupt; and God declares what will take place. He will execute judgment and thus cleanse the people and re-establish blessing. The two great principles are thus laid down: blessing proposed consequent upon repentance; but in fact it will be blessing brought in by judgment.

Thus re-established, Zion, the mountain of Jehovah, will be the center of blessing and peace to all the nations (chap. 2:1-4). This puts the invitation to the people into the prophet's mouth to come and walk in the light of Jehovah. Why has He forsaken His people? Because they have learnt the ways of the heathen. Well, the day of Jehovah shall be upon all the glory of man, and upon all his idols. They may cease from man, for God's own people on the earth, the place of His rest, shall be judged and smitten by their God (chaps. 3, 4). But in that day shall the Branch of Jehovah be glorious, and the earth shall be blessed. He who smites binds up the wounds by introducing the Messiah, and by Him blessing the earth. The remnant will be holy when the cleansing of Jerusalem shall have been accomplished by the judgment and the fire of Jehovah. Jerusalem shall be protected and glorified by the manifestation of Jehovah's presence, like the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the form in which the introduction to this prophecy is presented with much force and clearness.

After this the Spirit of God begins to plead with the people, taking two distinct groundsnamely, that which God had done for His people, and the coming of Jehovah in the Person of Christ in glory. Had the people made a suitable return to the care which Jehovah had lavished upon them? Were they in a condition to receive Jehovah in their midst? Chapter 5 takes up the first question, which addresses itself to the responsibility of the people, in

view of the care and the government of God. What could He have done for His vine that He had not done? It has produced Him but wild grapes. He makes known the consequences of this according to His righteous government. His hedge, the protection with which He had surrounded it, shall be taken away, and it shall be left a prey to the ravages of the heathen. God, in pleading with Israel, shows them their sins in detail. Then His hand is stretched forth against His people, and terrible judgments fall upon them. Nevertheless, "His anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." He will bring mighty strangers against them, whose progress nothing can arrest, who will carry the people into captivity. There shall be sorrow and mourning in the land, and the light of their heavens shall be darkened. In the first instance this will be Nebuchadnezzar, and even Sennacherib but still more fully will it be the nations that come against Jerusalem in the last days, and capture it, after having overrun and invaded all the land. We shall have the details of this farther on.

But it was in the counsels of God that His presence should be established in glory in the midst of His people, and this will be accomplished in Christ at the end of the age. Hence the testimony of the progress of the judgments is interrupted after the first general statement, and in chapter 6 the prophet sees this glory. Yet its first effect is judicial, and operates to blind and condemn them. The previous judgment (chap. 5) had been in respect of the breaking of the law and the despising of the word of the Holy One of Israel. But with enmity against Christ and His rejection comes judicial blindness and the separation of a remnant. That it is the glory of Christ is taught us in chapter 12 of John's Gospel. The prophet feels at once the incompatibility of the people's condition with the manifestation of this glory. Unclean lips cannot celebrate it. But a live coal from the altar cleanses his own lips, and he consecrates himself to Jehovah's message; and to that which concerns the glory of Christ. The heart of the people is made fat until there is entire desolation. Nevertheless there shall be a remnant, a holy seed, which shall be like the sap of a tree that has lost its leaves. *

> [* A more exact translation throws much light on this prophecy. Nevertheless there shall still be in it a tenth, and it shall return and shall be to be consumed, as the oak and the teil tree, which being cut down have still the trunk or the rooted stump]; thus the holy seed shall be their stock" (chap. 1:9). That is, the remnant itself will undergo Judgment and consumption at the time of their return; but there shall be a holy seed, from which life will spring as from a tree cut down.]

We have then in these last chapters the judgment of the people under two aspects: first, that of God's government (in this point of view the people, being altogether guilty, are given up to the Gentiles); secondly, in view of the glory of Jehovah's presence at His coming according to His purposes of

grace (for this the people were unfit). But here, as the purposes of God were in question, there is a remnant according to election in whom the glory shall be re-established. This distinction must be made when the government of God and His outward dealings are in question.

In **CHAPTER** 5, which speaks of the former character of judgment, there is no remnant. It is simply the public and complete judgment of the nation; for as to this all rested on their responsibility. In the Gospels this is looking for fruit; Christ might dig about it and dung it, but this was looking for fruit. Hence it is cursed and never to bear fruit. That is Israel (man) under the first covenant. In chapter 6 God acts within, in His own relationship with the people. Hence we find a remnant and the assured re-establishment of the people; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Here also we find Christ. God could not cast off His people for ever, and the prophetic faith is found which says, How long? as elsewhere it is said, There is none to say, How long? For when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?

But this requires further development; and it is given in a remarkable manner in the next prophecy, comprised in chapters 7, 8, 9 to the end of verse 7. Certain promises were attached to the family of David, in whichas we saw when examining the Books of SamuelGod had renewed the hopes of Israel, when the links between Himself and the people were broken by the taking of the ark, and He had forsaken His place at Shiloh. Now the house of David, the last sustainment of the people in responsibility, has also failed in faithfulness. Ahaz has forsaken Jehovah, and set up the altar of a strange God in the temple of Jehovah. In chapter 7 the Spirit of God directs the prophet to the king, and addresses him. Isaiah was to go and meet him, with Shear-jashub his sona symbolical child whose name signifies “the remnant shall return.” But the Lord seeks first, as He did with respect to the people in chapter 1, to encourage this branch of David to act in faith, and thus to glorify God. He announces to the king that the designs of Rezin and Pekah shall come to nought, and even proposes to him to ask a sign. But Ahaz is too far from the Lord to avail himself of this, though he replies with forms of piety. And again, as He had done with respect to the people, Jehovah declares that which shall happen to the family of David, and to the people under their rule. The two points of this prophetic announcement arethe gift of Immanuel, the virgin’s son; and the complete desolation of the land by the Assyrian. These indeed are the keys to the whole prophecy of Isaiah. Nevertheless there shall be a remnant. Verse 16 refers to Shear-jashub; but this prophecy goes farther. In chapter 8 the second prophetic child announces by his name the approaching appearance of this enemy and his ravages; and then, since the people despised the promises

made to the family of David and rejoiced in the flesh, Jehovah would take the thing in hand. Consequently we have the whole sequel of the people's history, of the directions given to the remnant, and of God's intervention in power for the establishment of full blessing in the Person of the Messiah.

In **CHAPTER** 7, where the responsibility of the family of David is the subject, Immanuel is promised as a sign; but the success of the Assyrian is complete without any reverse. Immanuel once brought in, all is changed; the land is His. The Assyrian reaches even to the neck, because the waters of Shiloah had been despised. But Immanuel secured all. Thus the prophetic Spirit passes on to the events of the last days, of which Sennacherib was but a type. He exhibits all the designs and confederacies of the nations brought to nought because of ImmanuelGod (is) with us. It is the complete deliverance of Israel in the last days (chap. <2805>8:5-10). And as to the remnant, what course are they to follow? (chap. <2811>8:11, and following.) They are not to be troubled by the fear of the people, nor to join them in their confederacies, but to sanctify Jehovah of hosts Himself, and give Him all His true importance in their hearts. He will be their sanctuary in the day of their trouble.

But who then is this Immanuel, this Jehovah of hosts? We well know. This brings in then the whole history of the rejection of Christ, and the position of the remnant and of the nation in consequence, and of the final intervention of the power of God. The passage is too clear to need much explanation. I will point out its principal subjects. Christ becomes personally a stumbling-stone. * In consequence of this the testimony of God is deposited exclusively in the hands and the hearts of His disciples, God's elect remnant. He hides His face from Jacob; but, according to the Spirit of prophecy, this remnant waits for Him and seeks Him. Meanwhile Christ and the children whom Jehovah has given Him are for signs to the two houses of Israel (compare <4501>Romans 11:1-8). Those (the nation) who reject the stone are in rebellion and anguish in Immanuel's land; they are given up to desolation. Nevertheless this distress is not like the former ravages of the Assyrian, because the Messiah, having appeared, has taken in hand the cause of His people, according to the counsels of God. The Spirit of prophecy passes at once, as is constantly the case, from His appearance as light, to the results of the deliverance which He will accomplish in the last days (from v. 2 to 3, chap. 9). For the church was a mystery hid in God, and not the subject of prophecy or promise. The yoke of the Assyrian being broken, all the brightness of the glory of the divine Person of the Messiah shines out in the blessing of His people.

[* The beginning of verse 17 is the passage quoted in Hebrews 2, along with verse 18, to prove the humanity of the Lord and His connection with the remnant.]

These two subjects, the Messiah and the Assyrian, form the basis of all the prophecy that speaks of Israel, when this people are the recognised object of God's dealings. It may be noticed that the Assyrian appears here twicethe second time in connection with a gathering together of the nations. The first time, chapter 7, he is Jehovah's instrument for the chastisement of Israel, and he does his own will without any question of his being broken. The second time, chapter 8, he fills the land; but the assembly of the nations gathered together against Israel is broken and brought to nothing. This expectation of Jehovah's intervention (without sharing the fears of the world in the last days, or seeking that strength which the world think to find in confederation, but, on the contrary, resting absolutely on Jehovah alone) contains in principle a valuable instruction for the present day.

In **CHAPTER** 9:8 the Spirit, having given the great leading facts as to Messiah, Immanuel, resumes the general history of Israel without any special introduction of the Messiah till towards the end. This prophecy closes with chapter 12. Although the pride of Ephraim is mentioned, yet Jacob or Israel is looked at as a whole. The different phases of chastisement or of distress are in verses 8-12, 13-17, 18-21, and chapter 10:1-4. The Assyrian then re-appears, as being properly the rod of Jehovah; and it is announced, that when God shall have accomplished all that He had determined with respect to Zion (an accomplishment not here revealed), He will break the rod that He has used, and then the remnant shall seek Jehovah, and shall "stay upon" Him. This is the final act of the great drama of God's dealings with respect to Israel. There is a consumption decreed of God for the land. But when at length the Assyrian lifts up his hand, Jehovah comes in and smites him. And the indignation of Jehovah, and His anger against Israel, which till now had never been turned away, will come to an end in the destruction of this rod that magnified itself against the Lord who used it. Verse 25 is in contrast with chapter 9:12, 17, 21, and chapter 10:4. Sennacherib was a type of this. But it is a prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian in the last days, when the indignation against Israel shall cease.

Consequently we have, in chapters 11, 12, the Messiah and His reign, the source of the millennial blessing of the people of God. The first verses of chapter 11 give His character; afterwards it is the effect of His reign.

With chapter 12 one division of the whole book closes. That which commences with chapter 13 continues to the end of chapter 27, which describes the same millennial condition, but in a more extended sphere,

because the worldof which these latter chapters speakis brought in; while chapters 5-12 were in especial connection with Israel.

The chapters we are now considering connect events that were then at hand with the end of the age. It is only by thoroughly apprehending this that we can understand them. The reason of this is simple: the nations are looked at in reference to Israel. But time is not reckoned, with respect to Israel, from the Babylonish captivity until the last days The introduction of the Messiah as a stone of stumbling, with which the special epoch of seventy weeks is noticed in Daniel, has been already considered. But this passage in the prophet of the times of the Gentiles shows only more distinctly that time is not reckoned afterwards to the close. Seventy weeks go to the full restoration of Israel. The immense gap, which has now lasted more than 1800 years, is in no way taken into account. * In the eyes of the prophet, Babylon, or more correctly its head, besides the idolatrous corruption, represents the imperial throne of the world in contrast with the throne of God at Jerusalem. ** Babylon will be overthrown, and God will again bless Israel. This will be the judgment of this present ageof the world. It is represented here in that destruction of Babylon which was at hand. But this judgment will not be completed until, the times of the Gentiles being ended, Israel shall be delivered. The character of the king of Babylon is described here in very remarkable language (chap. 2314214:12, 13). It is the spirit of Babylon, and still more especially in its last representative at the close, to which this prophecy in its full accomplishment refers. It was so even in Nebuchadnezzar himselfnay, even when they built the tower of Babel. The destruction of the Assyrian then takes place in the earth; + and, although the house of David had had its sceptre broken, Philistia shall be judged and subdued, and Jehovah will found Zion, and the poor of His people will trust in Him. This destruction of Babylon, and of the Assyrian after Babylon, necessary to the understanding of the whole scene, is a kind of scene apart, complete in chapters 13, 14.

[* The seventy weeks, or 490 years, include the great gap which has already lasted more than 1800 yearsthese coming in between the end of the 483rd and the end of the 490thonly that Christians know that half the 70th week was really fulfilled in Christ's ministry; therefore we get a half week in Daniel 7 and in the Revelation.]

[** Besides the fact of the captivity of God's people, Babylon has a very important position with respect to God's dealings. Until Nebuchadnezzar received power, the government of God, while centerd in Israel (with respect to whom He had set the bounds of the peoples), took cognizance of the nations as dispersed at Babel. He allowed them indeed to follow their own ways; but before Him every nation had an individual existence. The throne once taken from Jerusalem, from whence God governed the world with a view to His chosen people, the world is given up to the dominion of a single

throne, which stands therefore before God as holding the sceptre of it. Three other powers followed in succession, the last of which was in existence when Christ came, but the tune of its judgment was not yet come. These four empires form the times of the Gentiles. God will resume His government, and again judge the nations in view of Israel; and Babylon, or the one universal empire, will be set aside in its rebel and apostate condition. But, while it lasts, the empire has its own peculiar and absolute position before God. Jerusalem, punished for its idolatry by the Babylonish captivity (subjection to idols) and the transfer of the throne from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, is so far owned in the remnant under the Gentiles that God in the prophetic books takes account of it, though not as then His people, till the second grand sin was perpetrated, the rejection of Christ But this even was in the prophet when they were in captivity. Still they were partially preserved to present Christ the Lord to them, after that set aside till sovereign grace comes on them in the last week, for faith the latter half. Time begins to count again when that is come.]

[+ A proof that the prophecy relates to the last days, for of old the Assyrian fell before Babylon, being conquered by it. It is to be remarked that the Assyrian, not the beast nor Antichrist, is the subject of this prophecy. Under the Assyrian Judah was not “Lo-ammi,” nor is he in this prophecy. In Babylon Judah was captive, and “Lo-ammi” written on the people. Hence we must not look for the beast. The Assyrian is the main enemy here.]

But in Israel’s territory, or in connection with this people, some nations still remain; and God must dispose of these in order that Israel may enjoy the full blessing and the result of the promises. Babylon, being an immense system, which takes the place of the throne of David, is seen as a whole. The nations, whose judgments are here related (although there is allusion to events nearer the time of the prophecy), are looked at as in the last days, when God resumes His throne of judgment in order to re-establish His people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar had taken Tyre and subdued Egypt. The Assyrian had overthrown Damascus and led Ephraim captive. And these were events comparatively near at hand. But, as a whole, the events spoken of here are owned in the last days. Even in the preceding chapter the destruction of the Assyrian is placed after the fall of the king of Babylon. Yet historically the Assyrian had been subdued by Babylon; and the overthrow of Sennacherib had taken place many years before that epoch. But prophecy always looks to the accomplishment of God’s purposes. Here there are generally no details with respect to the instruments employed by God. They are found elsewhere.

In chapters 15 and 16 Moab is judged. They are warned that the throne of David shall be established, and the oppressor consumed out of the land. In chapter 17 we have the invasion of armies from the north, the assembled nations. Damascus is overthrown. Israel shall be but as a few berries on the outmost branches. Nevertheless they shall look to their Maker, and the

gathered nations shall perish before the manifested power of God. The outline of this last invasion of Israel gives rise to a brief but very clear prophecy of their condition in the last days, and which is contained in chapter 18. They shall be restored by means of some powerful nation, outside the limits * of their then national relationships; but Jehovah stands apart from His own relationship with them, though ordering all things. Then, when Israel shall begin to bud as a vine in the land, they shall be given up as a prey to the nations. Nevertheless in that time they shall be brought as an offering to Jehovah, and shall themselves bring an offering too.

[* The rivers of Cush, Nile and Euphrates.]

In chapters 19 and 20 Egypt shall be smitten in that day; but Jehovah will heal it. Egypt, Assyria, and Israel shall together be blessed of Jehovah. Chapter 20 teaches us that it will be Assyria that leads Egypt captive (compare Daniel 11 at the end). It will be observed here, that, in general, from chapter 13 to 17 there is deliverance. The sceptre of the wicked is broken (chap. <23405>14:5). The throne of David will be established in mercy (chap. <23505>16:5). The Assyrian is destroyed the Philistines subduedZion founded by JehovahDamascus reduced. The latter event introduces the evils of the last days. Only, as we have remarked, the gathering of the nations is for their destruction (<33401>Micah 4:11-13). Chapter 18, resuming the subject of chapter 17, shows us Israel as they are to be in their land in the last daysoppressed by the Gentiles, but in result brought back to God.

The chapters following 18 do not, like the previous ones, tell of Israel's deliverance. but of the invasion and overrunning of the nations before mentionedthe overflowing scourge. Egypt is overrun as well as Ethiopia, in which Israel had trusted. Babylon is overcomeDumah and Kedar destroyedJerusalem is ravagedTyre falls. In short it is a universal overthrow, the central scene of which is the land of Canaan, but in which the whole world is included (chap. <23404>24:4). Even the powers of heaven are overturned, as well as the kings of the earth upon the earth, giving place to the establishment of Zion, the mountain of Jehovah, as the center of power and blessing, the power of the serpent, the dragon that is in the sea, being annihilated.

After this outline attention must be given to some details. It will be observed that Babylon and Jerusalem fall (chaps. 21, 22), one after the other, Jerusalem the last. Now it is quite evident that this connection of events is yet future. That which is said of Babylon and Jerusalem may have found its occasion in the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, and partly in the condition of Jerusalem when threatened by Sennacherib. But there was

neither the connection nor the order of events noted in this prophecy. But Babylon is named in a manner that gives no clue whatever to its condition. The “desert of the sea” is a singular term to describe a city. But a dreadful invasion is before the prophet’s eyes, and Babylon falls. It comes like a whirlwind of the south, and the power of Babylon is at an endwe are not told in what manner.

Jerusalem, the valley of vision, is ravaged. The Persians and the Medes, who were the invaders of the preceding chapter re-appear here as attacking Jerusalem. There is no fighting outside; but, the city being taken, its inhabitants are bound or slain within it. Besides the prophetic revelations, this chapter contains also moral instruction of the deepest importance In the first place all the wisdom of man is insufficient to ward off evil, if not accompanied by the power of God. When the city of God is in question, this wisdom, exercised in forgetfulness of the God who built and founded the city of His holiness, is an unpardonable sin (chap. 22:11). Again, that which is related here was, historically speaking, done by Hezekiah, of whom it is said he prospered in all his works. Outward blessing attended his labors; but, at the same time, the condition of the people, even with respect to these labors, was such that God could not pardon it. This is often the case: outward faith in doing the work of God, blessed by Him, corruption as to state of heart in the thing, which God will assuredly judge, and forgetfulness of God Himself and of their belonging to Him. This is when the people of God lean upon human means. We see also here one who held a settled office, according to man, in the government of the house of David, set aside with shame, and one chosen of God taking his place all glory being given to him (a remarkable prefiguration of the setting aside of the false Christ, and the establishment of the true, in the last days). This prophecy gives room to suppose that the nations will attack Jerusalem when the Babylon of history is a desert. That which is Babylon in those days shall fall. Nevertheless Jerusalem, the object of the prophecies, shall be taken, its government changed; the usurper must yield his place to the chosen One of God.

The burden of Tyre shows us all the pride of human glory stained, and all the honorable of the earth brought into contempt. The occasion is the capture of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, but the prophecy goes farthereven to the days when her merchandise shall be holiness to Jehovah (chap. 23).

**CHAPTER** 24 sets before us the overturning of everything in the earth. The land of Israel is first in view. But there all the elements of all the systems of this world will be gathered together and judged. We have already remarked that this extends to the judicial overthrow of the power of wickedness in the heavenlies, as well as of the kings of the earth upon the earth: the

succeeding chapters show us with what intent. Without it the evil would not be set aside and put a stop to. Hence when Christ rides into Jerusalem in Luke it is said, “peace in heaven.” For till the power of evil is set aside thus, any blessing established on the earth is soon corrupted and fades.

Before examining them, let us retrace the objects of the judgments we have spoken of; let us retrace them in their moral order. We have Babylon, the power of organised corruption, where the people of God are captive; the public open enemy of God and His peoplethe Assyrian; the inward enemythe Philistine; then Moab, the pride of man. Damascus is that which has been the enemy of God’s people, but allied with the apostate part of that people against the faithful part. From all these the people are delivered. Afterwards we find, under judgment, Egypt, or the world in its state of nature, the wisdom of which is lost in confusion; Babylon, now desert in the midst of the nations; Dumah, the liberty, the independence, of man; Jerusalem, the professing people; Tyre, the glory of the world; and, finally, all that is on the earth, and, to sum up all power, spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

**CHAPTERS** 25 and 26 take the form of a song, in which the effect of God’s intervention is celebrated. Let us observe its principal subjects. God is faithful. He accomplishes His purposes. He has brought the city of human pride to nought through His power. All the strong organisation of man’s pride is destroyed. God has been the strength of the poor among His people in the day of their distress, and the power of the enemy has been brought low. He will execute justice in Zion for all people. He will take away the veil that is upon their heart. The resurrection of the faithful will have taken place. I say “the faithful,” for it is death swallowed up in victory. Moreover, 1 Corinthians is applies it thus. The rebuke of His people (Israel) shall be entirely taken away. The remnant (v. 9-12) celebrate their deliverance; they had waited for God, and the power of Jehovah shall be displayed on their behalf. Moab, their haughty neighbor, shall be subdued. *

> [* Note, you have here all the results then of this judgment of God and what is connected with it. The saints are raised, the power of evil cast down from the heavens, the rebuke of Israel taken away, and the veil of the covering taken off the face of all peoples.]

In **CHAPTER** 26 the remnant sing in praise of the character of this deliverance. They have a strong city, but its bulwarks are the salvation of God. The strength of man has no place here; it is the foot of the poor that treads down the lofty city. It is the judgment that the righteous God executes Himself. The remnant had waited for Him in the way of His judgments. The long-suffering of grace was in vain; it is only when the judgments of God are in the earth * that the inhabitants of the world will learn

righteousness. Even when the hand of Jehovah was lifted up to strike, they did not see. But they shall see, in spite of themselves, and they shall be ashamed. The fire of Jehovah's jealousy shall devour them; they shall not rise. But Israel shall be raised, as from the dead, by the power of Jehovah.

> [* I apprehend "the earth" is a more contracted sphere than "the world," the distinction especially lying in this, that it is the sphere in which the revealed ways and government of God have been brought before men. When this has been the case with the whole world, it becomes the earth. The word "earth" is used for the land of Israel and for the earth in the sense explained, and for the whole earth as a scene ordered of God. Hence, when the scene with which God has already dealt is judged, then it is that the wide world at large will learn righteousness; not, though it ought to have been carried there, while the present system of grace prevails.]

Finally, Jehovah invites His people to hide themselves a little moment, while He comes out of His place to execute vengeance (chap. 27). The power of Satan in this world and among men shall be destroyed, Israel preserved and watered as the vine of Jehovah. He had smitten Israel, but only in measure. Nevertheless the people shall be fully judged, and then Jehovah will gather His dispersed, one by one.

In the succeeding chapters we have the details of that which will happen to Israel in their own land, when invaded by the Gentiles in the last days, of which we have had but the general picture and results. We shall find a complete and glorious deliverance of the remnant amidst the most terrible judgments.

**CHAPTER** 28 sets before us the first elements of these final scenes in the history of this wonderful people. The scourge comes from the north. Ephraim is invaded as by an overflowing torrent, by a tempest of hail that smites and destroys; he is trodden under foot. But in that day Jehovah shall be for a crown of glory to the residue of His people. The people morally besotted, do not hear. And this is the judicial sentence of Jehovah who turns to Jerusalem in pronouncing it. There they had made a covenant with death and the powers of darkness, * that they might escape the overflowing torrent. But the covenant shall be disannulled, the scourge shall overtake them; they shall be trodden down, and smitten by this terrible rod. We have then this revelation, that when Ephraim shall be invaded by this terrible scourge, the princes of Jerusalem will seek to preserve themselves from it by making a covenant with the power of evil. But it shall come to nought. The waters shall overflow and sweep away the refuge of lies. Jerusalem, as well as Ephraim, undergoes the consequences of the assault of the enemy. But the Messiah is the elect corner-stone, the sure foundation for the remnant; he that believes in Him shall not be confounded. Thus Ephraim is

invaded and Jerusalem taken. There is a consumption determined ** by Jehovah upon the whole earth.

[* They insolently say they have made a covenant with the power of evil, so that, when the scourge came, it would not come nigh them. Impossible to conceive a more open defiance of God and His judgments. Historically they will have done it in uniting with the man of sin, the Antichrist, whose coming is after the power of Satan; but here it is said in defiance of God.]

[** This expression is used elsewhere also, as in Daniel, as a kind of technical formula for the Lord's dealings in the last daythe finishing of the work and cutting it short in righteousness. He judges completely, fills it up, but cuts it short for the sparing of the remnant, the elect.]

**CHAPTER** 29 Jerusalem is reduced to the last extremity. But this time Jehovah appears for her deliverance, and the multitude of her enemies disappear as a dream of the night. Everything is dark and gloomy as to the people; all is morally overturned, and soon God will overturn everything by His power, and change the forest into Carmel (that is, a fruitful field). Henceforth Jacob shall no more be weak and feeble. The meek shall be blessed, the deaf shall hear the word. The terrible one and the blasphemer shall be consumed before Jehovah. There are two parts then in this history, two attacks. The first succeeds against Ephraim and against Jerusalem. The second does not succeed. Jerusalem is brought very low, but Jehovah appears and she is delivered. The spirit of scorn and unbelief was marked in chapter 28; the spirit of blindness in chapter 29.

The effect of this unbelief is manifested in chapter 30. The people put their trust in man, according to the wisdom of man. They look to Egypt for help, but in vain. This contempt of Jehovah, accompanied by an absolute refusal to hearken to His word, which called on the people to trust quietly in Him, added yet more to their iniquity. God allows the evil, therefore, to go on to the full; but it is in order to give then free course to His grace. Verse 18 is a marvelous testimony to the ways of Jehovah. He allowed the chastisement to be fully accomplished, that nothing might be left for Him but perfect grace. Grace and glory will abound, when Jehovah shall bind up the breach of His people and heal their wound. At the end of the chapter we have the intervention of Jehovah against this last instrument of His chastisementsthe rod of chapter 10. The Assyrian is destroyed, and in the place where the rod should fall on him, there shall be only songs of triumph. But Tophet, the fire of Jehovah, was prepared for another also"for the king." He who shall have assumed that title in Israel shall be consumed also by the indignation of Jehovah.

**CHAPTER** 31. The folly of trusting in an arm of flesh is again pointed out, but only while dwelling on the true means of deliverance. Jehovah at

Jerusalem would be in the midst of the nations as a lion among the shepherds, and would defend Jerusalem as birds hovering over it. His presence should overthrow the Assyrian, and cause him to flee; for the fire of Jehovah shall be in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem.

Then, in chapter 32, the Messiah should reign in righteousness and set everything morally in order. Zion would in fact be a wilderness until the Spirit was poured out from on high, and then it should become a Carmel; and that which before had passed for a Carmel should be counted comparatively but a wilderness. Righteousness should be established everywhere, and peace, the fruit of righteousness, when the hail should come down upon the lofty ones who bear no fruit; and the city, the organisation of human pride, should be utterly abased. The last verse appears to me to speak of the blessedness of full earthly peace.

**CHAPTERS** 33, 34 announce the last two great acts of judgment. At the moment when God establishes Himself in Zion, and fills it with righteousness, a final and powerful enemy (whom I believe to be the same as the Gog of Ezekiel), who had come up to spoil the land, appears on the scene. But there are those who wait upon Jehovah, and He arises, and the enemy is put to flight. They gather the spoil of those who thought to despoil Israel. In verses 14, 15, the faithful remnant are distinguished. The Messiah appears in His beauty; and, all being at peace after the destruction of this enemy, the most distant parts of the land are open to the inhabitants of Zion, which is established in safety for ever.

**CHAPTER** 34 reveals the terrible judgments which will fall upon the other nations in Edom (compare chap. 63). * Here it is those who have oppressed Zion, and the vengeance that God takes on oppressors. Idumea is itself the particular object of this; but all the enemies of Israel, who were associated with Edom, the armies of the nations assembled against Jerusalem, will perish by the judgment of Jehovah in the land of Edom.

[* Compare also Psalm 83 and Obadiah.]

**CHAPTER** 35 gives a picture of the blessing that succeeds the judgment, the blessing even of the wilderness, which depends on that of Israel. The redeemed of Jehovah shall go up with joy in full security to Zion, and all mourning shall pass away for ever.

**CHAPTERS** 36-39 relate the history of the invasion of Sennacherib, its result, and the sickness unto death of Hezekiah, which preceded it: an instruction for the remnant as to the manner in which the Lord should be waited on (this deliverance being, as to the substance of it, a figure of that which will take place with respect to the Assyrian in the last days). The sickness of

Hezekiah furnishes us with a type of the Son of David as raised from the deadthe power of Christ, which shall be perfected in a nation raised alsomorallyfrom the dead, all their sins being pardoned. It is the outward and inward deliverance of Israel: resurrection (as to its practical power); and deliverance from the Assyrian. Meanwhile, as a present thing, the captivity in Babylon is announced.

Previously to this, we have rather had the outward history of Israel; but now we have their moral or inward history, in their place of testimony against idolatry, and in their relationship with Christ, and the separation of a remnant. *

[* See the next note further on.]

**CHAPTER** 40. The first part of that which might be called the second book of Isaiah extends from chapter 40 to the end of chapter 48. The Messiah is, comparatively speaking, but little introduced here. It is rather the great question between Jehovah and idols, answered first by the success of Cyrus and the capture of Babylon. For, though their glory cannot be separated, there is Jehovah and His anointed. This is evidently connected in grace with the deliverance of Israel, God's witness on the earth, unworthy, as the nation was, to be so. At the same time these ways of God showed that there was no peace at all for the wicked in Israel. This great truth is repeated twice over, being applied to the two great controversies which God had with Israel. We will point out some details to make all this evident. The first eight verses of chapter 40 express in a very remarkable manner the principles on which God acts: the grace flowing from His own heart, when His chastisements had been fully inflicted. God would comfort His people; and He speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, by telling her that her warfare is accomplished. The herald proclaims the coming of Jehovah. And here it is the fact, as deliverance: His rejection is not mentioned. It is spoken of later in chapters 51, 53. But with respect to the people, what must the prophet say? "All flesh is grass." If all flesh is to see the glory of Jehovah, if He pleads in vengeance with all flesh, this is where the testimony must begin. All flesh is grass: Jehovah bloweth upon it. Is it thus with the Gentiles only? No; "the people is grass." Comfort must begin with this. The grass withereth; who, then, can be trusted in? God has spoken. "The word of our God" (says the faith of the remnantsays the Spirit of prophecy) "shall stand for ever." Then comes the prophetic testimony to the blessedness of ransomed Zion, who proclaims to the cities of Judah the presence of Jehovahthe Savior, whose tender care is then described in a touching manner. The glory of His divine Majesty is contrasted with idols to verse 26. He then challenges Israel for their unbelief. He who is Jehovah fainteth

not, neither is weary. The depths of His wisdom are unsearchable; but they that wait on Him renew their strength, and shall not grow weary.

**CHAPTER** 41 begins the historical details which prove this. Who raised up Cyrus to overthrow idolatry? But in the midst of the havoc he made of it, Israel is the elect servant of God, the seed of Abraham * (this title of "servant" is a key to the rest of the book). He is not to fear: God will uphold him; and they that strive with him shall perish. God will hearken to His poor, and minister to their need. The besotted idolaters of the nations know nothing of what God is about to do in judgment and for the deliverance of His people.

[* It will be remarked that, though there is the fullest discovery of Israel's sin, yet these chapters are the expression of grace and sovereign goodness, and a remnant preserved; not the responsibility of the nation and judgment.]

But although Cyrus is Jehovah's instrument for inflicting judgment and for delivering His people, this is but a passing and partial thing. Above all this there is a servant of God, His elect, who will appear in humility and without pretension, but who shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles of the Gentiles shall receive His law (chap. 42). This testimony was needful, and secures the blessing of Israel by the unfailing purpose and grace of God; but nothing more is said of the Messiah in this part of the prophecy. The result of bringing in the work of the Messiah is the glory of Jehovah, who alone in fact shall be glorified, and that unto the ends of the earth. In the manifestation of this glory He who had for a long time held His peace, will deliver His blind and deaf people Israel, who had not understood His ways. He will magnify His law. But why then are the people robbed and spoiled? Jehovah had given them up because of their disobedience.

But now He delivers and saves them (chap. 43). He created them for His glory. The blind have eyes; the deaf, ears; they are witnesses that Jehovah alone is God. The judgments on Babylonthe commencement and the figure of the final judgments * prove this. Jehovah had formed this people for Himself, and the people had grown weary of their God; and, as it were, had made Him to serve with their sins. But now He pardons it all for His own glory. Glorious and striking testimony of Him who, in grace to the sinner when the sin becomes unbearable, puts away the sin instead of the sinner! This is what God has done through Christ.

[* That is, earthly judgments.]

**CHAPTER** 44. Jehovah now reasons with His people whom He had formed from the womb, encourages them, promises them His Spirit. Their children shall spring up as willows by the water-courses. They shall be witnesses for

Him, Jehovah, the King of Israel, and their Redeemer. He shows Israel the folly of idolatry, reminds him that he is Jehovah's servant, and that He will not forget them, and assures them of the entire pardon of all their sins: even Jehovah, who is the disposer of all things, and who calls Cyrus by name to rebuild Jerusalem.

**CHAPTER** 45 enlarges upon the same subjects, dwelling on the deliverance of Israel as an everlasting deliverance, the result of which shall never be overthrown.

In chapters 46, 47, the application is made to Babylon and to her idols, but still as pleading for Israel as beloved of God; for governmental judgment is always the deliverance of the beloved righteous. Babylon with all her pride and all her idols must come down and sit in the dust. In chapter 48 Jehovah at length pleads with Israel. He specifies Israel, the name of relationship with Himself, Jehovah, which those He is pleading with bear and claim, while noting that they were descended from Judahin a word, the Jews, who had the place of Israel and called upon the name of the God of Israel; but He declares their wickedness and obstinacy. He had told them many things long before, and had made new revelations to them, that they might know that Jehovah is God. But they hearkened not; they did not understand. Nevertheless for the glory of His name Jehovah would not cut them off; but would refine them as silver. He reminds them in an affecting manner of the blessing they would have enjoyed had they kept His commandments. Nevertheless it is even now declared unto them that Jehovah has redeemed His people. But as for the wicked, there is no peace unto them. This continual pleading against idolatry, whilst giving instruction for that day, seems to prove that, up to the end, the question of Israel's either testifying against idolatry or being defiled with it themselves will have a principal place. For the government of the world it is a primary question. The God of this world governs by means of idols; Jehovah, by His own name. Israel ought to have been the witness of this. They will be unfaithful to it in the last days. This is the reason why there is so much testimony here on the subject.

The Messiah is brought in, for it is He who delivers. But it is a question apart, so to say. The subject of Christ, and of the people's guilt with respect to Him, begins with chapter 49, which, with the following to the end of chapter 57, forms a whole; and, if one may venture to say so, Christ takes the place of Israel as the true servant of God. As He declared. "I am the true vine." * This makes an apparent difficulty, but gives the true sense of chapter 49. Israel is the vessel of the glory of God on the earth, and the Spirit of prophecy in Israel calls on the isles of the Gentiles to hearken, as being thus chosen of Jehovah. "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I

will be glorified" (v. 3). Then Christ, by this same prophetic Spirit, says, "then have I labored in vain." For we know that Israel rejected Him. Verse 5 is the answer. He shall be glorious. It would be a light thing to restore the remnant of Israel. He shall be the salvation of Jehovah unto the ends of the earth. Here we find a principle that is applicable to the work of Christ, even in the days of the gospel. But for the fulfilment of the counsels of God the succeeding verses carry us on to the millennium. Verse 7, Christ is exalted. Verse 8, He is given for a covenant of the people (Israel) to secure the blessing of the land of Canaan, and the long desolate inheritance, and then the deliverance of the captives. At length God has comforted His people. Zion, apparently forsaken, must confess that Jehovah's faithfulness is greater than of a mother to her sucking child. Her destroyers are gone, her children flock in crowds to her and replenish her waste places, which regorge with an unlooked-for multitude before the eyes of the astonished mother, long time desolate. Kings shall be her nursing fathers, and shall bow down to her. And although she has been the captive of the mighty, she shall be delivered, and her oppressors trodden under foot. And all flesh shall know that Jehovah is her Savior. This is the result in grace of the introduction of the true Servant.

> [* So, I doubt not, in Matthew, "I have called my Son out of Egypt." Christ replaces the first Adam before God, though blessing in that new position many of his children. He takes the place of Israel also, though blessing the remnant and making it the nation.]

**CHAPTER** 50 enters into the detail of the judgment which God brings upon Israel, and the true cause of their rejection. * Nothing can be more touching, more wonderful, than the manner in which the Person and the first coming of the Lord are presented in this remarkable chapter, which requires not interpretation but devout study. Jehovah, who disposes of the heavens and the earth at His pleasure, has learnt how to speak a word in season to the weary and heavy-laden, taking the place Himself of lowliness and humiliation. Mensad and dreadful truth!seized the opportunity to insult and put Him to shame. They would none of Him. The heart pauses before such a truth, and judges itself. But soon also, thank God, it melts before that love which took occasion to introduce man into God's own perfection (and that of man in the divine counsels) and to adapt itself, at the same time, to all his needto make him feel that it had experienced all his misery. But, whatever the sorrows and trials attendant on such a service the Man, Christ, trusted in God throughout, and turned not away back.

> [* It is affecting to remark how in both pleadings, as to idolatry, and as to the rejection of Christ, the love and faithfulness of Jehovah and its consequences are introduced before the pleadings of the Spirit of God with the people for their failure in these very points; the resulting blessing before

the human evil, God before man. It was so in the counsels of God before the world: the full declaration of the blessing comes afterwards.]

Here then is prophetically the cause of Israel's, or more specifically Judah's rejection;when Jehovah came, there was no man. But, at the same time, with the help of the New Testament, we find the Christian's place in the most clear and striking manner. It is the place of Christ Himself. That which Christ says here the apostle adopts, and puts it into the mouth of the believer * (Romans 8:33, 34). He is identified with Jesus in His position before God. God (thus judges faith) acknowledges Him whom the people have rejected and by so doing have, as it were, forced God to give them a bill of divorcement. Next, this is what distinguishes the remnanta new and important principlethey hearken to the voice of the servant, the Messiah, to the prophetic word. We have seen the church hidden in the Person of Christ Himself; here it is the faithful remnant of Israel in the latter day that are specified (v. 10). The rest who seek resources in themselves, in man and in flesh, shall lie down in sorrow.

[* These verses in Romans 8 should be divided thus. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, etc.; who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" In His love He has gone through everything that could make us imagine it possible. They have become the proofs of His love. Moreover it is the love of God: creation cannot separate us from His.I add a brief synoptical view of all these chapters, to aid in seizing them as a whole. Chapters 40-48 treat the question of idolatry between God and Israel; 49-57 that of Christ. Chapter 49 gives an orderly view of the purposes and ways of God as to Israel and the Messiah. God will be glorified in Israel (v. 1-3). Then Christ has labored in vain; yet His work is with God. 1st, He will be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah. 2ndly, It is a light thing, the restoration of the preserved of Israel. He is salvation to the ends of the earth. 3rdly, Heard in an acceptable time, He is set as a covenant of the people. Zion is restored. In chapter 50 Israel is divorced, because when Jehovah came, there was no man. He had come as man in humiliation in order to perfect sympathy with man in sorrow. Given up to shame, God justifies Him (v. 5-9). This, that is, Christ's justification, is the church's, as we have seen; in verses 10, 11 we have the Jewish remnant of the church. Chapter 50 gives us Christ's sufferings from man; in 53 it is atonement. Chapter 49 gives the glory resulting from Christ's taking the place of Israel, the fruit of His labor; chapter 50 the consequence of His rejection by Israel, yet in grace as to the yet unrevealed church and the remnant which is positively spoken of; chapter 49 has more to do with the government of God.]

The application is found in chapters 51 and 52 to the end of verse 12, and that to the remnant of Israel. In verse 13 a fresh division of the prophecy begins. The remnant in the last days are exhorted to have confidence. Those who follow after righteousness are a little flock; but God had called Abraham alone, and had blessed and increased him; He can do the same for

the remnant. Compare <26>Ezekiel 33:24, where we see in what manner carnal confidence, walking in unrighteousness, can imitate, to its own ruin, divine faith. Jehovah will comfort Zion. Verse 4 is the second exhortation. The remnant are acknowledged as Jehovah's nation. His righteousness was near; salvation and deliverance were already gone forth from Him, and should be for ever. In verse 7 there is a further step. They are a people who know righteousness, who have the law in their heart; they are not to fear men who should be devoured by the judgments of God. But His righteousness and His salvation should be everlasting. The remnant, thus set in their place, are revealed by the Spirit of prophecy as owned of Jehovah. The same Spirit speaks by the mouth of the remnant (v. 9), to implore His intervention in power, and to claim the perfect lovingkindness of Jehovah, and the assured salvation of His redeemed ones, as well as the re-establishment of Zion in everlasting joy. The remnant thus encouraged, the Spirit turns to Zion, and even as "Awake! awake!" had been addressed to the arm of Jehovah, so is it now to Zion herself, oppressed and trodden under foot of strangers. As if to say it was Zion that had need to awake, not the Lord, for the salvation was there. The cup shall now be given to those that afflicted her again. "Awake! awake!" is once more addressed to her, that she may stand up and clothe herself in strength and glory. For Jehovah has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of Israel's God. This threefold repetition of "hearken" (v. 1, 4 and 7), followed by the threefold repetition, "Awake! awake!" is extremely beautiful. The verses 11, 12 of chapter 52 show that in those days Israel will be captive among apostate Gentiles, as in the days of Babylon. Verse 13 is closely connected with that which precedes. It is Christ's position in those times of glory and of deliverance wrought by Jehovah. Nevertheless it may be considered separately, and as beginning a new subject, because it forms a whole with respect to the Lord Jesus Himself. Christ shall be very highly exalted in those days. But what had His position been? On this subject the Spirit of prophecy enlarges. The kings shall be astonished at His gloryHis whose visage had been so marred, more than any man.

**CHAPTER** 53. Israel's unbelief is declared. The structure of this most interesting chapter is as follows. As we have seen, in the Psalms and elsewhere, the full repentance of Israel comes after their deliverance. That is, when (as judged of Jehovah) their chastening is over, the glorious manifestation of Christ as their deliverer produces the deep sense of their sin in having rejected Him. This is <29>Psalm 130. It is the affliction of the day of atonement. This chapter (53) expresses it. After verse 1 the Spirit speaks by the mouth of the escaped remnant of Israel. They confess their sin in having despised Him. Nevertheless there is faith now in the efficacy

of His work (v. 5). Verse I shows that the testimony of Christ, addressed to faith, had been rejected. They believe when they see Him. I need not comment on this chapter, which is engraved on every true Christian's heart. We, by the work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, have anticipated, and more than anticipated, their faith in the value of that work which is here spoken of; and their sin, which, as far as the nation was concerned in it, they here acknowledge. They had esteemed Him smitten, rejected of God, but the meaning of this is now seen. In verse 11, it is my belief that the two parts of Christ's work are distinguished. By His knowledge He shall bring many to righteousness, or instruct many in righteousness, and He shall bear their iniquities.

**CHAPTER** 54 gives the result of these events to Jerusalem in those days. Jerusalem is looked at as barren and desolate, after having rejected Him who came to be her husband; but now, through that grace which has made Jehovah to be her righteousness, she is called to enlarge the place of her tent, and spread forth the curtains of her habitation. That grace indeed reckons all gathered during her desolation as her children. Christ being owned as the son born to her, all came in under Him (see Psalm 87:5, 6). For a little while God has treated her as a rejected wife, but has now comforted her with everlasting mercies.

**CHAPTERS** 55, 56, 57 are exhortations given in view of these things. Chapter 55 is full free grace, which consequently embraces the Gentiles. For this reason it can be applied as a principle to the gospel. Its accomplishment will be in the time of blessings to the earth through the Lord's presence. Chapter 56 gives the moral character that is necessary to enjoy the blessing, which is no longer according to the narrow legal principles of former days. His house shall in fact be a house of prayer for all those whose hearts are truly turned unto the God of Israel; and they shall be joyful in it. Chapter 57 denounces (we may say, on the same principle) those even in Israel who morally walk contrary to the will of God. The righteous might perish. But it would only be taking them from the evil to come. But whether it were Israel or not, there would be no peace for the wicked. These three chapters then give the moral instruction that belongs to those days. The faithful shall be blessed, and the meek, be they who they may; the wicked shall be judged, whether of Israel or not. Thus closes, as I have said, with chapter 57 the second subdivision of this part of the prophecy.

But these moral considerations rouse the indignation of the Spirit at the condition of Israel in the days of the prophecytheir sin and their hypocrisy in pretending to serve Jehovah; and in chapters 58, 59 He denounces their trust in outward forms, and places blessing on condition of obedience. It

was not that the arm of Jehovah was shortened, or His ear grown heavy; but the iniquity of the people hindered blessing and would bring judgment upon them. Yet, when all had failed and there was no one to maintain righteousness, Jehovah Himself would intervene in His sovereignty and might. He would crush His enemies and judge the isles; so that His name should be feared throughout the whole earth. The Redeemer should come to Zion and to those that turn from transgression in Jacob. Blessing should then be permanent, and the presence of the Holy Spirit abide with the seed of Jacob for ever.

**Chapter** 60 gives us the condition and the glory of Jerusalem in that time of blessing: all of the people thus spared would be righteous.

**Chapter** 61. As chapters 50-53 presented Christ in His sufferings, chapter 61 exhibits Him in the full grace of His Person concerned in the blessing of Israel. The three preceding chapters had revealed the judgment and the intervention of Jehovah, at the same time pointing out the Redeemer. We have seen the same principle in the structure of the prophecy from chapter 40 to the end of chapter 48, as in the last series. Then in chapter 49 the Messiah is specially introduced. So He is here from the beginning of chapter 61 to verse 6 of chapter 63. But there is a progress necessarily accompanying the introduction, in the last series of chapters, of the Person of Christ as the principal subject of Jehovah's pleadings. We see that it is Jehovah Himself who is Christ, and Christ who is Jehovah. "Wherefore, when I came," is the inquiry, "was there no man?" Hence also there is the difference between the moral sins of Israel against Jehovah, and the rejection of Himself in the Person of the Messiah, which we have seen so clearly pointed out in chapter 50. So also with respect to the repentance of the Jews. In the former chapters the law is written in their hearts; they turn away from iniquity, they trust in Jehovah; they hearken to the Spirit of prophecy, to the servant of Jehovah; they are delivered. But when they shall see their Redeemer in glory, then it is that the true repentance, the deep affliction, shall take place at the sight of Him whom they have despised and rejected, and who in His grace has born their iniquities.

**Chapters** 61, 62 appear to me too plain to need much remark. The manner in which the Lord stopped in the middle of verse 2 (chap. 61) Will be observed, the time for the fulfilment of the last part of the verse not being yet come. But He could set before them that which applied to His own Person in grace.

**Chapter** 63:1-6. We find again here the terrible judgment of chapter 34 executed by Jehovah (or rather having been already executed, for He returns

from it). The result is the peace and blessing which we have just seen described in chapter 62.

From <2630>verse 7 of chapter 63 we have the reasoning of the Spirit of prophecy in the mouth of the remnant, or perhaps that of the prophet, putting himself in that position. And in chapters 65, 66 we find Jehovah's answer. Nothing can be more affecting than the way in which the Spirit lends Himself to the expression of all the feelings of a faithful Israelite's heart; or rather in which He gives a form to the sentiments of an afflicted but trusting heart, recalling past kindnesses, overwhelmed by the present distress, acknowledging the hardheartedness and rebellion of which they had been guilty, but appealing to the unchangeable faithfulness of God's love against the judicial blinding and hardening which the people are under. If Abraham acknowledged them not, God was their Father. Where was His strength, His tenderness. His mercies? Were they restrained? Faith recognises through all things the link between the people and God; it acknowledges that God prepares for those that wait on Him things beyond man's conception * that He meets those who walk uprightly; and it confesses that the state of Israel is quite differentthat they are sinners, not even seeking His face. But the affliction of His people, the disastrous condition into which sin had brought them, is to faith a plea with God. Whatever had happened, the people were to faith as the clay, and Jehovah the potter. They were His people; their cities, the cities of Jehovah. The house in which their fathers had worshipped was burnt up, and all was laid waste.

[* The difference between this and gospel knowledge as made by Paul (<4600>1 Corinthians 2) is striking, often quoted for just the contrary. These things, he says, have not entered into man's heart, but God has revealed them unto us (Christians) by His Spirit; so at the end of the chapter, "but we have the mind of Christ.]

The next two chapters give us a full revelation of the dealings of God in answer to this appeal. First of all, God, through His grace, had been sought after by others. He had made Himself known to those who were not called by His name. The infinite and sovereign grace of God had sought out the poor Gentiles. At the same time, with infinite patience, He had stretched forth His hands to a people who would not have Him to a people who provoked Him continually in the grossest manner. And now He declares His mind. The people that forsook Him shall be judged; He will number them with the sword; they shall bow down to the slaughter. But there shall be an elect remnant in gracethe servants of Jehovah, who shall be spared and blessed (v. 11, 12, 8, 9, 13, 15). Jehovah would then introduce an entirely new order of things, in which the truth of His promises should be acknowledged, and the former things should be quite forgottennew heavens

and a new earth, not as yet with respect to the physical change, but the moral order of which should be entirely new. It should not be only a new order of things on the earth, which the power of evil in the heavens might spoil, as in former days; the state of the heavens themselves should be new. We learn elsewhere that Satan will have been cast out, and his power there gone for ever. * Indeed, this would have been the occasion of the last terrible trials in Jerusalem. But now Jerusalem should be blessed in the earth, and her people should enjoy the gifts of Jehovah in as long a life as that of men before the flood. A man of a hundred years old should be a child; and if any one should die at that age, he must be looked upon as cut off by the curse of God. God would always grant the prayers of His people. Peace should be established, and there should be no evil in all His holy mountain. This is the millennial state of the Jews.

[* Hence, when the Lord enters into Jerusalem as Jehovah Messiah, it is said (Luke 19:38) "peace in heaven."]

**CHAPTER** 66 speaks of the judgment that introduces it, and consequently gives us more historical details. The temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem (v. 6), but Jehovah does not own it, man alone being concerned in its building; neither does He acknowledge the sacrifices offered in it. He looks to the meek and contrite spirit. There were some who mocked at the hopes of these, and said mockingly, "Let Jehovah display his glory"; but He will appear to their confusion, and for the blessing of those who waited for Him. Zion shall suddenly be as the mother of a people, blessed in Jehovah and comforted. The remnant is thus distinguished in these two chapters in the most explicit manner.

Let us retrace here the use of the word servant. First of all it was Israel; then Christ Himself, the only true Servant amidst this people; afterwards the remnant who hearkened to His words as the Servant, or Spirit of prophecy. For the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. The latter are called servants here: they shall be comforted in Jerusalem, as one whom his mother comforteth; and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward His servants, and His indignation toward His enemies. For He shall come and execute judgment against all flesh. Salvation has been made known to all flesh. And now Jehovah shall plead in judgment with all flesh. The unbelieving and idolatrous Israelites shall be there, confounded with the nations, all of whom God will assemble, who shall come and see His glory. He will execute judgment on the multitude by fire and by His sword. But there shall be some who through grace will escape. God will send these to the distant nations who have never seen His glory nor heard His fame. There is no question here of the election by grace for heaven. They will declare (not that grace, but) the glory which they have seen; and the nations

will bring back the dispersed of Israel, as an offering to Jehovah in His holy mountain. And the seed of Jacob, and the priests whom Jehovah shall choose, shall be as the new heavens and the new earth before Jehovah, and all flesh shall come to worship before Him. Those who have been the objects of Jehovah's judgments, who have transgressed against Him, especially it seems to me the apostate Jews, shall be an abiding testimony of Jehovah's terrible judgment. For if the full blessing of His presence shall shine upon His people, it is the principle of judgment that brought it in and that maintains it.

There remains a general remark to be made here. The sinful condition thus judged existed in the days of the prophet. The patience of God bore with it, but the principle that brought in judgment was there (witness chap. 6). Until the rejection of Christ, and in a certain sense until the reception of Antichrist coming in his own name, the evil is not fully consummated, nor the final judgment executed. But already in Ahaz the occasion had been given for pronouncing it. Thus, the occasion being in this manner given, the whole condition of Israel, the grace that received the Gentiles, the nothingness of forms and ceremoniesin a word, all the great moral principles of truth are laid down in this part of the prophecy; and we see Stephen, Paul, the Lord Himself, making use of passages that speak of these principles, applying them to the times in which they lived: the Lord, to the hardened state of the people; Stephen, to the unprofitableness of an already judged system; Paul, to the Jews' state of condemnation, and to the manifestation of grace to the Gentiles. What remains is the accomplishment of the great result, in which these things shall be demonstrated to the world by the judgment and the sovereign blessing of God.

As to the coming of Jesus in humiliation, we have seen it as clearly revealed as His coming in glory. In short, all the ways of God in the government of His people, with respect to their conduct under the law, to the promises made to the house of David, and at last to their treatment of ChristJehovah in humiliation amongst His peoplethe government, I repeat, and the ways of God towards Israel in all these respects, are developed in the clearest and most wonderful manner in the course of this prophecy.

But the judgment pronounced now by the prophet the patience of God suspended nearly 800 years. It was only accomplished when they rejected Christ.

# JEREMIAH

The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah has a different character from that of Isaiah. It does not contain the same development of the counsels of God respecting this earth that Isaiah does. It is we, that we are told many things in it concerning the nations; but it is principally composed of testimony addressed immediately to the conscience of the people, on the subject of their moral condition at the time the prophet speaks, and with an eye to the judgment with which they were threatened. Judah had forsaken Jehovah; for their repentance under Josiah was but a fair appearance, and under the kings that succeeded him their degradation was complete. The prophet's heart was overwhelmed with grief, because of his love for the people; at the same time that he was filled with a deep sense of their relationship with the Lord. The sense of this produced a continual conflict in his soul between the thought of the value of the people as the people of God, and a holy jealousy for the glory of God and His rights over His peoplerights which they were trampling under foot. This was an incurable wound to his heart. He had pleaded for the people, he had stood in the breach for them before Jehovah; but he saw that it was all in vain: the people rejected God and the testimony that He sent them. God Himself would no longer hearken to prayer made for Israel. Jeremiah prophesies under this impression: a sorrowful task, indeed, and one which made the prophet truly a man of sorrow. And although he could always say that, if the people repented, they would be received in grace, he well knew that the people had even no thought of repenting. Two things sustained him in this painful service: (for what could be more painful than to announce judgment for their iniquities, to a people beloved of God?) first of all, the energy of the Spirit of God, which filled his heart and compelled him to announce the judgment of God, in spite of contradiction and persecution; and then the revelation of the people's final blessing according to the unchangeable counsels of God. After this brief notice of the spirit of the Book of Jeremiah, the proofs and details of which we shall find in going through his prophecies, let us now examine these in succession.

It is well known that the order of the prophecies in the Septuagint is different from that in the Hebrew Bible. But I see no reason for not receiving the latter. There is no doubt that it does not preserve the chronological order. The names of the kings * in the successive chapters clearly prove this. But it appears to me that, where there is chronological confusion, the subjects are classed, and that according to the mind of the Spirit.

[* In chapter 27 “Jehoiakim” should be “Zedekiah” (see verse 12 and chapter 28:1).]

The first twenty-four chapters have rather a different character from those that follow. To the end of chapter 24 it is a reasoning, a moral pleading with the people. In chapter 25 there is a formal prophecy of judgment on divers nations by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. And afterwards we find prophecies much more distinct from each other, and connected with historical details.

**CHAPTERS** 30-33 contain promises of assured blessing for the last days. From chapter 39 it is the history of that which followed the taking of Jerusalem, and the judgment of Egypt and Babylon.

We will now state the different distinct prophecies; chapter 1, chapters 2-6, chapters 7-10, chapters 11-13, chapters 14, 15, chapters 16, 17, chapters 18-20, chapters 21-24, chapter 25, chapter 26, chapter 27 (v. 1, read Zedekiah instead of “Jehoiakim”), chapter 28, chapter 29, chapters 30, 31, chapter 32, chapter 33 (this last, however, is connected with the preceding one), chapter 34, chapter 35, chapter 36, chapters 37, 38, chapter 39, chapters 40-44, chapter 45, chapter 46, chapter 47, chapter 48, chapter 49, verses 1-6, 7-22, 23-27, 28, 29, 30-33, 34-39; chapters 50,51. Chapter 52 was not written by Jeremiah.

There can be nothing more striking in the way of deep affliction than that of the prophet. He is distressed; his heart is broken. One sees too that God has made choice of a naturally feeble heart, easily cast down and discouraged (even while filling it with His own strength), in order that the anguish, the complaints, the distress of soul, the indignation of a weak heart that resents oppression while unable to throw it off or overcome it, being all poured out before Him, should bear testimony against the people whose inveterate wickedness called for His vengeance. The affliction of Christ, whose Spirit wrought that of Jeremiah, was infinitely deeper; but His perfect communion with His Father caused all the anguish, that in Jeremiah’s case broke out into complaints, to be in secret between Jesus and His Father. It is very rarely expressed in the Gospels. He is entirely for others in grace. * In the Psalms we see more of His feelings. In Jeremiah’s case, it was proper that the anguish of the faithful remnant should be expressed before God. The absolute perfection of the Lord Jesus, and the calmness which, through the presence of God, accompanies His perfection in all His ways, allowed of no complaint, whatever might be the inward anguish of His heart. He thanks in the same hour that He can justly upbraid. Sympathy for others became the position of Jesus. We see that our precious Lord never failed in this.

[* Compare Matthew 26 where this is brought out in the most striking way. It is very precious to see both this perfect result in Christ and at the

same time all that He felt in His heart as man, both as sensible to circumstances without and so deeply exercised within. Perfect exercises within produce perfect quietness in walk without, for in both God is fully brought in. If we avoid the full dealing with the matter with God, the heart cannot act for Him as if all were disposed of: and that is peace in action. Yet how precious to see the reality of Christ's human nature in all the intimate exercises of His spirit.]

But it was equally becoming that the outpouring of heart of the faithful, who needed this sympathy, should be expressed by the Holy Ghost. It is not that there was no weakness in the heart that poured itself out; but if the Spirit lays it open, it is evident that He must express it as it is; otherwise it were useless and false. Consequently Jeremiah enters much more personally into his prophecies than any other prophet. * He represents the people in their true position before Godsuch as God could recognise, as being before Him in this characterin order to see whether, receiving from God that which applied to this position, and expressing the sentiments inspired by such a position, it was possible to reach the conscience and win the heart of the people; always remembering that these sentiments were expressed according to the Spirit, and accompanied by the most direct and positive prophecies of that which God would bring upon the people. It is to be observed also, that a great part of that which was written was not addressed in the first instance to the people, but to God. This position of Jeremiah's, as the representative before God of the true interests of the people, or of the remnant, causes him to be looked at sometimes as though he were Jerusalem itself, and, at other times, as a remnant separated from it and set apart for God.

[* There is something analogous in Jonah. But there the circumstances of the prophet are an episode, and are not connected with the testimony he bore, unless by the single principle of grace.]

But these points will be better understood by examining the passages which bring them into notice. The period during which Jeremiah prophesied was of considerable length, and embraced the whole time of Israel's decline, from the year after that in which Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem and all the land, until the final destruction of Jerusalem by the army of the Chaldeans; and even a little while after in Egypt, a period of more than forty yearsa period throughout of distress and anguish. For although Josiah was a godly king, the reformation of the people was only an outward one, as we shall see. So that the anguish of one who saw with God was so much the greater on account of this appearance of piety. "And Jehovah was not turned away from his fierce anger, because of the sins of Manasseh." Nevertheless the prophet distinguishes between the two periods, that is, the reign of Josiah, and that of his successors.

Excepting in chapters 21-24 there are no dates for the first twenty-four chapters. It is probable that they were mostly given under Josiah's reign. They contain moral arguments, the expression of the prophet's sorrow of heart, and solemn warnings of the coming invasion from the north. The four chapters I have specified have no chronological order, and are probably composed of prophecies given at different periods. They contain the judgment of the different branches of the house of David successively, as well as that of the false prophets who deceived the people. They end by declaring the fate of the captives in Babylon, and of those that remained with Zedekiah in Jerusalemthe two very different from each other.

In **CHAPTER** 1 the prophet is established in his office, to which he had been appointed by Jehovah, even before his birth, that he should carry His word unto the nations. But Jeremiah's fears are immediately manifested. The Lord encourages him by the assurance of His presence. He puts His words into his mouth, and appoints him as prophet over the nations to root out and to plant. Two visions are shown him, which contain the summary of the prophetic charge communicated to him, and announce that Jerusalem shall soon be stricken by the kingdoms of the north. Under these circumstances Jeremiah is set before a rebellious people, who will strive against him. Nevertheless he must declare everything; and as the Lord had before encouraged the prophet, He now adds to the encouragement, in order to enforce it, a threat in case of disobedience; namely, that, if through fear he drew back from his commission, the Lord would become a greater cause of fear, and would break him to pieces before those of whom he was afraid. But if he fulfilled his appointed task, Jehovah would be with him. Verses 6-8, 17, 18, show the great fearfulness of the prophet's spirit, which needed to be thus strengthened by Jehovah.

**CHAPTER** 2 contains a most touching appeal to the people at Jerusalem. It requires no explanation, but deserves the heart's serious attention. It testifies in the most striking manner to the kindness and tender love of the Lord. Only that we have here only the comparison of what they had originally been as planted by the Lord, and His ways of love, not any reference to the coming of the Lord. Christ is not in view nor the counsels of God as in Isaiah, though we shall find it further on; but their responsibility under God's touching ways of grace with them is much more fully brought out, and final blessing is spoken of in the following chapter.

**CHAPTER** 3 has the same character; indeed it is the continuation of the same address; but it contains details of Israel's and Judah's behavior, and proclaims the restoration of Israel by sovereign goodness, and the blessing of the last days on their return to God. Remark only that, before the pleading with Israel for their folly, what the Lord first notices is that there

was no seeking Himself, no longing after Him: no people nor priests said, "Where is Jehovah?" For judgment being executed on Israel, God can allow His heart to flow out in the testimony of grace. This necessarily gives a place also to Judah, as the two are to be united. The end of the chapter enlarges, in a very affecting manner, on the spirit that grace will produce in Israel when they are brought back, and on the manner in which the Lord will receive them. In verses 23-25 the prophet confesses the people's condition at the time in which he spoke. It is in this chapter that we have the solemn revelation, that as far as the people were concerned, the reformation under Josiah was but hypocrisy. These two chapters form a kind of general introduction, showing the ways and judgment of Israel and Judah, and their restoration by grace. The first chapter had been the appointment of Jeremiah to the prophet's office.

**CHAPTER** 4 resumes the subject of chapters 2, 3, and, applying it at that time to the people, tells them that, if they return, it must be unto the Lord Himselfthat neither forms nor half-measures would be of any use. After verse 4 the prophet announces the certain judgment of God, which should come from the north, and fall upon Jerusalem in destruction.

In **CHAPTER** 5 the sin and iniquity are shown to be universal: rich and poor, all are alike. And "Shall not I visit for these things? saith Jehovah." Nevertheless He will not destroy entirely. The source of evil, or, at least, that which maintains it, is pointed out. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means. Chapter 6 continues the testimony, but gives also the position of Jeremiah in the midst of all this evil. In verses 11-26 the judgment is plainly announced. The conduct of the false prophets is again marked. In both these chapters the coming of Nebuchadnezzar in judgment is evidently declared.

**CHAPTER** 7 begins a new prophecy, contemplating especially the temple, which, instead of being a protection (as the people, without conscience, would have it), was become a further demonstration of their iniquity. They were to remember Shiloh; for the house of God should likewise be overthrown. Judah should be cast off, as Ephraim had been, and God would hear no intercession for His people. He required obedience and not sacrifice, and if the people came into His house while they were practicing idolatry, they did but defile it. But Israel had less understanding than the birds of the heaven, which at least knew their appointed times, while Israel knew not the judgment of Jehovah (chap. 8).

From verse 18 to verse 2 of chapter 9 the prophet lays open the depth of his grief. From verse 3 of chapter 9 he proclaims judgmenta judgment which shall also visit the nations around. And in view of these judgments he

exhorts every man not to glory in man, but in the knowledge of Jehovah (v. 23, 24).

In **CHAPTER** 10 the idols and the vanities of the nations are put in contrast with Jehovah. In verses 19-25 we have the affliction of the prophet, speaking of the desolation of Jerusalem as though he were himself the desolate city, and praying to God that His dealings might be only chastisement, and not excision. The reader will do well to observe that the repetition of God's pleadings with Israel (although these pleadings, while varied in their character, need little remark to make them understood) is the most touching proof of the kindness of God, who multiplies His appeals to a rebellious and perverse people, "rising up early," as He expresses it, to protest unto them.

**CHAPTER** 11 suggests some observations. God addresses Himself again to Israel on the ground of their responsibility, reminding them of the call to obedience, which had been addressed to them ever since their coming out of Egypt. God was about to bring on the people the evil with which He had threatened them. Jeremiah is not to intercede for them. Nevertheless He still calls Israel His "beloved"; but, being corrupted, what had she to do in His house? Whatever she might have been to Him, judgment was coming. At the end of the chapter Jeremiah takes the place of the faithful remnant who have the testimony of God. His position continually reminds us of the Psalms. We see the working of the Spirit of Christ often clearly expressed, but sometimes, it appears to me, in expressions more mingled with Jeremiah's personal position, and thereby less deep and less akin to the sentiments of Christ, although the same in principle with the Psalms. Jeremiah, on account of his faithfulness and his testimony, was exposed to the machinations of the wicked. Jehovah reveals these things to him; and, according to the righteousness which characterises the condition of the remnant, he calls for the vengeance of God. * This will be the means of deliverance for the remnant. He announces the judgment of these wicked men by the word of Jehovah. In <19801>Psalm 83 the same principles will be found, and the same wickedness in God's enemies; only there, these enemies are Gentiles, and the range of thought is wider. Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah are the object of the prayer in that Psalm. Compare also chapter 9 and <19601>Psalm 64. Here there is more intercession on Jeremiah's part; the psalm speaks of judgment. Compare also <19906>Psalm 69:6, 7, and <24155>Jeremiah 15:15. The words of the psalm being from the mouth of Christ Himself, the request is for others and infinitely more touching. This comparison of passages will help in understanding the relationship between the position of Jeremiah and that of the remnant described in the Psalms. We may also compare <19730>Psalm 73 with the

beginning of chapter 12. This last chapter forms a part of the same prophecy as the preceding one. Jeremiah pleads with God on the subject of these judgments, but in a humble and submissive manner, which God accepts by making him feel (a painful necessity) the evil of the people more deeply. At the same time He sustains the prophet's faith by the personal interest He manifests in him. God makes him understand that He has forsaken His inheritance: the state of things was therefore no longer to be wondered at. At the same time He reveals His purposes of blessing to His people, and even to the nations among whom they will be dispersed, ** if these nations would learn the ways of Jehovah.

[* Righteousness characterises the saint as well as love, and has its place where there are adversaries to that love and to the blessing of the loved people. It is the Spirit of prophecy, not the gospel, no doubt because prophecy is connected with the government of God, not with His present dealings in sovereign grace. Hence in the Revelation vengeance is called for by the saints.]

[** We see at the same time the unchangeable love of God for His people, and the bond of His faithfulness which cannot be broken. He calls the nations, that surround the inheritance He had given to His people, His neighbors. We see also the setting aside of all that national system of which He had made Israel the center, and which falls when Israel, the keystone of the arch, is taken away (v. 14). Afterwards, these nations are re-established, as well as Israel, and blessed if they acknowledge the God of Israel. The Lord Christ will re-unite the two thingsthe universal headship of man, and the union of nations round Israel as a centerin His Person. He will be the one Man to whom the whole dominion is given; and Israel, as well as the various nations with their kings, shall be re-established, each in his own land and his own heritage (as before the time of Nebuchadnezzar), with the exception of Edom, Damascus, Hazor, and Babylon herself; that is to say, those nations which occupy Israel's territory, and Babylon which had absorbed and taken the place of all the others, and which must disappear by the judgment of God to give them their place again. (Compare chapter 46 and the following chapters.)]

**CHAPTER** 13, bringing to mind how God had bound Israel to His heart, announces the terrible judgment with which the people shall, as it were, be drunken; and, on the ground of this judgment, calls them to repentance. He relates their hopeless evil, and the unfeigned grief of the prophet at their obstinacy. Compare <42 19 41>Luke 19:41. This zeal for Jehovah's glory against the evil and the people who dishonored Him, and touching affection to them as Jehovah's people, is everywhere a striking mark of the working of the Spirit of Christ. Compare Moses (<02 32 27>Exodus 32:27, 28, 31, and sequel); so Paul (<45 09 01>Romans 9; <52 02 15>1 Thessalonians 2:15, 16): only here, under grace, there is no call for judgment; so even Christ Himself (compare <40 23 38>Matthew 23:31-37).

**CHAPTER** 14 refers to a famine which took place in the land. The desolation of Jerusalem by the sword and by famine is again declared. But observe here the touching intercession of verses 7-9; and again in verses 17-22, the deep affliction of the Spirit of Christ which expresses itself in the prophet's mouth. "For in all their affliction he was afflicted." Observe also another element of their condition, pointed out by the Apostle Peter, and by the Lord Himself, with reference to the last daysnamely, false prophets.

The beginning of chapter 15 is an answer to the close of chapter 14; but the instruction and the principles it contains are very remarkable. Jehovah declares that if Moses and Samuel (whose love for Israel, and faith in intercession for them, were unequalled among all the servants of God who had stood before Him on their behalf)if these two beloved leaders of the people were there, yet God would not accept Israel. Who should have pity on them? Jehovah Himself forsakes them. From verse 20 we find the true position of the remnant in such a case: a most touching instruction for ourselves!

Poor Jeremiah complains of his lot, among a people whose sorrows he bore on his heart, while at the same time enduring their causeless hatred. We see in verses 11-13, that he represents the people before God, but yet that the faithful remnant are separated from the mass of the wicked. From verse is they present themselves in this separated position to God, bearing at the same time all the pain of the nation's wound, even while asking vengeance on the wicked, the adversaries of the truth. In reply, precise directions are given for the walk of one who is faithful in such a position. The word of God, eaten and digested in the heart, is the source of this position (v. 16).

Instead of sharing the spirit of the enemies and the mockers, who rejoiced in the abominable and hypocritical state of those who bore the name of God's people, the effect of the word in the heart was no doubt to separate from this condition of the people, but to isolate the godly one, as though he were himself the object of God's indignation, as being himself the people. The word, which revealed the relationship between God and the people, and showed them their privileges and their duties, caused the faithful to judge the state of the people, and to feel all the consequences of this state as the judgment of Jehovaha judgment so much the more terrible to his heart from his feeling how close a band of affection and blessing from God was the normal condition of the people. "Thou hast filled me with indignation" (v. 17, 18) is the prophet's language.

In verses 19-21 the precise instructions of God with respect to this condition are given. God also addresses Jeremiah as though he were the

people whom he thus represented in spirit before Him, and, at the same time, according to his individual faith. He says, first of all, “If thou return, then I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me.” This open dooropen till man shuts itis always in the ways of God, although He well knows that man will not profit by it.

Is this all that is to be done while it is called today and the door is open, to call on the rebellious people to return? No: there is something else for the faithful to do: and this is the second leading principle: “If thou separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.” In the midst of the ruin caused by the rebellion of God’s people, this is the especial work of one who is faithful, who is imbued with the word. The desire of his soul being the reproduction of this word, and of the affections of God revealed in it, can he reject the people in a mass as wicked? That cannot be. Can he accept them in a condition of rebellion, which is so much the worse because they belong to God? This he cannot do either. He must learn to do that which God doestake account of all that is good, and, if it is too late to preserve everything, never condemn that which is of God. The penetrating eye of God never loses sight of this. The affections of the prophet are fixed upon it also.

But God has His own thoughts, and He acts according to His own will; He lays hold of that which is precious, owns it, and separates it from that which is vile. This is not precisely the judgment of God respecting evil; but when the judgment is imminent on account of the evil, the energy of the Spirit and the power of the word lead us to attach ourselves to the good, to discern it, to separate it from the evil, before the judgment comes. If Satan can, he will mingle them together. Those who know how to separate them shall be as the mouth of God. God will do it in judgment by smiting the evil: in the faithful the Spirit of God does it by separating the precious from the vile.

The third principle is, that, when once separated from the path of the rebellious by this spiritual intelligence, there must not be a moment’s thought of returning to them. “Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.” Finally, in this position, Jehovah will make the faithful like a wall of brass. The rebels, who boast of being called the people of God, fight against His faithful servant, but shall not prevail, because Jehovah is with him. Deliverance is promised to Jeremiah.

All this, while having its immediate application to the prophet, is most valuable instruction for us in the principle which it contains, to direct us in similar times. Patience is required, but the path is clearly marked out. There is always an open door on God’s part; the separation of the precious from the vile makes us like the mouth of God; a positive refusal, when thus

placed, to return to the unfaithful: such are the principles that God has here established. The word received in the heart is their source. At the same time the effect is very far from contempt of the fallen people; on the contrary, the heart of the faithful takes upon itself all the grief of the position in which the people of God, or those who publicly stand as such, are found.

In **CHAPTER** 16 Jehovah teaches Jeremiah to avoid all family relationships with this people, and to cease from all testimonies of interest in what was going on among them. For He Himself had entirely broken off with them, and would cause all His testimonies to cease among them, and would drive them out of the land. But, after all, through the greatness of the evil which He would bring upon them, He would cause their deliverance out of Egypt to be forgotten in their yet greater deliverance from this evil. For at length God will pardon and comfort His people But before this He will recompense their iniquity. Afterwards the Gentiles themselves shall come and acknowledge the true God, the God of Israel.

**CHAPTER** 17. The great thing, amidst all that was going on, was to trust in Jehovah. He who, failing in this, made flesh his arm, should not see when good came. Meantime the fire of God's anger was kindled and should not be quenched. How could a wicked and deceitful heart be trusted? The Lord searches it, to give every one according to his ways. The prophet, in the name of the people, casts himself upon Jehovah; and, on account of the wickedness of the adversaries who mocked at God's testimonies, he appeals to God. He had not desired the woeful day which He announced; neither was it by his own choice that he forsook the peaceful duties he owed the people to follow God in this testimony. He entreats God, whose terrible judgments were to scatter the people, not to be a terror unto him. God was all his hope in the day of evil. What a picture of the condition of the remnant in the last days; and, at all times, of the portion of one who is faithful when the people of God will not hearken to his testimony! Nevertheless, it being still called Today, God in His longsuffering opens the door of repentance to the people and to their king, if they have ears to hear.

In **CHAPTER** 18 this principle is fully demonstrated before the people (v. 1-10). But the people in despair as to God, in the midst of their boldness in evil and in contempt of His marvelous patience, give themselves up to the iniquity by which Satan deprives them of their hope in God. God announces His judgment by the prophet, whose testimony provokes the expression of the confidence felt by a hardened conscience in the certainty and immutability of its privileges, and of the blessings attached to the ordinances with which God had endowed His people, and to which He had outwardly attached these blessings, which maintained their relationship with Him. What a dreadful picture of blindness! Ecclesiastical influence is

always greatest at the moment when the conscience is hardened against the testimony of God; because unbelief, which trembles after all, shelters itself behind the presumed stability of that which God had set up, and makes a wall of its apostate forms against the God whom they hide, attributing to these ordinances the stability of God Himself. Conscience says too much to allow the unbeliever any hope of standing well with God, even when God opens His heart to him. “There is no hope,” he says; “I will continue to do evil; moreover the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise; nor,” he adds (the false prophets having the ear of the people), “the word from the prophet.” The warning which this chapter contains appears to me very solemn. I can scarcely imagine a more terrible picture of the professing people’s condition. The prophet asks for judgment upon them. This is in the spirit of the remnant trodden down by the wickedness of the Lord’s enemies.

**CHAPTERS** 19 and 20 show us the judgment of Jerusalem announced in terms that require little explanation; and we have in chapter 20 a sample of the opposition of the priests, and of Jeremiah’s sufferings. But this does not prevent Jeremiah’s denouncing the priest himself, and repeating that which he had said of Jerusalem. Nevertheless we see the effect of these sufferings on his heart. He was compelled, as it were, by the Lord to bear this testimony. He has not (and it is the same with the remnant) the willing spirit that rejoices in tribulation by the power of the Holy Ghost. He was the subject of constant mockery. They watched for his halting, so that he would gladly have been silent; but the word of Jehovah was like fire in his bones. Alas! we understand all thisthe deep iniquity of the men who are called the people of God; the way in which the feeble heart recoils before this iniquity, that has neither heart nor conscience; and how on these occasions the word is too strong in us to be shut up in our heart. Nevertheless with all this fear he had also the consciousness that Jehovah was with him, and he again asks for vengeance (which, in fact, is deliverance, and the only deliverance of those who have the testimony of Christ in such a position). This deliverance is celebrated in verse 13; but in verses 14-18, we see to what a point personal grief may drive those who are subjected to such a trial as this.

See the same thing in Job — a picture of the same condition, that is to say, of a soul tried by all the malice of Satan, without the full knowledge of grace, in the sense of its own nothingness, and in the forgetfulness of self. This will be precisely the state of the remnant in the last days. Christ is the model of perfection in what answered to these circumstances of trial, the reality of which He thoroughly experienced and felt, when He had yet to undergo for others what laid the foundation of grace for them.

**CHAPTERS** 21-23. On the occasion of Zedekiah's request to Jeremiah to know if the Lord would interfere in favor of the people against Nebuchadnezzar, the Spirit of God has brought the testimonies together that were given with respect to all the members of David's family who presided, so to say, at the ruin of Jerusalem Jehoahaz (chap. 22:10), Jehoiakim (v. 13-19), Jeconiah (v. 20-30). The judgment of Zedekiah had been pronounced (chap. 21); and after having declared, as we have seen, that the door was always open to repentance, and that blessing always attended a godly walk (chap. 21:12; 22:1-5), judgment is again pronounced, and a sentence from God upon the different kings. Finally (chap. 23) the expression of Jehovah's indignation against these evil pastors gives rise to the declaration that He will raise up a Shepherd after His own heart, namely, the true Son of David, the Messiah. The just indignation and the judgment of God are expressed in the strongest terms.

Two things attract our attention in chapter 24. First, submission to the judgment of God when He executes it is the proof of intelligence in His wordof real spirituality. Want of faith leans, not on the stability of the promises, but, under pretext of the promises, on that of the ordinances and of the men who enjoy them. Those who submit to this judgment of God upon the unfaithfulness of man (a judgment which leads to the enjoyment of these promises, and operates to the setting aside of ordinances, the stability of which God had not guaranteed; but in connection with which man would, if faithful, have enjoyed the promises)those, I repeat, who submit to this judgment, shall enjoy the full and entire effect of these promises, to which it is impossible that God should be unfaithful. The second thing to be remarked is that, when God would encourage the faith of those who submit to His judgment (being led by this submission to a holy conviction that man has deserved it), God stops at nothing short of the full and entire accomplishment of the promises, which depend on His faithfulness, whatever may have been the unfaithfulness of manan accomplishment which can and shall be enjoyed solely by means of a work of God in man, that will bring him into a condition suitable to this accomplishment (see v. 6, 73. The position of the people at the time of Jeremiah's prophecies furnished an evident opportunity for the development of these two principles; for the people and the house of David had entirely failed in their faithfulness to God. It is very afflicting, and very humbling, when we are obliged to confess that God's enemies are in the right. The only comfort is that God is in the right (Ezekiel 14:22, 23), and that in the end He cannot fail to accomplish His gracious promises.

**CHAPTER** 25 closes, so to say, this part of the prophecy with a general summary of God's judgments on the earth, giving it into the hand of

Nebuchadnezzar. The immediate application to events already accomplished does not offer much difficulty, but we shall find a good deal, if we would bring in also an allusion to the last days. Israel, to whom the door had always been held open, is first judged. The chapter begins by announcing the judgment of God upon Jerusalem, because she had refused to hear the call to repentance which had been addressed to her during twenty-three years. And here let us notice the hardness of the people's heart, stubborn in evil, and refusing to bow the neck to God's testimony, in spite of all the pains God took, if we may so speak, to warn them. And indeed it is His own language: "Jehovah hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened" (2 Chronicles 36:15). Jehovah had always set before the people a full and abiding blessing, if they repented; but they would not. The prophet announces that Jehovah will bring all the families of the north under Nebuchadnezzar, against Jerusalem, and against the adjoining nations, all of whom should assuredly drink the cup of judgment that the Lord had mingled for them. Jerusalem shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years; and after that the king of Babylon himself should be judged and punished, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah against all the nations. For, having begun with Jerusalem, it should be a universal judgment. That which should immediately happen was the judgment of the nations around Palestine, and afterwards that of Babylon, which was the instrument of their judgment. But the fact that the city called by the name of Jehovah was to be laid waste implied the judgment of all the nations. Consequently, in the symbolical action of the prophecy, all the nations connected with Israel, all those of the world as then known, are forced to drink the cup. But this is expressed in terms that include the nations of the whole earth. The historical application of verse 26 does not go farther than that which happened by means of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Sheshach, who should drink subsequently to the others. But a principle of universal judgment is comprised in this. The universal evil is developed (v. 29-38). The only question that can be raised is whether, in this ulterior destruction of all the kingdoms of the earth, the expression "King of Sheshach" has any application to one who shall possess the same territory, or if it is merely Nebuchadnezzar. I doubt its going farther. * The picture of universal judgment ends the first division of the prophecy. That which follows gives details and particular cases. **

[* In either case the judgment does not appear to me to go farther than the oppression of the nations by the king of the Gentiles, who is raised up in place of the throne of God in Jerusalem, and his own destruction at the end of his wicked career.]

[** The destruction of Babylon had a peculiar importance; first, because it was substituted by God Himself in place of His throne at Jerusalem;

secondly, because it was the only Gentile power directly set up by Him, though all power be from Him. The others replaced Babylon providentially. Hence, at the destruction of Babylon, Jerusalem is restored (however partially it shows the principle), and the power which judges Babylon is the setter up of God's people again in the holy city. Babylonits setting up, its rule, and its destructioninvolved the whole of the direct dealings of God with the Gentiles, and with His people in power. All the rest came in merely as a prolonging by the bye.]

**CHAPTER** 26 begins this series of details with a prophecy of the commencement of Jehoiakim's reign. The people are warned, as being already in sin, that if they repent, they shall escape. We have constantly seen this character attached to the prophecies of Jeremiah, as though God said, "Today, if ye will hear my voice." Circumstances rendered this appeal urgent, for in fact, if Israel did not repent, the house of Jehovah was to be like Shiloh. We find that of which God had warned the prophet. They strive against him; but, as Jehovah had promised, they gain no advantage over him. We see that it is the ecclesiastical party that excite the people against the testimony which God bears to them by the mouth of the prophet. But God turns the heart of the princes and of the people towards him. There were some also who regarded the ways of Jehovah. Their intelligence did not go far, but sufficiently so for deliverance; they feared God. We may remark here, that conscience laid hold of the word of God in its immediate application. No doubt the evil would go on increasing, and, when ripe, the judgment would be accomplished (for God does not strike before iniquity has come to its height), and then the prophecy would be fulfilled. But conscience, under the influence of the word, takes knowledge of principles which are judged by it, even when all is not yet ripe for judgment; and as yet consequently the judgment is not executed (v. 18, 19).

**CHAPTERS** 27 and 28 go together. Their chief subject is the submission to the head of the Gentiles, which God requires of the Jews. But before dwelling on this, I would call attention to the care which God bestows on His people, warning them again at each new phase of their career towards judgment. We remember that Zedekiah brought down this judgment by rebelling against the king of Babylon. At the beginning of his reign the Lord sent His word by Jeremiah to warn all the kings around, as well as Zedekiah, that they must submit. If they submitted, they should dwell in their land in peace; if not, they should be driven out and perish.

Let us now observe the place which, as Creator of the earth, of man and beast, God gives to the king of Babylon. God has given the nations, and even the beasts of the field, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for a certain time. God establishes the central and universal power, and the nation that refuses to submit to it would be in rebellion against Himself, and should be

consumed. Compare <2018>Daniel 2:38, which adds the fowls of the heaven to his dominion. All on earth was subjected to this king of the earththe imperial head taken from among the Gentiles. It was a government appointed of God, who had forsaken Jerusalem, and would no longer protect her unless she submitted to this government. It appears that the kings of the surrounding countries were plotting with Zedekiah to throw off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and that the mission of their ambassadors was the occasion on which this prophecy was given, God declaring that He would have all submit to this yoke, for it was He Himself that imposed it.

This factthat God has committed power in this world to a manis very remarkable. In the case of Israel man had been tried on the ground of obedience to God, and had not been able to possess the blessing that should have resulted from it. Now God abandons this direct government of the world (while still the sovereign Lord above); and, casting off Israel whom He had chosen out from the nations, grouping the latter around the elect people and His own throne in Israel, He subjects the world to one head, and committing power unto man, He places him under a new trial, to prove whether he will own the God who gave him power, and make those happy who are subjected to him, when he can do whatever he will in this world.

I do not enter here into the details of the history of this trial: they belong to the Book of Daniel. We know that man failed in it. Senseless and presumptuous, he ravaged the. world and oppressed the people of God, trod down His sanctuary, and prepared for himself a judgment so much the more terrible that Satan will induce him to resist it, and will aid him in his rebellion. Nebuchadnezzar alone answers in all points to that which we have just said. He is the head of gold. God had committed immediately to him the government of the world. Cyrus had personally a more peculiar place, and one more honorable in some respects. But as an empire, the Persians only took the place of one that already existed; and the sources and character of power continually deteriorated, in proportion as their distance from God and His gift increased.

False prophets as well as false teachers oppose the truth in this very point on which God tries His people. They can use all other parts of truth in order to deceive, and appear to have increased faith in them. It is manifest that the secret of the Lord is never with them. But whatever appearances may be, they neither stop nor turn away God from the path He takes. Yet the true prophet’s position is a painful one. He may seem for the time to be reduced to silence; for the popular falsehood possesses the hearts of the people. Jeremiah had to go away. Nevertheless in the combat between truth and error God often intervenes by a striking testimony, and so it was here. The function of the prophet, with respect to the government of the world and of

the people's walk, is always a testimony to the judgment which hangs over unfaithfulness.

**CHAPTER** 29. On the other hand the prophet comforts those who, by the judgment of God, were subjected to the yoke which He had imposed upon them. The Jews in Babylon should dwell in peace, quietly seeking the welfare of the city in which they were captives. The time of deliverance should come. The spirit of rebellion should be punished. Finally, having insisted on the people's submission to the judgment, God reveals His own thoughts of grace. This submission was necessary, because of Israel's sin; for God must maintain His own character, and not identify Himself with the ways of a rebellious people. But He must needs manifest Himself as He is in His grace. The execution of the judgment, and Israel's ruined condition, brought the truth and beauty of the grace of God into yet greater prominence.

Some details of the circumstances that accompany its exercise deserve our attention, as well as the character which God displays in it, and the extent of its effects. In chapter 30 God commands Jeremiah to write in a book all the words of the judgment which he had heard, for God would restore the people. Now this deliverance found Israel at the height of the distress. This is the first thing presented to the prophet. No day could be compared to this day of Jacob's trouble. It is the day spoken of in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. But in this extremity God comes to the help of His people, who shall be delivered. And now, God having executed His judgment and acted according to His own counsels in grace, this deliverance shall in consequence be full and complete. Israel shall serve Jehovah their God and David their king. The ruin (v. 12) was complete, incurable: no remedy could heal it. It is God who had smitten His people for the multitude of their sins. Nevertheless He was with them to save them; and consequently all the nations who had availed themselves of God's anger to devour Israel should be themselves devoured. Zion should be rebuilt on her own foundation, joy and peace should be in her dwellings, the governors of the people should be of her children. Israel should be the people of Jehovah, and Jehovah should be their God. Finally a principle which we have seen clearly explained is here announced, namely, that judgment should fall upon the wicked; that this judgment went forth to smite the people of God first, because they were wicked and must bear the consequence. But wherever the wicked might be, this judgment should reach them. Wheresoever the carcase might be, there should the eagles be gathered together.

**CHAPTER** 31. But it would not be Judah only, to whom the prophecies of Jeremiah were addressed, that should be restoredall the families of Israel should enjoy this blessing. Jehovah should be their God, they should be His

people. A few words will suffice to fix the reader's attention on this beautiful prophecy. All the tribes are there, but all in renewed relationship with Zion. It is a deliverance wrought by the Lord, and it is therefore complete. Its enjoyment is not hindered by weakness. It is a deliverance that melts the heart and produces tears and supplications, but which removes all cause for tears, excepting grace. They shall sorrow no more; their soul shall be as a watered garden; they shall be satisfied with goodness from Jehovah. Ephraim has repented, and God will cause him to feel that He has never forgotten him. The Lord has always remembered His erring child; Judah shall be the habitation of justice and the mountain of holiness. This shall be through a new covenantnot that which was made when they came out of Egypt. The law shall be written in their heart; they shall all know Jehovah; and none of their sins shall be remembered any more. If God should overthrow the ordinances of creation, then, saith He, shall Israel be cast off for all that they have done. Finally the Lord declares in detail the restoration of Jerusalem.

I would add that in verse 22 I see only weakness. Israel, feeble as a woman, shall possess and overcome all strengthseeing that strength manifests itself in that which is very weakness.

These two chapters give in general the prophetic testimony to Israel's restoration. Chapter 32 applies it to the circumstances of the Jews besieged in Jerusalem; taking occasion, from the ruin that evidently threatened them by the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, to announce the infallible counsels of God in grace towards them. Jeremiah had declared that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah led captive. But Jehovah had caused him to buy a field, in proof that the people should assuredly return. He points out the iniquity of the people and of the city from the beginning; but now that, in despair through sin, their ruin appeared to them inevitable, Jehovah declares not only a return from captivity, but the full efficacy of His grace. He would give oneness of heart to the people, that they may serve Him for ever. Their relationship to God as His people should be fully established according to the power of an everlasting covenant. Jehovah will rejoice in doing them good. He would plant them in the land with His whole heart, and His whole soul. It was He who had brought all this evil in judgment, and it was He who would bring all the good which He had promised.

**CHAPTER** 33 repeats with ample and rich abundance the testimony to these blessings, and dwells particularly on the presence of the Messiah; it announces that the branch of righteousness shall grow up unto David, executing judgment and righteousness in the land. Judah shall be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. Her name shall be "Jehovah our Righteousness." David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the

house of Israel (not merely Judah), nor the tribe of Levi a priest. The Lord's covenant with the heavens and the earth shall fail, before this covenant with David shall be broken. However deeply sunk in despair the people might be, the Lord would never cast off Jacob, or His servant David, but would cause their captivity to return and would have mercy on them. The reader will remark how complete this revelation of deliverance is in its objects: first Judah, who was then particularly in question, then all Israel, then the land, then Messiah and the priesthood. Although, as a comfort to those in Babylon, the captive Jews are encouraged with a sure hope on their repentance (chap. 29); yet in general Judah is joined with Israel in the same deliverance. It is looked at as a whole. Indeed, after chapter 29, save chapter [illegible]31:23, 24, where Ephraim had been already distinguished, and chapter [illegible]33:7, 10, 16, in present grace because of the siege, Israel is always put before Judah when both are named, and God glories in the name of the God of Israel.

We do not get in Jeremiah the rejection of Messiah. His subject is present sins, and future purposes in which Messiah comes in. With this chapter the second part of the book closes, that is, the revelation of the full effect of God's grace towards ruined Israel, a result which should be according to His purposes of love, and perfect according to His counsels.

**CHAPTER** 34. On the occasion of renewed iniquity the prophet announces the certain ruin of the people. Nevertheless Zedekiah, though carried captive to Babylon, should die there in peace. * In the succeeding chapters we have some details of the obstinate rebellion which led to the destruction of Jerusalem and of all Judah.

> [* God's ways in this are remarkable. He had broken the oath of Jehovah, and he is judged as profane. It was mainly through the influence of others (for he was disposed to listen to Jeremiah), and therefore mercy is extended to him]

**CHAPTER** 35. The obedience of the Rechabites is set forth in order to show out more clearly the sin of Judahdisobedient in spite of the remonstrances and the patience of God. God does not forget the obedience that glorifies His name. The family of the Rechabites shall never fail.

**CHAPTER** 36 furnishes us with another example of the obstinacy with which the kings of Judah despised the call and the testimony of God. Jeremiah was shut up; but God can never fail in means to address His testimony to man, whatever efforts they may make to escape it. Baruch is employed to write the prophecies of Jeremiah, and to read them, first to the people, then to the princes, and at last to the king himself. But the latter, hardened in his evil ways, destroys the roll. Jeremiah, by God's direction,

causes the same words to be written again; and others also, for he neglects no means to reach and lay hold afresh of the people's conscience. But all was useless.

**CHAPTER** 37 gives us Zedekiah in the same state of disobedience. A show of religion is kept up, and, having a moment of respite which excites some hope, the king seeks an answer from the Lord by His prophet. But the favorable circumstances, through which it might appear that the wicked may escape from judgment, do not alter the certainty of the word. Jeremiah sought to avail himself of the opportunity to avoid the judgment which was coming upon the rebellious city; but this only serves to manifest the hatred of the heart to God's testimony; and the princes of the peopleaccusing Jeremiah of favoring the enemy, because he proclaimed the judgment that should fall on the people by their meansput him in prison. Zedekiah manifests some conscience by releasing him. * In general there is more conscience in Zedekiah personally than in some others of the last kings of Judah (see v. 21, and chaps. 21; 38:10, 14, 16). On this account, perhaps, were those few words of favor and mercy addressed to him in chapter 34:5. But he was too weak to allow his conscience to lead him in the path of obedience (compare chap. 38:2-12). This last chapter gives us the history of his weakness. Nevertheless in the midst of all this scene of misery and iniquity we find some rare examples of righteous men; and, however terrible His judgment may be, God remembers them; for His judgment is terrible because He is righteous. Ebed-melech, who delivered Jeremiah, is spared. Baruch also preserves his life; and even Zedekiah, as we have seen, is comforted by some words of encouragement, although he must undergo the consequences of his faults. The ways of God are always perfect, and if His judgments are like an overwhelming torrent as to man, still everything, even to the smallest detail, is directed by His hand; and the righteous are spared. The prison even becomes a place of safety for Jeremiah, and Jehovah deigns not only to spare Ebed-melech, but to send him a direct testimony of His favor by the mouth of Jeremiah, that he may understand the goodness of God in whom he had trusted.

[* See preceding note.]

After this, chapter 39 and the following chapters give us the history of the confusion and iniquity that reigned among the remnant who were not carried captive to Babylon, in order that they should be scattered, and that all should fully bear the judgment which God had pronounced. Nevertheless, if at this last hour this remnant had submitted to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, peace should have reigned in the land, and these few that remained should have possessed it. But some revolt, and the others fear the consequences of their folly. There is no idea of trusting in Jehovah. They consult Jeremiah,

but refuse to obey the word of the Lord from his mouth. They take refuge in Egypt to escape Nebuchadnezzar, but only to fall under the sword which would have spared them in Judea, had they remained there in subjection to the king. In Egypt they give themselves up to idolatry, that the wrath of God might come upon them to the end. Nevertheless God would spare even a little remnant of these, but Pharaoh-hophra, in whom they trusted, should be given up into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as Zedekiah had been.

**CHAPTER** 45 gives us the prophecy with respect to Baruch, already mentioned. Chapter 46 and following chapters contain the prophecies against the Gentiles around Judea, and against Babylon herself. We shall find these special elements in the prophecies that refer to the nationsthe judgments are not those of the last days, as in Isaiah, but (according to the general character of the book) refer to the destruction of the different nations, in order to make way for the dominion of one sole empire. It is thus that, in the case of Judea, the judgment is even now executed.

But there is a difference with respect to the restoration of those nations in the last days. Egypt, Elam, Moab, Ammon, are restored in the last days; Edom, Damascus. Philistia, Hazor, are not. The reason of this is easily seen. Egypt and Elam form no part of the land of Israel. God in His goodness will have compassion on those countries; they shall be inhabited and blessed under His government. When the people of Israel entered Canaan, Ammon and Moab were to be spared. They were not Canaanites under the curse; and however deplorable their origin might be yet, being related to the family of Israel, their land was preserved to them, although to the tenth generation they could not be admitted into the congregation of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3). And when God shall put an end to the dominion given to Nebuchadnezzar, and to the empire of the Gentiles, these nations shall again enter into the countries that were allotted them. But, although Edom had been spared, and were even to be received amongst Israel in their third generation, yet as their hatred to Israel had been unbounded, they should be totally destroyed in the judgment of that day. Compare Obadiah throughout, especially in verse 18. Their land should form a part of Israel’s territory, and was, in fact, a part of it, although they themselves were spared at the beginning as the brethren of Israel, but only, alas! to abuse this favor; so that the judgment would be more terrible upon them than upon the rest. Damascus, Hazor, and Philistia were a part of the land of Israel, properly so called. These nations disappear as distinct nations, as to their territory. At the close of the judgment on Egypt, God sends words of encouragement to Israel. Israel had leant on Pharaoh when Nebuchadnezzar had attacked Jerusalem. The Egyptian power appeared to

be the only one capable of balancing that of Babylon. But God had ordained the fall of Egypt, who would willingly have taken the chief place. This was, however, appointed for Babylon. The country from which they were brought out (the world, considered as man in his natural independent character, organising in his own strength) would like to prevail over idolatrous corruption and Babylonish principles; but these were to be in force until the time appointed by God, when God will judge them. Now Israel having leant upon Egypt, would apparently fall with Egypt; but God watched over them, and they were to return from their captivity and dwell in peace. The ways of God in government are well worthy of attention here. God would judge the nations; He would chastise Israel in measure. His people should not be condemned with the world. Grace abused brings down the most terrible judgments; thus it was with Edom.

Babylon yet remains. But, in Jeremiah, all the judgments are contemplated in connection with the setting aside of the independent nations, and the establishment of the one empire of the Gentilesthe chief subject of this prophecy; consequently the prophet is specially occupied with the historical fate of the empire, as established by God in the prophet's own days. It is Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans which are the subject of his prophecy. It is the judgment of this empire, to avenge the oppression of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar, who had broken his bones (chap. 50:17). Nevertheless, the deliverance of Israel, at the time of the destruction of Babylon, is given as a pledge and foretaste of their complete and final deliverance (chap. 50:4-19, 20, 34; see also 51:19-21). For the destruction of Babylon was the judgment of that which God had Himself established as the Gentile empire. This is the reason why, even historically, her judgment was accompanied by the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of idolatry, by a man raised up to execute the righteousness of God. It has not been at all the same thing with the other empires, although, no doubt, they were also set up by the providence of God. But in their case it was not the immediate establishment of the empire on God's part, placing man in it under responsibility. Man, thus placed, had completely failed. He has tyrannised over God's people, established a compulsory idolatry, and corrupted the world by its means. Looked at as having the dominion of the world, which had been committed to him, he has been judged, and Babylon is fallen. It is important thoroughly to apprehend this truth with respect to this first empire. In principle the deliverance of Israel results from it, whatever the subsequent dealings of God may have been. See also the character of this judgment, chapter 50:28, 33, 34. The next chapter furnishes us also with important principles in connection with this destruction of Babylon.

**CHAPTER** 51:6 reveals the unchangeable faithfulness of God to Israel, in spite of the people's sins. It was the time of the Lord's vengeance. When the time that God indicated should have arriveda time to be known only by those whose spiritual discernment would enable them to apply the prophecy, the elements of which were given clearly enough in these two chapters (especially in the assaults of the nations), then those who had ears to hear were to leave the city. Moreover the fall of Babylon was a judgment pronounced upon idolatry. The portion of JacobJehovahmight chastise His people, but He was not like the vanities of the Gentiles. After having chastised them, He would bring forth His righteousness in contrast with the Gentiles, who oppressed them, and would, finally, use them as His weapons of war. From verse 25 we see that it is the Babylon of those days which is in question. From verse 29 the historical circumstances that are related give us a very especial proof of this.

The last chapter forms no part of the book of Jeremiah, properly so called. We find in it events relative to the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple. After the remarks we have made, that which is said in it of Babylon will be easily understood.

I recapitulate here the principles of this book on account of their importance. The empire of Babylon, in consequence of the unfaithfulness of the house of David, was established by God Himself, and entrusted with the government of the world. But Babylon not only oppressed Israel, but set up idolatry, and corrupted the world. He who should have been a worshipper of the true God, and an instrument of His power, established, as far as he could, the influence of the enemy. God has judged him. The empire which God Himself established has been entirely overthrown. This judgment was executed against the pride of man, and against idolatry. At the same time it was the deliverance of Israel. This last consideration gave rise to a declaration on God's part of what Israel was to Him, and what it shall be in the last days. But the subject treated of is the Babylon of that day. Since then God has permitted other powers to exist, governing the world with universal dominion, until the final accomplishment of all His purposes. These empires have subsisted according to His will, have been raised up or cast down as He saw good. But neither of them has held precisely the same place as Babylon. None of them have been formally established in the place of Israel, nor has the destruction of any of them been the occasion of Israel's restoration. The word of prophecy assures us that at the end of the days, the judgment of the last empire will have this effect. The judgment of Babylon has, in a manner, foreshadowed it; as its moral character commenced the sad history of these monarchies, and served as a model to them in many respects as to the evil that should be developed until the end.

But to understand the fundamental principles of this history, and the dealings of God, the place which this first empire held in these dealings must be clearly and distinctly kept in mind. Besides the immense fact of the substitution of empire in man’s hand, for the immediate exercise of God’s government on the earth, the diligent testimony which God sent, and the warnings to king after king, to people and to priests, is very striking in this book, the patience of God’s love and interest.

# THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

The Lamentations of Jeremiaha touching expression of the interest which God feels in the afflictions which His people undergo on account of their sinswill not require much explanation as to the general meaning of the book. A few remarks may be useful, to show the true character of this book, and its connection with the dealings of God, as revealed to us elsewhere. The first interesting pointto which I have already alludedis that the affliction of His people does not escape the eye of God. He is afflicted in their affliction: His Spirit takes knowledge of it; and, acting in the heart of those whose mouth He uses, gives expression to the feelings He has produced there. Thus Christ wept over the hard-heartedness of Jerusalem, and invited its inhabitants to do so likewise. And here also His Spirit not only reproves and reveals things to come; He gives a form to the grief of those who love what God loves, and furnishes the expression of it Himself. There is nothing more affecting than the sentiments produced in the heart by the conviction that the subject of affliction is beloved of God, that He loves that which He is obliged to smite, and is obliged to smite that which He loves. The prophet, while laying open the affliction of Jerusalem, acknowledges that the sin of the people had caused it. Could that diminish the sorrow of his heart? If on the one hand it was a consolation, on the other it humbled and made him hide his face. The pride of the enemy, and their joy in seeing the affliction of the beloved of God, give occasion to sue for compassion on behalf of the afflicted, and judgment on the malice of the enemy. At the end of chapter 1, after full confession that it was Judah's sin that had brought the evil upon them, and that Jehovah was righteous, the people call on the eye of Jehovah to look on their sorrow, and judge those by whose wickedness they were punished.

The second chapter is a very deep and touching appeal. The desolation of Jerusalem is looked at as Jehovah's own work, on what was His own, and not as that of the enemy. Never had there been such sorrow. Not only had He polluted the kingdom and its princes, and had been as an enemy against Jerusalem, and all that was goodly in it, but He had cast down His altar, abhorred His sanctuary. He no longer respected what He had Himself set up. Only we must remember that it was when the relationships of Jehovah with His people depended, however long God's patience, on the faithfulness of the people's obedience to Jehovah, on the old covenant. But this consideration gives room for appealing to Himself. Still it is a solemn

thing when Jehovah is forced to reject that which He acknowledges to be His own. But it must be so if the association of His name is only a means of falsifying the testimony of what He is (v. 6, 7). And this brings before us the amazingly important principle contained in the ministry of Jeremiah, not merely the substitution of Babylon and the Gentile empire for Jerusalem and God's government in Israel, but the setting this last aside in itself, the ground of God's relationship with man where it subsisted, as that which could not subsist when put to the test.

In **CHAPTER** 3 we find the language of faith, of sorrowing faith, of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant, on the occasion of the judgment of Jerusalem in which God had dwelt. Before, the prophet (or the Spirit of Christ in him) spoke in the name of Jerusalem, deploring her sufferings and confessing her sin, while appealing to Jehovah against her enemies, relating what He had done in forsaking His sanctuary, and (from v. 11 of chap. 2) expressing the depth of her affliction at the sight of the evil. But in chapter 3 he places himself in the midst of the evil to express the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ; not, it is true, in an absolute manner, according to the perfection of Christ Himself, but as acting in the heart of the prophet (as is generally the case in Jeremiah), expressing his personal distressa distress produced by the Spirit, but clothed in the feelings of the prophet's own heartto bring out that which practically was going on in the heart of a faithful Israelite, the reality of that which was most elevated in that day of anguish and affliction, in which alas! there was no more hope from the people's side than from that of the enemies who attacked them, and in which the heart of the faithful suffered without hope of remedy, yet much more on account of a people who hearkened not to the voice of Jehovah, than on account of enemies raised up in judgment. What has Christ not suffered! That which His Spirit produces in the midst of human weakness, He has Himself undergone and felt in its full extent; only that He was perfect in all that His heart went through in His affliction.

In **CHAPTER** 3 the prophet expresses then in his own person, by the Spirit of Christ, all that he felt as sharing the affliction of Israel, and being at the same time the object of their enmitya position remarkably analogous to that of Christ. What suffering can be like that of one who shares the suffering of God's people without being able to turn away the evil, because they refuse to hear God's messagelike that of one who bears this affliction on his heart with the feeling that, if this foolish people would but have hearkened, the wrath of God should have been turned away? It was the lamentation of Christ Himself, "Oh, if thou hadst known," etc. In the main Jeremiah partook of the same feelings. But we see him more as being of the people, and participating in his own person in the consequences of the evil, seeing

himself under these consequences with the people, because they had rejected his testimony. This may be said of the Lord at the close of His life, or on the cross. But we see that this sentiment, a little known in the case of Job, takes here the form of a personal prayer, complaining of personal suffering. Jeremiah suffers for the testimony, and for the rejection of the testimony. The first nineteen verses of chapter 3 contain the expression of this state. It is altogether the spirit of the remnant; and, with the exception of the sentiment I have just mentioned, it is that expressed in many of the Psalms. Into it all indeed, if we go on to the cross, * Christ Himself entered.

[* I add, "if we go on to the cross," because, though Christ may have felt much of it in His sorrow as He approached the cross, there are expressions which apply to Him only as suffering there. The direct proper application is to the remnant, as is the case with the Psalms, and to Jeremiah in particular.]

The prophet speaks as having born in his own heart the deep grief of that which Jehovah had brought upon Jerusalem; but feeling it as one who knew God to be his God, so that he could experience what it was to be the object of the wrath of God. He suffered with Jerusalem, and he suffered for Jerusalem. But the truth of this relation with Jehovah, while making him feel the affliction more deeply, sustained him also (v. 22). He begins to feel that, after all, it is better to have to do with Jehovah, although, in another point of view, this made it all the more painful. He feels that it is good to be afflicted, and to wait upon Jehovah who smites: for He will not cast off for ever. He does not afflict willingly, but from necessity. Why complain of the chastening of sin? It were better to turn unto Jehovah. * He encourages Israel to do so, and while remembering the affliction of his weeping people, faith is in exercise until Jehovah shall interpose. It is well that an affliction like this should be felt; the only harm is when it is allowed to weaken confidence in the Lord.

[* We have here a principle of the deepest interest, and most instructive. I will follow it out with a little more detail. The principles are in the text. Jehovah smiting His own altar and all the holy things, having been set up by Himself in the midst of His people as marking them as His and the formal link with them as their God, their destruction which broke that formal link, as far as God's own ordinances went, put an end to the connection; and this, as one of that people and living in that bond, had been the deepest distress to the true-hearted Jeremiah; but while this, because they were of God, pressed upon his heart, it led him, when he had got to the depth of the feeling, to the Jehovah whose ordinances they were; Jehovah known in his heart takes then the place of the ordinances which bound the people to Him, and his soul is drawn out in confidence to Him who was within and beyond all those links. He feels and speaks from the place of affliction, but his soul is humbled in him when personally thus in intercourse with Jehovah, and so has hope. And this is a sure and immovable anchor of faith when God our

Father is truly known (see v. 22-26). He is brought quite low and subdued in spirit, but Jehovah is before his soul and known, though he must wait for Him (v. 27-30), but Jehovah rises up before him. He does not afflict willingly; and now he turns in greater calmness of spirit to try his own ways (v. 39-42). Yet he looks fully at all the sorrow (v. 42-49). But now Jehovah is in his heart, and the "till" (v. 50), the full assurance of which flows from His very nature, for personally, when at the lowest, he had called and Jehovah had drawn near to him, and pleaded the cause of his soul, and he looks for Jehovah's judgment on his relentless and causeless enemies. No doubt the call for judgment is characteristic of Jehovah's relationship with Israel. Still, there will be such on all the open enemies of the Lord.]

The prophet calls to mind the affliction of Jerusalem, and, remembering the way which he had been succored himself, he makes use of the kindness he had experienced to confirm his assurance that God would show the same kindness to the people. But with respect to the proud and careless who reject the truth, their enmity against God, manifesting itself in their enmity against those who were the bearers of His word, he asks for the judgment of God upon them. * Thus relieved in spirit, and his heart filled with the sentiment that, since the evil came from Jehovah, that which gave so much depth to the sorrow was also a comfort to the heart, he can return to the affliction itself, measuring its whole extent, which the anguish of his soul prevented his apprehending till he had been able to arrive at its true source. Now he can enter into details, although with deep grief, yet with more calmness because His heart is with God. The sense of trouble and distress at the thought of God's judgment falling on those whom He loves is not sinful, although in Jeremiah's case his heart sometimes failed him.

[* In all this the spirit of these passages is wonderfully in accordance with that of the Psalms, as indeed is very natural. The way in which Christ entered into it is spoken of in what is said on the Book of Psalms. Christ passed, in grace, through all exercises as to it in perfectnessJeremiah and the remnant, that they might be perfected in their own state and feeling as to it. See what follows in the text.]

It is right to be troubled, and, as it were, overwhelmed, at God's breaking, not perhaps the relationship, but His present connection with that which was the object of His favor, that which bore the name and the testimony of God. Christ felt this for Himself, though in Him distress went much farther: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." Only in Christ all is perfect; and if He feels in perfection the profound distress of the object of God's love becoming the object of His judgment, a feeling of unparalleled grief, seeing it at the same time according to the perfection of God's ways, He can say, "For this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name!" He was Himself the necessary object of all God's affection, and consequently (if the judgment

was to glorify God) the object also of a perfect judgment, that is, of a complete forsaking on God's part. That which is dreadful in this thought is, that the change of relative position was absolute and perfect in His case according to the very perfection of the relationship. He suffered the forsaking of God, instead of enjoying infinite favor which He knew.

There was something similar in the case of Jerusalem; and Jeremiah, feeling by the Spirit of Christ the preciousness of this relationship, and entering into it as sharing it, he suffers with that which was thus judged of God. Only, although moved by the Spirit of Christ, he must find the equilibrium of his thoughts, he must seek Jehovah to bring Him into the affliction, amidst all his personal grief, and the true but human workings of a heart that was shaken and cast down by the circumstances. He attached himself to Jerusalem, as resting on her position before God, and not solely and absolutely for God, and as God Himself, as did our blessed Lord. There was an object between his soul and God (an object beloved also by God), and it was not loved absolutely in God, and with the affection of God, and hence the affliction had to reach this object, he being in it and of it, reach his heart in this placeand then God draw it to Himself, so that he may look at all from Jehovah's view of it. But Christ was Himself absolutely in the place, for God's glory and the salvation of others. The judged thing from which He was infinitely far, even as man, he was to be before God. Ever perfect, He learned to the absolute fulness what it was to be this before God, and glorified God there. But this, though we know it true, none can fathom. There was in Jeremiah the right foundation, and he finds Jehovah, first of all in spite of the affliction, but soon in the affliction itself, and he recovers himself immediately, not from the affliction, but in the affliction, by the power of God. Christ can say, "How often would I have gathered," etc. This was the affection of God. Jeremiah confesses sin, and ought to confess it, as himself in the place, though a testimony of God in it. But this thought changes so far the character of the feeling (see chap. <2019>1:19, 20).

Christ sought for nothing as a resource, as if self were concerned in it. His affliction was unmixed and absolute to Himself alone, more profound (for who could share it?) but perfect as being His alone. Thus, in <4301>John 12, when it is Himself personally (for this Gospel sets the old vine aside as rejected), He cannot desire that the hour of God's forsaking should come; He ought to fear and be troubled, and He was therefore heard. But it is between God and Himself alone. No other thought comes in betweenit is wholly with God. Alas! had it been possible, all was lost. But no; it is the absolute submission of the perfect man, who seeks (and seeks nothing else) that the name of God may be glorified according to God's perfection; that at all cost to Himself God's name may be glorified. Not now as God, who

must necessarily maintain its glory, but as one who submits to everything, who sacrifices Himself, in order that God may glorify His name. For this cause He has been supremely glorified as mana glorious mystery, in which the glory of God will shine forth throughout eternity.

Jeremiah, having now found Jehovah in the affliction, tranquilly measures its whole extent. But this is itself a consolation. For after all Jehovah who changes not is there to comfort the heart. This is chapter 4. He calls the whole to mind, and contrasts that which Jerusalem was, when under the blessing of Jehovah, with that which His anger has produced. It is no longer only the overwhelming circumstances of the present scene, but what it was before God. The Nazarites pass before his thoughts; that which Jerusalem, as the city of the great King, had been even in the eyes of her enemies; the anointed of Jehovah, under whose shadow the people might have lived (as we have already seen), although the Gentiles ruledthe anointed of Jehovah had been taken in their pits, like the prey of the hunter. But the afflicted spirit of God's servant, who bears the burden of His people, can now estimate not only the affliction that overwhelms them, but the position of the enemies of Jerusalem, and that of the beloved city. Nay, he who would have one run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem to find a just one, now sees the enemies have slain the just in her midst (see v. 13 and [24]Jeremiah 5:1). The cup of God's wrath shall pass through unto Edom, who was rejoicing in the ruin of the city of Jehovah; and as to Zion, she has doubtless drunk this cup to the dregs; but if she has done so, it was in order that she might drink of it no more. The punishment of her iniquity is accomplished, she shall no more be carried into captivity. All was finished for her: she had drunk the cup which she confessed she had deserved (see chap. [25]4:11; [25]1:18-20). But the sin of haughty Edom should be laid bare. God would visit her iniquity.

The prophet can now present the whole affliction of the people to God, as an object of compassion and mercy. This is an onward step in the path of these deep exercises of heart. He is at peace with God; he is in His presence; it is no longer a heart struggling with inward misery. All is confessed before Jehovah who is faithful to His people, so that he can call on God to consider the affliction in order that He may remember His suffering people according to the greatness of His compassions. For Jehovah changes not (chap. [25]5:19-21). The sense of the affliction remains in full, but God is brought in, and everything having been recalled and judged before Him, all that had happened being cleared up to the heart, Jeremiah can rest in the proper and eternal relations between God and His beloved people; and, shutting himself into his direct relations with his God, he avails himself of His goodness, as being in those relations, to find in the affliction of the

beloved people an opportunity for calling His attention to them. This is the true position of faiththat which it attains as the result of its exercises before God at the sight of the affliction of His people (an affliction so much the deeper from its being caused by sin).

This Book of Lamentations is remarkable because we see in it the expression of the thoughts of the Spirit of God, that is, those produced in persons under His influence, the vessels of His testimony, when God was forced to set aside that which He had established in the world as His own. There is nothing similar in the whole circle of the revelations and of the affections of God. He says Himself, How could He treat them as Admah and Zeboim? Christ went through it in its fullest extent. But He went through it in His own perfection with God. He acted thus with regard to Jerusalem, and wept over it. But here man is found to have lost the hope of God's interposing on His people's behalf. God would not abandon a man who was one of this people, who loved them, who understood that God loved them, that they were the object of His affection. He was one of them. How could he bear the idea that God had cast them off? No doubt God would re-establish them. But in the place where God had set them, all hope was lost for ever. In the Lord's own presence it is never lost. It is in view of this that all these exercises of heart are gone through, until the heart can fully enter into the mind and affections of God Himself. Indeed this is always true.

The Spirit gives us here a picture of all these exercises. How gracious! To see the Spirit of God enter into all these details, not only of the ways of God, but of that also which passes through a heart in which the judgment of God is felt by grace, until all is set right in the presence of God Himself. Inspiration gives us, not only the perfect thoughts of God, and Christ the perfection of man before God, but also all the exercises produced in our poor hearts, when the perfect Spirit acts in them, so far as these thoughts, all mingled as they are, refer in the main to God, or are produced by Him. So truly cares He for us! He hearkens to our sighs, although much of imperfection and of that which belongs to our own heart is mixed with them. It is this that we see in the Book of Lamentations, in the Psalms, and elsewhere, and abundantly, though in another manner, in the New Testament.

# EZEKIEL

In the prophecy of Ezekiel we have left the touching ground we were on in Jeremiah. He was within with the judgment hanging over the guilty city, and under the oppressive sense of the evil which brought on the ruin, bearing a testimony which, as to apparent result, was of no avail, though it maintained, in personal sorrow of heart according to human measure, the glory of God.

Ezekiel had been carried into captivity with the king Jehoiachin; at least, he was one of those made captive at that time, and he habitually dates his prophecies from that periodan important thing to remark that we may understand the revelations made to him. For himself there is no more question either of dates or of kings, of Judah or of Israel. The people of God are in captivity among the Gentiles. Israel is looked at as a whole; the interests of the whole nation are before the eye of the prophet. At the same time the capture of Jerusalem under Zedekiah had not yet taken place. This occasions the revelation of that king's iniquity, the measure of which was filled up by his rebellion. For Nebuchadnezzar attached value to the oath made in the name of Jehovah. He counted upon the respect due to that name, and Zedekiah had not respected it.

The first twenty-three chapters contain testimonies from God against Israel in general, and against Jerusalem in particular. After that the surrounding nations are judged; and then, beginning with chapter 33, the prophet resumes the subject of Israel, announcing their restoration as well as their judgment. Finally from chapter 40 to the end we have the description of the temple and of the division of the land.

In **CHAPTER** 1 we find a date which refers to the year of Josiah's passover, but with what intent I do not know. It has been thought that the thirty years relate to the jubilee. On this point I cannot speak with confidence. But other circumstances are very important.

The throne of God is not seen in Jerusalem, but unconnected with this city, and outside. It is the universal sovereign throne of God. God judges the city itself from this throne. The prophecy commences with the description of the throne. We have the attributes of God as the supporters of His throne, under the likeness of the four categories of created beings on earth, the four being united in one, at least the four heads of these categories. These symbols are nearly the same as those used by the pagan inventors of idolatry to represent their gods. Formal idolatry began with a figurative personification of the

attributes of God. These attributes became their gods, men being impelled to worship them by demons who governed them by this means, so that it was these demons whom men worshippeda worship that soon degenerated so far that they set up gods wherever there was anything to desire or to fear, or that answered to the lusts which inspired these desires or these fears (sentiments which the demon cultivated also, in order to appropriate to himself the worship due to God alone). Now these attributes belonged to the only God, the Creator, and the head of all creation; but, whatever their power and glory might be in action, they were but the supporters of the throne on which the God of truth is seated. * Whatever instruments He may employ, it is the mighty energy of God that manifests itself. Intelligence, strength, stability, and swiftness in judgment, and, withal, the movement of the whole course of earthly events, depended on the throne. This living energy animated the whole. The cherubic supporters of the throne, full of eyes themselves, moved by it; the wheels of God's government moved by the same spirit, and went straight forward. All was subservient to the will and purpose of Him who sat on the throne judging right. Majesty, government, and providence, united to form the throne of His glory. But all the instruments of His glory were below the firmament; He whom they glorified was above. It is He whom the heathen knew not.

> [* Wise infidels, always petty in their conceptions because they know not God, have seen in the winged human-headed bulls and lions of Nineveh the origin of Ezekiel's vision. They betray themselves. They do not see or know Him who sat above them. I do not doubt a moment that these images represented the same thing essentially as the cherubim; but these poor pagans, misled by Satan, like these infidels in their wisdom, worshipped what was below the firmament. In Ezekiel's vision they were merely symbolic attributes, and He who was worshipped was above the firmament. It is just the difference in this respect between idolatry and the revelation of God.]

This throne of the supreme and sovereign Lord God is seen in Chaldea * in the place where the prophet then wasamong the Gentiles. It is no longer seen at Jerusalem in connection with the land; nor have we any law embodied, so to speak, in the throne, according to which an immediate government was exercised. Consequently the voice of God speaks to Ezekiel as to a "son of man"a title that suited the testimony of a God who spoke outside of His people, as being no longer in their midst, but on the contrary was judging them from the throne of His sovereignty. It is Christ's own title, looked at as rejected and outside of Israel, although He never ceases to think of the blessing of the people in grace. This puts the prophet in connection with the position of Christ Himself. He would not, thus rejected, allow His disciples to announce Him as the Christ (Luke 9), for the Son of man was to suffer. **

[* I mean merely in the limits of the empire of the Chaldeans. It was by the river Chebar, which was more to the northwest.]

[** This distinction is always carefully maintained, based on <19002>Psalms 2 and 8. (Compare Nathanael, <43001>John 1.)]

In testimony and example, as to his prophetic relation, the same thing happens in Ezekiel's case. God is rejected; His prophet takes this place, with the throne, to judge the whole nation, and especially Jerusalem, announcing at the same time (to faith) their re-establishment in grace. He is sent from Jehovah to a rebellious people, to say, Jehovah has spoken, whether they would hear or not. The judgment would make it known that a prophet had been among them. His first testimony is composed of lamentations, and mourning, and woe; nevertheless the communication of the word of God is always full of sweetness, looked at as a revelation from Him, and as taking place between God and man (chap. 2).

Some important principles in the relations of God with Israel are developed in chapter 3.

But we have yet to notice a feature that characterises the Book of Ezekiel, comparing it with that of Jeremiah. The latter addresses himself immediately to his contemporaries (that is to say, to the people of God) in a testimony which, making its way through the bruised and wounded heart of the prophet, exhibits the marvelous patience of God, who, up to the last moment, invites His people to repentance. It is not thus with Ezekiel. He announces that which necessitates the judgment. He is sent indeed to Israel, but to Israel in a hardened condition. His mouth is shut as to the people; he is not to rebuke them. He may communicate to them certain declarations of Jehovah at a suitable time, when Jehovah opens his mouth to make them understand that there is a prophet among them; but he does not address himself directly and morally to the people, as being still the object of God's dealings. Jehovah reveals to him the iniquities that oblige Him to cast off His people, and no longer to act towards them on principles of government established by Himself, as with a people whom He acknowledged. It is, on God's part, a setting forth of Israel's conduct as the occasion of the rupture of His relations with them. At the same time certain new principles of conduct are revealed. I speak of that part of the prophecy which relates to Israel; for there are also sundry judgments upon the Gentiles, and a description of the future state of the land, as well as of the templea state which the prophet was to communicate to Israel in case they should repent.

**CHAPTER** 3. The Lord testifies that Israel is even more hardened than any of the heathen nations. The people are "impudent and hard-hearted." It needed that Ezekiel should have his forehead made as hard as adamant to speak to

them the word which he had to declare, saying, “Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.” The prophet is carried away by the power of the Spirit into the midst of the captives at Tel-abib. Although the house of Israel was hardened, God distinguished a remnant; and in this manner. The prophet was to warn individuals: it was to this work he was appointed. If his word was received, he who hearkened should be spared. Ezekiel should be responsible for the fulfilment of this duty: but each one should bear the consequences of his own conduct, after he had heard the word. Thus the people are no longer judged as a whole, as was the case when all depended on the public conduct of the nation or of the king. Israel had revolted, but still he that hearkened to the word should live. God was acting in accordance with His long-suffering grace. The prophet again sees the glory of Jehovah by himself, and the Spirit announces to him that he is not to go out among the people, but that he shall be a prisoner in his house, and that God will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth; for they were a rebellious people, and, as a people, the warning was not to be given them. God, when He pleased, would open the mouth of the prophet, and he should speak peremptorily to the people, declaring the word of Jehovah. Let him hear that would, Jehovah would no longer plead in love, as He had done.

**CHAPTER** 4. Besides the general judgment that God pronounced upon the condition of Israel, Jerusalemon whom lay all the iniquity of the people now come to its heightappears before God whom she had despised. The prophet, in representing the siege of Jerusalem, was also to point out the years of iniquity that had led to this judgment: for Israel in general, 390; for Judah, 40. It is certain that these dates do not refer to the duration of the kingdom of Israel apart from Judah, nor to that of Judah, because the kingdom of Israel only lasted about 254 years, while that of Judah continued about 134 years after the fall of Samaria. It would appear that the longer period mentioned is reckoned from the separation of the ten tribes under Rehoboam, counting the years as those of Israel, because from that moment Israel had a separate existence, and comprised the great body of the nation; while Judah was everything during the reign of Solomon, which lasted forty years. After his reign Judah would be comprised in the general name of Israel according to Ezekiel’s usual habit, although on certain occasions he distinguishes them on account of the position of Zedekiah and of God’s future dealings. The reason for using this name of Israel for the whole is plain enough, namely, that the captivity had placed the whole nation in the same condition and under one common judgment, and Israel was the name of the whole people. The entire nation was now set aside, and a Gentile kingdom established. Judah is sometimes distinguished, because there was still a remnant at Jerusalemjudged indeed yet more severely than

the mass, but which nevertheless existed, and which will have distinct circumstances in their history until the last days. The same thing happens in the New Testament. In the language of the apostles the twelve tribes are blended. Nevertheless, as a matter of history, the Jewsthat is to say, those of Judahare always distinct. In the main, Ezekiel prophesied under the same circumstances. Hence, in part, as we have said, his title of “son of man,” given also to Daniel, as well as that of “man greatly beloved.” The man of power was Nebuchadnezzar. But he who represented the race before God was an Ezekiel, as the man of desire was a Daniel, a man beloved of God.

With respect to the date, it is certain that the 390 years are almost exactly the time of Israel’s duration from the death of Solomon to the destruction of the temple. Some persons have wished to reckon the forty years of Judah from Josiah’s passover down to the same period, supposing that the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar took place four or five years after the captivity of Zedekiah; but this was not the caseit was a month later in the same year. Jehoiachin was carried into captivity in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar (<12412>2 Kings 24:12). Zedekiah reigned eleven years (<2501>Jeremiah 52:1). In the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzar-adan burnt the house of Jehovah, and, reading from verse 6, we see that it was a month after in the same year. In taking the forty years of Judah to be the reign of Solomon, it would be saying that Israel had done nothing but sin ever since the establishment of the kingdom, for it was only in the days of Solomon that there was a peaceful reign. David founded the kingdom. The responsibility of his family began with Solomon (2 Samuel 7).

In the revelation given to Ezekiel Jerusalem is taken, and its population almost entirely destroyed. The dispersed remnant are pursued by the sword, and a portion only of this remnant is spared. There would be some even of this portion cast into the fire. * And this fire should reach to the whole house of Israel. That is to say, the judgment that should fall upon the remnant who do not perish in the city should represent the position of all Israel. It is thus that the prophet is constantly led to speak of the whole nation. For, as long as there was a remnant at Jerusalem, the nation had a place on the earth. But when the iniquitous rebellion of Zedekiah had led to the destruction of Jerusalem, this was no longer the case. But this judgment of Jerusalem contains very important elements for the understanding of all this part of the history of the people and of the dealings of God, “This is Jerusalem, saith the Lord Jehovah; I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries round about her.” And instead of being a testimony in the midst of the nations, so that the house of Jehovah should have attracted them, or at least have placed them under responsibility by a true testimony

to God who dwelt thereinstead of this, her inhabitants had even gone beyond the idolatrous nations in wickedness. Therefore God would execute judgments upon her in the sight of all the nationsa just retribution for her sins. She should also be laid waste and made a reproach among the nations round about her; and (chap. 6) the judgment should not be confined to Jerusalem, it should be executed on all the high places, on all the mountains of Israel. Every city should be desolate, all their idols destroyed, and the people scattered. They should know that the Lord had not threatened them in vain with His judgments. The fire should reach those that were afar off as well as those that were in the land; and the land should be laid waste, and the worshippers of idols slain around their infamous gods. Nevertheless God would remember mercy in the midst of judgment; He would spare a little remnant of those who were scattered, and those who should escape should loathe themselves for the abominations they had committed. Thus Jerusalem was judged as well as the mountains of Israel, which were but too notorious for their idols and their high places.

> [* It is thus that I understand this passage. We should imagine, from our translation, that it was some of the hairs that were cast into the fire. But in the Hebrew the pronoun is in the singular, and it is masculine as well as feminine.]

Finally (chap. 7), the whole land of Israel is under the sentence of God, “the four corners of the land.” Those who escape the general judgment mourn alone upon the mountains, having forsaken all in despairhaving no power for resistance. The worst of the heathen should possess the land. And the ornament of the majesty of Jehovah, which He had established in glory, having been profaned by their abominations, should be given up into the hands of strangers to be profaned by them. The secret place of His holiness should be polluted. Mischief should come upon mischief, and there should be no remedy. Jehovah would judge the people according to their deserts.

Solemn judgment was thus pronounced on the whole nation. All is desolate, and with respect to the relations of Israel with Godwhether on the part of the people themselves, or by means of the house of David which was responsible for the maintenance of these relationsall was finally lost. Grace may act; but the people and the house of David had totally failed. The name of God had been blasphemed through His people, instead of being glorified. The execution of judgment is now the only testimony rendered to Him. The judgment is complete, it has fallen on the four corners of the land, and Israel is no longer a nation. What a solemn thought it is, that judgment should be the only testimony that can be given to God!

**CHAPTER** 7 closes this first prophecy, which is one of vast importance, as declaring the judgment to be fully executed upon the people of God on earth.

**CHAPTER** 8 begins a new prophecy, which comprises several distinct revelations, and extends to the close of chapter 19 (from the eighth to the end of the eleventh being connected). Judah still existed at Jerusalem, although many of them had already been carried into captivity with Jehoiakim. It was not till five years later that the temple was destroyed. It is the state of things at Jerusalem which is judged in these chapters. The elders of Judah presented themselves before the prophet, and Jehovah took this opportunity to show him all the enormities that would bring down judgment on the people. In the prophecy of the preceding year God, by the mouth of the prophet, had threatened Israel with the giving up of His sanctuary to the profane (chap. 7:20-22). Here Jehovah exhibits in detail the cause of this judgment. The glory of Jehovah appeared to the prophet, and he was taken in the visions of God to Jerusalem, and there in the courts and the chambers, and in the gates, he was shown every form of hateful and defiling idolatry practiced in Jehovah's own house by the elders and others of Israel. If we compare the history of Jeremiah, and the outward profession that was madethe pretension that the law should not perish from the priest, we shall understand the excessive iniquity of the Jews and their hypocrisy.

The glory of Jehovah visits the temple. He takes His place on the side that looked towards the city, and, after having shown the prophet the heinous sins committed there, He gives command to execute the deserved vengeance, but to spare the remnant who mourned over all these abominations. That which declares morally the state of heart of the wicked, and which made them give the loose rein to their iniquity, is that the absence of Jehovah's intervention on account of their sins, had so acted on their belief as to make them say, "Jehovah hath forsaken the earth and Jehovah seeth not." This was obduracy of heart.

In **CHAPTER** 10 the whole city is given up to be consumed. The glory of Jehovah presides over the judgment and commands it. He stands upon the threshold of His house which He fills with His glory in judgment, as He had formerly done in blessing. The throne of Jehovah was apart. We have a renewed description of all its parts. Jehovah left His throne and stood on the threshold of the house. This is an interesting element of this judgment. The cherubim and the terrible wheels instinct with living energy and full of eyes could have accomplished all. But Jehovah leads the prophet to take personal cognisance of the various and abominable sins and idolatries by which they profaned His sanctuary. No doubt His providential government wrought in

power to carry out His judgment, but it was the Jehovah of the defiled house who stood personally on its threshold to direct the judgment of the city, and personally have a mark put on the godly and secure them in the hastening judgment (chap. 9:3, 4, following, and from beginning of chap. 8). This personal intervention of Jehovah, both to show the evil well known to Him, to mark and spare the mourners, and to direct the judgment, is full of interest.

In **CHAPTER** 11 God judges the leaders of iniquity, who comforted themselves in the thought that the city was impregnable. * They should be brought out from the midst thereof and be judged in the border of Israel. One of these wicked men dies in the presence of the prophet, which brings out the sorrow of his heart and his intercession for Israel. In reply, God distinguishes those in Jerusalem from the captives. As to the latter, God had been a sanctuary to them wherever they were. He would restore them, and give them back the land. He would purify them, and give them a new heart. They should be His people, and He would be their God. But as for those who walked after their abominations, their ways should be visited upon them in judgment. The remnant are always distinguished, and individual conduct is the condition of blessing, save that they, the faithful, are established as the people of God at the end.

[* Jeremiah's exhortations will be rememberedto submit themselves to Nebuchadnezzar, and even to quit the city and go forth unto him.]

The glory of Jehovah then forsakes the city and stands upon the Mount of Olives, from which Jesus ascended, and to which He will again descend for Israel's glory. This part of the prophecy ends here.

**CHAPTER** 12 announces the fight and the capture of Zedekiah, who would be carried to Babylon though he would. not see it. All the force of Judah would be dispersed, and the land laid desolate; a small remnant of captives would declare among the heathen the abominations which had brought the judgment; and the judgment was soon to come, for God's patience with His people had led to the unbelieving comment that God would not interfere, but now the effect of His words would not be delayed.

**CHAPTER** 13 judges the prophets who deceived the people in Jerusalem by their pretended visions of peace.

In **CHAPTER** 14 the elders of Israel come and sit before the prophet. Here God sets distinctly before Israel the new principles on which He would govern them. These elders had put their abominations before their eyes. God Himself will judge them according to their transgressions. As a nation they were all alike. Jehovah could only say to them, "Repent ye." The

prophets and the people should be punished together. Even if the most excellent of the earth should be found in a land which Jehovah judged, they would not hinder the execution of the judgment, they would only save their own lives by their righteousness. God did not own a nation (the only one He had He had now rejected); He did, the individually righteous (compare Genesis 18). Now God was bringing all His judgments upon Jerusalem. Nevertheless, a remnant should be spared; and the proofs they would give of the abominations committed in the city would comfort the prophet with respect to the judgments accomplished on it. And so it is: the judgment of God, who gives His people up to their enemies, is a burden to the heart of one who loves the people; but when the manner in which the name of God had been dishonored is seen, the necessity of the judgment is understood and felt.

**CHAPTER** 15 shows that the vineutterly useless if it bore no fruitwas fit only for fuel, and to be consumed. Thus should it be with the inhabitants of Jerusalema striking picture of this destruction, and of the condition of Jerusalem, which was worth nothing more.

In reading chapter 16 it must be remembered that Jerusalem is the subject, and not Israel. Moreover, the subject treated of is not redemption, but God's dealings. He had caused to live, He had cleansed, ornamented, and anointed, that which was in misery and devoid of beauty. But Jerusalem had used all that Jehovah had given her in the service of her idols, and also to purchase the succor and the favor of the Egyptians and the Assyrians. She has had no idea of independence and of standing alone, leaning on Jehovah. She should be judged as an adulterous woman. Jehovah would bring against her those whom she had sought. Nevertheless, filled with pride, she would hear nothing of Samaria or of Sodomnames which Jehovah now uses to humble her. She was even more worthless than those whom she must own for her sisters, in spite of her pride. Jerusalem being thus justly condemned and humbled, God will yet act in full grace towards her, and will re-establish her, remembering His love and His covenant. She will never be restored on the former ground, any more than Samaria or Sodom; and the grace that will be exercised towards her shall suffice to bring them back also, namely, the sovereign grace of redemption and pardon, which is by no means the covenant of Jerusalem under the law. With Jerusalem Jehovah will also establish a special covenant, and her two sisters shall be given her for daughters. Her mouth shall be shut at the thought of all the grace of God who shall have pardoned her. The fifty-fifth verse is absolute and perpetual. The promise, in verse 60, is on entirely new ground. Samaria, Sodom, Jerusalem, go together in judgment; but sovereign grace has its own way and time, and thus all three might be and would be restored, but Jehovah

would establish His covenant with Jerusalem. The free unconditional covenant of promise would be made good to Jerusalem (chap. <2308>16:8).

**CHAPTER** 17 present the judgment of Zedekiah for despising the oath that Nebuchadnezzar made him take in the name of Jehovah. Israel not having been able to stand in integrity before God, Jehovah had committed the kingdom to the head of the Gentiles, whom He had raised up. This was His determinate purpose; but He had disposed the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to respect the name of Jehovah, and Judah might still have remained the center of religious blessing, and the lamp of David might still have given light there, although the royalty had been subjected to the head of the Gentiles, until the time should come for the result of the judgment and dealings of God. The covenant between Nebuchadnezzar and Zedekiah was made on this ground, and the name of Jehovah was brought in to confirm it. It was not the Gentile who broke the covenant. Zedekiah added to his other sins that of rendering impossible the existence of a people and a kingdom that belonged to God. The name of Jehovah was more despised and trampled under foot by him than by the Gentile king. He intrigues with Egypt to escape from the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar, whom God Himself, in judgment, had set up as supreme. This filled up the measure of iniquity, and brought on the final judgment. But it left room for the sovereignty of God, who would bring down the high tree and exalt the low tree, who would dry up the green tree and make the dry tree to flourish. His grace would take the little forgotten branch of the house of David and raise it up in Israel upon the mountain of His power, where He would cause it to become a goodly cedar, bearing fruit, and sheltering all that would seek the protection of its shadow. All the powers of the earth should know the word and the works of Jehovah.

**CHAPTER** 18 contains an important principle of the dealings of God, unfolded at that period. God would judge the individual according to his own conduct; the wicked nation was judged as such. Neither was it, in fact, judged for the iniquity of the fathers. The present iniquities of the people made the judgment which their fathers had merited suitable to their own actions. But now, with respect to His land of Israel, the principle of government laid down in <2407>Exodus 34:7 was set aside, and souls belonging, as they did individually, to Jehovah, would individually bear the judgment of their own sins. God would pardon the repenting sinner. For He has no pleasure in the sinner’s death. The government of Israel on earth is still the subject. Every one shall be judged according to his ways. *

[* It is important to remark that it is temporal judgment in death which is spoken of here. The question treated of is the allegation of Israel that they, according to the principle laid down in Exodus, were suffering for their

fathers' sins. The prophet declares that this principle is not that on which God will act with them, that the soul or life of every one belonged to God, one as another, and that in judgment He would deal with each for his own sins, not the son for the father's; and then proceeds to lay down the principles on which He would deal in mercy and judgment; but the judgments are temporal judgments, and the death physical death in this world. If the wicked turned from his ways, he would live and not dienot be cut off for the sins he repented of; so of the wicked, he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him. So the soul that sinneth, it shall die. It is not the father, nor the son because of a father's sins; the soul or person himself that sins shall die, each for his own. The emphasis is on "it."]

**CHAPTER** 19 describes the captivity of Jehoiakim, afterwards that of Jeconiah, and finally the complete decay of the house of David.

**CHAPTER** 20 begins a new prophecy, which, with its subdivisions, continues to the end of chapter 23. It will have been remarked that the general divisions are made by years. Chapter 20 is important. The preceding chapters had spoken of the sin of Jerusalem. Here the Spirit retraces the sin, and especially the idolatry of Israel (that is to say, of the people, as a people) from the time of their sojourn in Egypt. Then already they had begun with their idolatry. For His own name's sake God had brought them up from thence, and given them His statutes and His sabbathsthe latter too in token of the covenant between God and the people. But Israel had rebelled against God in the wilderness, and even then He had thought to destroy them. But He spared them, warning at the same time their children also, who nevertheless followed their fathers' ways. Still, for His name's sake, God withdrew His hand on account of the heathen in whose sight He had brought the people up from Egypt. But in the wilderness He had already warned them that He would scatter them among the nations (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 32); and as they had polluted the sabbaths of Jehovah and gone after the idols of their fathers, they should be polluted in their own gifts, and be slaves to the idols they had loved, that they might be made desolate by the Lord. For, having been brought into the promised land, they had forsaken Jehovah for the high places. He would no longer be enquired of by them, but would rule over them with fury and with an outstretched arm. He had already in the wilderness threatened the people with dispersion among the heathen; and now, having brought them into the land for the glory of His great name, Israel had only dishonored Him. He, therefore, executes the judgment with which He had threatened them. Israel, always ready to forsake Jehovah, would have profited by this to become like the heathen. But God comes in at the end in His own ways. He keeps the people separate in spite of themselves, and He will gather them out from among the nations and bring them into the wilderness, as when He led them out of Egypt, and there He will cut off the rebels, sparing a remnant, who

alone shall enter the land. For it is there that Jehovah shall be worshipped by His people, when He shall have gathered them out from all the countries where they have been scattered, and Jehovah Himself shall be sanctified in Israel before the heathen. Israel shall know that He is Jehovah, when He shall have accomplished all these things according to His promises. They shall loathe themselves, and shall understand that Jehovah has wrought for the glory of His name, and not according to their wicked ways.

This is the general judgment of the nation, and in fact of the ten tribes as distinct from Judah. They, as a body, were not guilty of the rejection of the blessed Lord. They had been long scattered for their rebellion against Jehovah. They will be brought back, but passed as a flock under the rod of the covenant, the rebels purged out, and only the spared remnant enter the land. They will not thus be in the special tribulation of the last half week, nor under Antichrist. They are dealt with in the national government of God. Judah will of course be in verse 40, but the object is to show it is not simply Judah, the Jews as we say. Israel in the land, the whole people will enjoy the blessings once promised. But this brings out some important principles. Though the original promises are referred to and exist for the full blessing, yet the dealings of Jehovah begin with the land of Egypt. Next there is an accumulation of sin. The Lord's sparing mercy, when it only made them go on in greater oblivion of His goodness, only aggravated and accumulated the evil, as the Lord speaks, from Abel to Zacharias. Thus the people are judged in view of their conduct, from the time of their departure from Egypt; their idolatrous spirit was manifested even in Egypt itself (compare <3015>Amos 5:25, 26; <4701>Acts 7). Jehovah had indeed spared the people for the glory of His name, but the sin was still there. Israel as a nation is therefore scattered, and then placed anew under the rod of the covenant, and God distinguishes the remnant, and acts for the sure accomplishment in sovereign grace of that of which the people were incapable as placed under their own responsibility. Israel, as a whole, as a nation, is distinguished from Judah, which continues in a particular position. With regard to the nation, as such, the rebels are cut off and do not enter the land. In the land two-thirds are cut off at the end (<3808>Zechariah 13:8, 9). But in this latter case, it is the Jews who were guilty of the rejection and death of Jesus who are judged. Here it is the dealings of God with the nationguilty from the time of Egypt; there it is the chastisement of the enemies and murderers of Christ. Grace is shown in both cases to the remnant.

From verse 45 it is another prophecy, which contains the application of the threats in the preceding prophecy to the circumstances through which it will be fulfilled, by the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, as unfolded in chapter 21.

Jehovah had unsheathed and sharpened His sword to return it no more to its sheath: it was prepared for the slaughter. The prophet sees Nebuchadnezzar at the head of the two roads to Jerusalem and to Ammon. Jerusalem would treat that which he was doing as a false divination, but she would be overtaken by the judgment of Jehovah. Their conduct had brought their whole sinful course to mind, and the profane Zedekiah (who had filled up the iniquity by despising the oath which he had taken in Jehovah's name) should come to his end when the iniquity was judged; for he had filled up its measure. Moreover, it was now a definitive judgment, and not a chastisement which would allow the unsheathed sword to return to its scabbard, as for His name's sake they had been so often spared as we have seen rehearsed in the chapter. In fact it was a revolution in God's ways, a taking His throne from the earth and the beginning of the times of the Gentiles. Jehovah overturned everything until He should come, to whom in right it all belonged, and to whom the kingdom should be given; that is to say, until Christ. Ammon likewise should be destroyed.

The more these prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah are considered, the more striking do they appear. First of all, they establish the very important fact with respect to the government of the world, namely, that the throne of God has been removed from the earth, and the government of the world entrusted to man under the form of an empire among the Gentiles. In the second place, the veil is also withdrawn as to the government of God in Israel. This test, to which man had been subjected, in order to see if he were capable of being blessed, has only proved the entire vanity of his nature, his rebellion, the folly of his will, so that he is radically evil. Even from Egypt, it was a spirit of rebellion, idolatry, and unbelief, which preferred anything in the world, an idol, or the Assyrian, to Jehovah the true God. Constant in their sin, neither deliverance nor judgment, neither blessing nor experience of their folly, changed the heart of the people or the propensity of their nature. The idolatry that began in Egypt, and their contempt of the word of Jehovah, were not altered by their enjoyment of the promises, but characterised this people until their rejection of Jehovah. But on God's part we see a patience that never belies itself, the most tender care, the most touching appeals, everything that could tend to bring their hearts back to Jehovah; interventions in grace, to lift them out of their misery, and bless them when in a state of faithfulness produced by this grace, through the means of such or such a king; rising up early to send them prophets, until there was no remedy. But they gave themselves up to evil; and, as shown by Ezekiel and Stephen, the Spirit of God returns to the first manifestations of their heart, of which all that followed was but the proof and the expression. And the judgment is executed on account of that which the people have been from the beginning.

After the full manifestation of that which the people were, God changes His plan of government, and reserves for sovereign grace the re-establishment of Israel according to His promises, which He would fulfil by His means who could maintain blessing by His power, and govern the people in peace.

It is not uninteresting to recall, that that sovereign grace, which blesses Israel at last and after all, when responsible human nature has been fully tried, isthough we come to it, where real, through definite conviction of our sins and sinfulnessas to God's ways, the starting point of our path and what belongs to us. Hence the necessity of a new nature, and God's love in giving His Son, are the opening of all to us. The cross for both secures the righteousness through which grace reigns.

**CHAPTER** 22 recapitulates the sin of Jerusalem, of her prophets, her priests, and her princes. The eye of God sought for some one to stand in the gap before Him, and found none. His indignation should consume them. What force the prophecies give to those words of the Lord, "How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

In **CHAPTER** 23 Jehovah justifies Himself for judging Jerusalem by the iniquity and unfaithfulness of her walk. Her whoredom with the Gentiles brought her early course to mind. The same conduct showed the same nature. She has ended as she began, because at heart she was the same. Samaria's lot should be hers. The latter is called a tent or tabernacle, and Jerusalem "My tabernacle in her."

In **CHAPTER** 24 definitive judgment is pronounced against Jerusalem, who was not even ashamed of her sins. The day that Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem, the wife of the prophet dies; and, although she was the dearest object of his affections, Ezekiel was not to mourn. Under the figure of his wife's death he is instructed to refrain his heart before the judgment of Jehovah. The judgment once executed, the mouth of the prophet would be opened, and the word of Jehovah openly addressed to the remnant, so that Jehovah should be known to them. Jerusalem should be set as a caldron on the fire to melt and consume the whole. God had purged her, but she was not purged; and now He causes His fury to rest upon her.

**CHAPTER** 25 has an especial character. The nations that surrounded and that were within the territory of Israel rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the sanctuary. Therefore God would execute judgment upon them. Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines are the objects of this prophecy. The testimony of God against Edom is yet more developed in Obadiah. Thus, by the judgment that should fall upon them, should these nations know that, although Jerusalem had not been a faithful witness, Jehovah

alone is God. Chapters 24 and 25 go together. Chapter 25 anticipates (although the date is similar) the events which gave rise to the manifestations of hatred that are the occasion of the judgments pronounced. But the spirit had shown itself in these tribes or nations from the commencement of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem. Their introduction here is easily to be understood, for these nations were to share the same fate, and are included in this judgment, because they are all upon Israel's territory. Another remarkable element (found also in other prophecies on Edom, and giving a wider meaning to the one we are considering), is, that it declares that the judgment which shall fall on Edom in the end shall be executed by the hand of Israel. Compare Obadiah 17, 18 with verse 14 of this chapter.

Although in a certain sense upon Israel's territory, Tyre has another character, and is the subject of a separate prophecy (chaps. 26-28), because it represents the world and its riches, in contrast with Israel as the people of God; and rejoices, not like the others from personal hatred, but because (having opposite interests) the destruction of that which restrained its career gave free course to its natural selfishness. It is worthy of remark in these prophecies, how God lays open all the thoughts of man with respect to His people and that which they have been towards Him.

In **CHAPTER** 27, Tyre is judged for its ill-will to the people and the city of God. It is overthrown as a worldly system, and all that formed its glory disappears before the breath of Jehovah.

In **CHAPTER** 28 it is the prince and the king of Tyre that are judged for their pride. Verses 1-10 set before us the prince of this world's glory as a man, exalting himself and seeking to present himself as a God, having acquired riches and glory by his wisdom. Verses 11-19, while continuing to speak of Tyre, go, I think, much farther, and disclose, though darkly, the fall and the ways of Satan, become through our sin the prince and God of this world. The prince of Tyre represents Tyre and the spirit of Tyre. The verses which follow (11-19) are much more personal. I do not doubt that, historically, Tyre itself is referred to; verses 16-19 prove it. But, I repeat, the mind of the Spirit goes much farther. The world and its kings are presented as the garden of Jehovah on account of the advantages they enjoy. (The outward government of God is in question, which till then had recognised the different nations around Israel). This however applies more especially to Tyre, which was situated in the territory of Israel, in Emmanuel's land, and which, in the person of Hiram, had been allied with Solomon, and had even helped to build the temple. Its guilt was proportionate. It is the world in relation with God, and if the prince of Tyre represents this state of things as being the world, and a world that has been highly exalted in its capabilities

by this positionan exaltation of which it boasts in deifying itself, the king represents the position itself in which, under this aspect, the world has been placed, and the forsaking of which gives it the character of apostasy. It is this character which gives occasion for the declaration of the enemy's apostasy contained in these verses. He had been where the plants of God flourished, * he had been covered with precious stones (that is to say, with all the variety of beauty and perfection, in which the light of God is reflected and transformed when manifested in, and with respect to, creation). Here the varied reflection of these perfections had been in the creature: a creature was the means of their manifestation. It was not light, properly so called. (God is light; Christ is the light here below, and so far as He lives in us, we are light in Him). It was the effect of light acting in the creature, like a sunbeam in a prism. It is a development of its beauty, which is not its essential perfection, but which proceeds from it.

[* We may see, chapter Ezek. 31:8, 9, 16, that this is a description of the kings of the earth, at least before Nebuchadnezzar, who first substituted one sole dominion given by God, for the many kings of the nations recognised by God as the result of Babel, and in the center of which His people were placed, to make the government of God known through their means.The special relation of Tyre with Israel added something to the position of the merchant city, and gave room also for the use made here of the history of its king as a type or figure of the prince of this world.]

The following are the features of the king of Tyre's character, or that of the enemy of God, the prince of this world. He is the anointed cherubhe is covered with precious stoneshe has been in Eden the paradise of God, upon the mountain of Godhe walked in the midst of the stones of firehe was perfect in his ways until iniquity was found in him. He is cast out of the mountain of God on account of his iniquities; his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted himself. Farther, we find that which, as to the creature, is most exalted; he acts in the judicial government of God according to the intelligence of God (this is the character of the anointed cherub). He is clothed with the moral beauty that variously reflects the character of God as light. * He is recognised among the plants of God, in which God displayed His wisdom and His power in creation, according to His good pleasure, as Creator. He had been there also where the authority of God was exercisedon the mountain of God. He walked where the moral perfections of God were displayed in their glory, a glory before which evil could not stand"the stones of fire." His ways had been perfect. But all these advantages were the occasion of his fall, and characterised it. For the privileges we enjoy always characterise our fall. Whence have we fallen? is the question; for it is the having failed there, when we possessed it, that degrades our condition. Moreover it is not an outward temptation, as in man's casea circumstance which did not indeed take away man's guilt, but

which modified its character. “Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty.” He exalted himself against God, and he was cast out as profane from the mountain of God. His spirit, independent in security, was humbled when he was cast to the ground. His nakedness is manifested to all; his folly shall in the end be apparent to all.

> [* Observe that this takes place in the creature. In the case of Aaron, the type of Christ as priest, it exists in the absolute perfection of grace, which presents us to God according to His perfection in the light. It is afterwards seen in the glory as the foundation of the city, the bride, the Lamb’s wife, in the Revelation. That is, these stones present the fruit of perfect lightwhat God is in His nature shining in and through the creature, in creation, grace, and glory.]

The judgment of Sidon is added. And then, all hope having been taken from Israel, when the judgment of the nations is accomplished, God gathers them and causes them to dwell in their land in peace for ever.

**CHAPTERS** 29-32 contain the judgment of Egypt. Egypt sought, in the self-will of man, to take the place which God had in fact given to Nebuchadnezzar. All must submit. The mighty empire of Asshur had already fallen. Pharaoh, whatever his pretensions and his ambition might be, was no better. We see this judgment of the Assyrian, the chief of all the nations as to his power, in chapter 31:10, 11; where the “mighty one of the heathen” is distinctly brought outfalling before this decree of God. Pharaoh would be consoled by seeing all the great ones of the earth overthrown like himself. Already fallen like the uncircumcised (that is, like people who were not owned of God, nor consequently upheld by Him), all must give place to this new power in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. That which characterised Egypt was the pride of nature, which would follow its own will, and owned no God (chap. 29:9). Such a principle shall no longer be the confidence of God’s people (v. 16). Egypt should have her place, but should no longer rule. The judgment of Egypt should be the occasion of Israel’s blessing. This reaches to the end. In the destruction of the Assyrian, God had shown that He would not allow a nation to exalt itself in this manner. The will of man in Pharaoh did not alter His judgment. In Nebuchadnezzar, as we have seen, a new principle was introduced by God Himself into the world.

Observe that in chapter 32:27 Meshech and Tubal are distinguished from the rest of the nations.

This prophecy concerning Egypt has particular importance. It is composed of three distinct prophecies. The first (chaps. 29, 30) is subdivided; the second, chapter 31; the third, chapter 32. But this last extends to the end of chapter 39, and embraces several subjects in connection with the fate of

Israel in the last days. Observe that chapter Ezek 29:17-21 is a prophecy of a very different date, introduced here on account of its relation to that which precedes it in the same chapter. Chapter 30:20-26 is also a distinct prophecy as to its date.

Until chapter 25 we principally found moral arguments with respect to the state of Israel; from thence to the end of chapter 32 it is rather the execution of the judgment. But the prophecy that announces this execution is remarkable in more than one respect. Nebuchadnezzar is looked at as executing the judgment of God, whose servant he is for the purpose of doing so on Jerusalem, now become pre-eminently the seat of iniquity although the sanctuary of God. At the same time God sets His land free, by these very judgments from all the nations that wrongfully possessed it. He brings to nought the haughty power of man in which Israel had trusted, that is, Egypt, which shall never rise again as a ruling nation. But it was the day of all nations. The result of these judgments, whether on rebellious Jerusalem or on the nations, should be at the same time the re-establishment of Israel according to promise and by the power of God in grace. The snares which had led them into evil were taken away (see chap. Ezek 26:16-21; Ezek 27:34-36). Thus, although these events have had their historical accomplishment by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the ways of God in view of the re-establishment of Israel have been manifested, as far as regards the judgments to be executed judgment, through which all the nations, as well as Israel, who was their center, disappear from the scene as nations. The Spirit, while recounting the execution of the judgments that were to fall on Asshur, Elam, and Meshech, gives details of those that had invaded the land or been snares to Israel. So that the prophetic recital of these very judgments contains in itself the assured hope granted to Israel by the efficacious grace of the Lord. I cannot doubt that all this prophecy of judgment relatesin a perspective brought nigh by the energy of the Spiritto the events of the last days, which will be the complete fulfilment of these purposes and intentions of God.

In **CHAPTER** Ezek 30:3, we see that it is universal. *

> [* It will be remembered that with Nebuchadnezzar God set aside the order He had previously established in the world, revealed in Deuteronomy 32 (namely, of nations and peoples arranged around Israel as a center). He owns Israel no longer as His people. Thus order then falls of itself, and Babel of old, the place of dispersion, becomes the center of one absorbing empire. In connection with the fact that Israel is no longer owned as a people, being judged as such, God addresses Himself to individual conscience in the midst of the nation. But this was the judgment of the nations, and the call of a remnant. And this is why the prophecy reaches in its full bearing to the final judgment of the earth, when that judgment and call are to be fully

accomplished. God consequently Himself delivers and saves His people, judging between sheep and sheep, and executing wrath against all those who have trodden them under foot. The judgment of the one absorbing empire does not form part of the prophecies of Ezekiel (this is found in Daniel), save so far as every oppressor and evil shepherd is judged (chap. 34). The connection of this empire with Israel in the last days will not be immediate. It will politically favor the Jews who do not own the Lord. What I here notice forms the key of the prophecy. Ezekiel speaks from the midst of Israel captive, and does not occupy himself with Judah, owned by itself in the land under the power of the Gentiles.]

I have already quoted the passages which show that for Israel it is the deliverance from their former snares. The pretensions of man are overthrown (chap. 29:3-9), the spirit of dominion (chap. 31:10-14). The nothingness of the glory of man is shown at the end of chapter 31, and of each judgment of chapter 32. We have already seen that the fate of Meshech is mentioned separately, perhaps in view of that which will happen to it in the last days, and which is announced farther on (chap. 39:5).

It is important to remark one point in this series of prophecies, which commences with the judgment of Jerusalem, the center of the former system of nations. They are executed with the object of making them all know Jehovah: only in Israel's case there is, besides this, the understanding and the special verification of prophecy. See chapter 24:24-27, Israel; chapter 25:5, 7, 11, Ammon and Moab; verses 15-17, especial vengeance on the Philistines; chapter 26, Tyre; chapter 28:22, Sidon; chapter 29:19, Egypt; as also chapters 30:26; 32:15. With respect to Edom (chap. 25:14), it is only said that Edom shall know the vengeance of Jehovah by means of Israela further proof that in certain respects this prophecy extends to the last days. These prophecies, then, furnish us in general with the manifestation of Jehovah's power, so as to make Him known to all by the judgments which He executed; already partially realised in the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, but to be fully accomplished by-and-by in favor of Israel.

It will be remarked that, in verse 12 of chapter 35 when Edom is again judged, it is only said, "Thou shalt know that I Jehovah have heard all thy blasphemies." But in verses 4, 9, it is said of Edom, "Thou shalt know" or "Ye shall know that I am Jehovah." So that this knowledge of Jehovah is by the judgment itself, not by any resulting spiritual knowledge of Him; for, when all the earth shall rejoice, Edom shall be made desolate. It will be through judgment that all the nations shall know that Jehovah is God. But when the judgment has been executed and all the earth shall rejoice in blessing, Edom will have only judgment. Compare Obadiah. Edom

undergoes judgment by means of the mighty among the nations, but Israel himself shall strike the final blow. We may see the two means of making Jehovah known in the case of Israel (chap. 24:24-27; 28:26; 34:27; 36:11). In the other cases it is by judgment.

We have yet to observe that in the case of Tyre, commercial glory, and in the case of Egypt, governmental pride founded on power, are absolutely judged, cast down and destroyed without remedy (chap. 26:21; 27:36; 31:18). Compare chapter 32:32. This has been literally fulfilled with respect to the continental Tyre, and the Egypt of the Pharaohs. We have seen a total destruction of Edom announced by Jehovah. That which characterised Edom was its implacable hatred to the people of God.

In **CHAPTER** 33, in view of these judgments, which put His people on entirely new ground (for they were judged as Loammi, with the nations, and this is why the prophecy can look on to the last days, although the judgments had been but partial)in view then of these judgments, God establishes an entirely new principle, namely, individual conduct as the ground of the dealings of God, in contrast with the consequences of national sin (v. 10, 11). Thus the door was still fully open to individual repentance founded on a testimony that applied individually, whatever the national judgment might be. The end to which the judgment applies is in contrast with the effect to be produced by it on the individual, and that in order to confirm the principles. Faith would not be shown now by reckoning on the promises to Israel, or on the intervention of God in behalf of His people as in possession of His promises, for the people were judged; and the very thing that would have been faith, had it been the time of the promises, and that hereafter also will be faith, is but hardness of heart in the time of judgment (v. 24). Compare Isaiah 51:2, a passage often entirely misapplied. The little remnant in the latter days may trust in a God who had called out one man alone and had multiplied him; but such a thought on the part of the people, when God was cutting off the multitude of them because of their iniquities, would only cause the judgment to be more keenly felt. In this way of judgment on the iniquities of which they had been nationally guilty (and not by a blessing which presumption would snatch from God), they should know that Jehovah was God.

The end of Jeremiah has given us an account of the fulfilment of Ezekiel’s words; but all these judgments give room for the intervention of God in behalf of His people by means of sovereign grace accomplished in the Messiah. Still the evil lay in the shepherds, that is, in the kings and princes of Israel, who were not true shepherds (indeed there were none true); and the flock, diseased, scattered, afflicted, and ill-treated, were a prey to their enemies. The shepherds devoured them, and neither protected nor cared for

them. But Jehovah now points it out in order to say that He Himself would seek out His poor sheep, and would judge between sheep and sheep, and would deliver them from the mouth of those that devoured them, * and that He would feed them upon the mountains of Israel, and in fat pastures. He would raise up the true and only shepherd, David (that is, the well-beloved Messiah). Jehovah should be their God, and His servant David their prince. The covenant of peace should be re-established; full and secure blessing should be the abiding portion of the people of God, the house of Israel. There should be no more famine in their land, and the nations should no more devour them. Observe here the way in which Jehovah Himself delivers His sheep, without calling Himself their shepherd, and then raises up a plant of renown, the true David, as their shepherd.

> [* The thirty-third chapter having stated the great principles of God's dealings in the last days, namely, individual condition before God, chapter 34 exhibits the conduct of their leaders: Jehovah judges the latter as having misled and oppressed His people; He discerns Himself "between cattle and cattle." Then in chapter 35 Edom is judged (compare <2301>Isaiah 34). Here, in general, it is the effect, relating to all Israel ("these two countries"). In chapter 36 is the moral renewing of all Israel, that they may judge their ways; in chapter 37, the restoration of the people, as quickened by God in national resurrection; and at last (chaps. 38 and 39) the judgment of the enemies of the people thus restored in peace, or rather, of the enemy (that is, Gog). All these things are connected with the relationship between Jehovah and His people Although He gives David as king, yet the Messiah is not named as having had relations with the people; for in fact this was only true of Judah. It is a general picture of the last days in their great results and their events, everything having its place in reference to all Israel, without giving a history of details.]

In **CHAPTER** 35 God decides the controversy between Edom and Israel, and condemns Mount Seir to perpetual desolation, because of the inveterate hatred of that people to Israel; and instead of delivering up Israel to Edom in the day that He chastises His people, it is Edom that shall bear the punishment of this hatred, when the whole earth shall rejoice. When God chastises His people, the world thinks to possess everything; whereas that chastisement is but the precursor of the world's judgment.

**CHAPTER** 36 continues the same subject with reference to the blessing of Israel. The nations insulted Israel as a land whose ancient high places were their prey, andas the spies had saida land that devoured its inhabitants. God takes occasion from this to show that He favors His people, and Jehovah declares that He will restore peace and prosperity to the land and take away their reproach. Israel had defiled the land and profaned the name of Jehovah, and Jehovah had scattered them among the heathen. And even in this His name would be profaned through their vileness, because the

heathen would say, “These are the people of Jehovah, and are gone forth out of his land.” But Jehovah would intervene and sanctify His great name before the heathen, by bringing His people back from among them, and cleansing them from all their filthiness; taking away the hardness of their hearts, giving them His Spirit, causing them to walk in His statutes, planting them in the land which He had given to their fathers, owning them as His people, and being Himself their God. The reproach that the land devoured its inhabitants would then be evidently without foundation. God would multiply earthly blessings to His people. Jehovah’s work should be evident to all men.

It is principally to this passage (although not exclusively) that the Lord Jesus alludes in John 3, telling Nicodemus that He had spoken of earthly things, and that, as a master of Israel, he ought to have understood that this renewing of heart was necessary to the blessing of Israel in the earth. The truth of this, with regard to a Jew, ought not to surprise him, since it was a work of sovereignty in whomsoever should be born of God; and if Nicodemus did not understand the declaration of the prophets, with respect to the necessity of being born again for Israel’s enjoyment of earthly things, how could he understand if Jesus spoke to him of heavenly things, for the introduction of which the death of the Son of man, His rejection by the Jews, was absolutely necessary?

We may remark that this prophet speaks of the dealings of God with respect to Israel as a nation responsible to Jehovah, and never says anything of the first coming of Christ or of Israel’s responsibility with regard to Him. This took place under the dominion of the Gentiles. Here Nebuchadnezzar is but a rod in the hand of Jehovah, and the times of the Gentiles are not considered. This is the reason why we find the judgment of the nations by Nebuchadnezzar connected with the events of the last days. The rejection of Christ by the Jews is therefore not mentioned here. It is Israel before Jehovah. This remark is important in order to understand Ezekiel (see preceding note).

**CHAPTER** 37 reveals the definitive blessing of the people as a fact, without entering into any details of the events that terminate in this blessing. The dry bones of Israel, of the nation as a whole, are gathered together by the power of God. God accomplishes this work by His Spirit, but by His Spirit acting in power on His people to produce certain effects rather than in giving spiritual life (although it is not to be doubted that those who are blessed among the Jews will be spiritually quickened). The result of this intervention of God is that the dispersed of Israel, hitherto divided into two peoples, are gathered together in the earth, reunited under one Head, as one nation. It is the resurrection of the nation, which was really dead and buried.

But God opens their graves, and places them again in their land restored to life as a nation. The fact of their division before this operation of God is recognised. But the result of the operation is Israel in their unity as a people. One king should reign over them. This, under God's hand, is the result of all their iniquity, and of the devices of the enemies who had carried them into captivity. David (that is, Christ) should be their king. They should be thoroughly cleansed by God Himself. They should walk in His statutes and His judgments, and dwell for ever in their land. The sanctuary of God should be in their midst for evermore; His tabernacle, His dwelling-place, should be among them, He their God and they His people. The heathen should know that Jehovah sanctified Israel, when His sanctuary should be there for ever. It is the full national blessing of Israel from the Lord Jehovah.

**CHAPTER** 38. Gog, not fearing Jehovah, seeks to take possession of the land. He has no thought that Jehovah is there. His pride blinds him.

It is very important to remark that Ezekiel speaks neither of the first nor the second coming of Christ, nor of the circumstances of the Jews in connection with the empire of the Gentiles. The latter only appear as instruments performing the will of God. The prophet brings Jehovah and Israel into the scene. He presents Christ indeed, but as being there already and in the character of David. Jehovah raises up for them a plant of renown. His coming is not the question. The judgments of Jehovah upon the earth make Him known to the nations and to Israel (to the latter His blessings also). The nations learn through these, a point of capital importance in God's ways, that Israel went into captivity because of their sins, and not because their God was like the idols of the heathen. But in all the ways of God thus presented, not only is the coming of Christ not mentioned, but it has even no place. It belongs to another series of thoughts and revelations of the Spirit of Godanother order of events.

It is well also to observe that chapters 36 and 37, and the two following ones taken together, are not consecutive; but each of the first two by itself, and the last two, taken together as a whole, treat of distinct subjects, each subject being complete, and presenting the introduction of Israel's blessing in connection with the subject treated, and closing with the assurance that it will be final and perpetual. The subject of all these prophecies is the land, and the blessings of God upon the land of Israel. This land, which belonged to Jehovah, He would not have defiled. He drives out Israel from it in judgment; and when He has cleansed the people, He makes the nations, as well as Israel, understand His ways in this respect. He acts in full grace towards His people He makes it known that they are His people, that He will be sanctified, and that He is sanctified, in their midst.

I think, then, that Gog is the end of all the dealings of God with respect to Israel, and that God brings up this haughty power in order to manifest on earth, by a final judgment, His dealings with Israel and with the Gentiles, and to plant His blessing, His sanctuary, and His glory in the midst of Israel (none of the people being henceforth left in exile afar from their land).

Besides the numerous verses in which it is said, “And they shall know that I am Jehovah,” the following passages may be referred to, which will show the leading thought in those declarations and judgments of God, namely, the manifestation of His government on the eartha government making manifest the true character of God in His rule, and securing its demonstration in the world, in spite of the unfaithfulness of His people; and that, in grace as well as in holiness, chapters Ezek 36:19-23, 36; Ezek 39:7, 23, 24, 28. With respect to Israel, see chapter Ezek 34:30; to the enemy, chapters Ezek 35:12 and Ezek 37:28.

That which I have just said of Gog supposes that all the events which relate to the coming of the Son of man are omitted in the writings of this prophetwhich I believe to be the case. The Book treats only of the governmental ways of God on the earth, of Jehovah in Israel. The power designated by “Gog” is that of the north, outside of the territory of the beasts in Daniel. I doubt not that the right translation would be “Prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,” as learned men have remarked. Cush and Phut were on the Euphrates, as well as on the Nile. Persia is known. Togarmah is the northeast of Asia Minor. The audaciousness of this king causes the wrath of Jehovah to break forth.

I will add, in order to facilitate the establishment of the connection of this with other passages, that I doubt not Jesus will reign in the character of David before assuming that of Solomon. He suffered as David, driven away by the jealousy of Saul. The remnant will pass through this in principle. This is the key to the Book of Psalms. He will reign as David, Israel being blessed and accepted, but all their enemies not yet destroyed. And, finally, He will reign as Solomon, that is to say, as Prince of peace. Many passages, such as Micah 5, several chapters in Zechariah, Jer 51:20, 21, Ezek 25:14, speak of this time, in which Israel, already reconciled and acknowledged and at peace within, shall be the instrument for executing Jehovah’s judgments without (compare Isa 11:10-14).

All, then, that related to the destruction of the empires which are the subject of Daniel’s prophecies has no place in the prophecies of Ezekiel; nor that which takes place in order to put Israel again in relation with God; nor the consequences to the Jews of their rejection of Christ. These subjects will be

found elsewhere, as in Daniel, Zechariah, and more generally in Isaiah. Here God makes Himself known in Israel. Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, falls upon the mountains of Israel, and Jehovah makes Himself known in the eyes of many nations (chap. 38:21-23). The judgment shall reach the land of Gog, and the isles (chap. 39:6). The name of Jehovah shall be known in Israel, and the heathen shall know that Jehovah, the Holy One, is in Israel (v. 7). And, the glory of Jehovah being thus manifested in the midst of the nations, Israel from this day forth shall know that it is Jehovah Himself who is their God, and the nations shall know that it was the iniquity of Israel that brought judgment upon them, and not that Jehovah had failed either in power or in the stability of His counsels (v. 22-24). In a word, Jehovah and His government should be fully known in Israel, and by means of this people in the world; and from that time God would no more hide His face from them. His Spirit should be poured out upon His people. Verses 25-29 recapitulate the dealings of God towards them for the establishment of His government, and to make Himself known among them.

The remaining part of the prophecy is the establishment of His sanctuary in the midst of His people. The reader will perceive that we find in these last chapters a revelation of the same kind as that given to Moses for the tabernacle, and to David for the templeonly that in this case the details are preserved in the writings given to the people by inspiration, as a testimony for the time to come, and to conscience in all times. God takes an interest in His people. He will reestablish His sanctuary among men. Meantime the testimony of this has been given to the people to bring them under the responsibility which this goodwill of God towards them involved. For the prophet was commanded to tell the house of Israel all that he had seen; and he did so. When the dimensions of the different parts of the house have been given, the glory of Jehovah fills the house, in the vision, as happened historically at the dedication of the tabernacle and of the temple.

**CHAPTER** 43:7 proclaims that the house, which is the throne and the footstool of Jehovah, should no more be defiled by profane things. The prophet was then to declare that, if Israel renounced their unfaithfulness, Jehovah would return to dwell there. Thus the people are placed at all times under this responsibility. The prophet was to show the house to Israel that they might repent; and, if they repented, he was to explain it to them in detail. And it is this which takes place at the end. The ordinances of the house were to be shown them, if they humbled themselves; and in view of this the prophet announces all that was to be done for the cleansing and the consecration of the altar, in order that the regular service might be performed.

**CHAPTER** 44 makes known the fact that Jehovah is returned to His house, and the memorial of His having done so is preserved in that the door by which He entered is to remain for ever shut. The Prince alone (for God will raise up a Prince in Israel) is to enter through itto sit before Jehovah. We have seen that this prophet always contemplates Israel on their own ground, as an earthly people in relation with the throne of God on the earth (compare [3807]Zechariah 12:7,8, 10). Finally God maintains the holiness of His house against all strangers, and even against the Levites who had forsaken it. The family of Zadok is established in the priesthood, and directions are given to keep it from all profanation.

**CHAPTER** 45. The portion of the priests in the land is assigned themclose to that of the sanctuary. The portion of the Levites was to adjoin that of the priests, and then came the possession of the city and its suburbs. That which remained of the breadth of the land was for the Prince and for the inheritance of His children, in order that the people should no longer be oppressed. All the rest of the land was for the people. Provision is also made for the daily offerings, and for those of the Sabbath. The other appointed offerings were to be made by the Prince.

Some details require one or two remarks. The cleansing of the sanctuary commences the year. It is no longer an atonement at the end of seven months to take away the defilements that have been accumulating. The year opens with an already accomplished cleansing. Afterwards, in order that all may have communion with the sufferings of the Paschal Lamb, an offering is made on the seventh day of the month for every one that erreth, and every one that is simple (v. 20). During the feast they offered seven bullocks instead of two. The character of worship will be perfect. The sense of Christ's acceptance as the burnt-offering will be perfect in that day. The feast of Pentecost is omitteda circumstance of great significance, for this feast characterises our present position. Not that the Spirit will not be given in the world to come, when Christ shall establish His kingdom. But this gift is not that which, connecting us with a heavenly Christ and the Father in Christ's absence, characterises that period as it does the present time. For Christ will be present.

We have observed that the prophet sees everything in a point of view connected with Israel. Thus the remembrance of redemption, the passover, the basis of all, and the enjoyment of rest celebrated at the feast of the tabernacles, will characterise the position of Israel before God. The two feasts are celebrated in the recognition of the full value of the burnt offering presented to God. Another circumstance which distinguishes the worship of this millennial day is, that the two feasts which are types of that period are marked out in the worshipthe Sabbath, and the new moon, rest and

re-establishment, Israel appearing anew in the world. The inner gate on the side of the east was open on that day, and the Prince worshipped at the very threshold of the gate and the people before the gate (chap. 46). The other days it was shut. They stood thus before Jehovah in the consciousness of the rest which God had given to Israel and of His grace in again manifesting His people in the light. Nevertheless it still remains true that neither the people nor the Prince entered within. Those who are the most blessed on the earth in that day of blessing will never have that access into God's presence which we have, by the Spirit, through the veil. Pentecost belongs to, and links itself with, the rending of the veil; and gives us to walk in all liberty in the light, as God Himself is in the light, having entered into the holy place by the new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.

The Prince entered by the outer door on the side of the east, and he went out by the same door. In the solemn feasts, the people went in by the north gate and came out by the south gate, and the Prince in their midst. When he went in alone, as a voluntary worshipper, he entered and retired again by the eastern gate. These ordinances, while giving remarkable honor to the Prince, in connection with the glory of God, who gave him his place among the people, equally secured that which follows (v. 16-18) of the brotherly and benevolent relations between him and the people of God, and took away all opportunities of oppression.

The last two chapters do not require any lengthened remarks. The waters that issue from the sanctuary represent the life-giving power that proceeds from the throne of God, flowing through His temple, and healing the Dead Sea, the abiding token of judgment. The waters abound in fish, the trees that grow beside them are filled with fruit, the marshes alone remain under the cursethey are "given to salt." The blessing of that day is real and abundant, but not complete. The land is divided between the tribes in a new manner, by straight lines drawn from east to west. The portion for the sanctuary and for the city, or the 25,000 square reeds, are situated next to the seventh tribe, beginning from the north. The name of the city thenceforth shall be "Jehovah is there." Compare, for the waters that flow from the temple, <290318>Joel 3:18; <381408>Zechariah 14:8 passages that refer to the same period.

It appears that the two places pointed out to the fishermen as a boundary were the two extremities of the Dead Sea (we may compare <011407>Genesis 14:7; <141202>2 Chronicles 20:2; and <231508>Isaiah 15:8). The main features in the whole passage are the re-establishment of Israel, but on new grounds and blessing, analogous to that of paradise (an image borrowed from this prophecy in the Apocalypse); * but, after all, with the reserve that this

blessing did not absolutely remove all evil, as will be the case in the eternal ages.

> [* When I say “borrowed,” it is not that the Spirit of God has not given us an original image in the Apocalypse: one has but to read it to be convinced of the contrary. But Old Testament imagery is constantly employed in the descriptions there givenonly in such a manner as to apply it to heavenly things, a circumstance that makes it much easier to understand the book by helping us to enter into its real character through its analogy with the Old Testament.]

There is a powerful and abiding source of blessing which greatly surmounts the evil, and almost effaces it; nevertheless it is not entirely taken away. Still the name of the city, of the seat of power, that which characterises it, is “Jehovah is there”Jehovah, that great King, the Creator of all things, and the Head of His people Israel.

# DANIEL

In the Book of Ezekiel we have seen the government of God on earth fully developed in connection with Israel; whether in condemning the sin which occasioned the judgment of that people, or in their restoration under the authority of Christ, the Branch that should spring from the house of David, and who, in the book of that prophet, bears even the name of David, as the true "beloved" of God, the description of the temple, with its whole organisation, being given at the end. In this development we have found Nebuchadnezzar, the head of the Gentiles, introduced as Jehovah's servant (chapters Ezek 29:20; Ezek 30:24) for the judgment of sinful Israel, who were rebellious and even apostate, worshipping false gods. God had made Israel the center of a system of nations, peoples, and languages, that had arisen in consequence of the judgment on Babel, and existed before God independently of each other. The nation of Israel was doubtless very distinct from all that surrounded it, whether as a people to whom the true God was known, or as having in their midst the temple and the throne of God; but, whatever the contrast might be between the condition of Israel as a nation, and that of the other nations, still Israel formed a part of that system of nations before God (Deut 32:8).

In executing the judgment of God on Israel Nebuchadnezzar set aside this whole system at once, and took its place in the absolute and universal dominion which he had received from God. It is of this order of things and of its consequencesof this dominion of the head of the Gentiles, and of the Gentile kings, in the successive phases that characterised their historythat the Book of Daniel treats, bringing into notice a remnant of Israel, in the midst of this system, and subject to this dominion. The king of Judah having been given up into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, the royal seed is found in the same position. The remnant becomes the especial object of the thoughts of God revealed by His Spirit in this book.

Besides the testimony rendered to Jehovah by the fact of the faithfulness of the remnant in the midst of the idolatrous Gentiles, two important things characterise their history as developed in this book. The first is that the Spirit of prophecy and of understanding in the ways of God is found in this remnant. We have seen this raised up in Samuel, when all Israel had failed, and subsist through their whole history under the shadow of royalty. The Spirit of prophecy now again becomes the link of the people with God, and the only resting-place for their faith, amid the ruin which the just judgment of God had brought upon them. The second circumstance that characterises the dealings of God with regard to this remnant is, that, preserved by God

through all the misfortunes into which the sins of the people had cast them, this remnant will assuredly share the portion which God bestows on His people according to His government and according to the faithfulness of His promises. We find these in the first and last chapters of the Book we are considering.

This Book is divided into two parts, which are easily distinguished. The first ends with chapter 6, and the second with the close of the Book, the first and last chapters having nevertheless a separate character, as an introduction and a conclusion, respectively making known the position of the remnant, to whom, as we have said, the testimony of God was confided at the beginning and at the end.

The two great divisions have also a distinct character. The first sets before us the picture of the dominion of the Gentiles, and the different positions it would assume before God according to the human pride which would be its animating principle. This picture contains historical features which plainly indicate the spirit that will animate the ruling power in its different phases; and then the judgment of God. This division is not composed of direct revelations to Daniel, except for the purpose of recalling Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is the heads of the Gentiles that are presented. It is the external and general history of the monarchies that were to succeed each other, or the different and successive features that would characterise them, and their final judgment, and the substitution of the kingdom of Christ; and especially, the course and judgment of the one which God had Himself established, and which represents all the others, as being invested with this character of divine appointment. The others did but inherit providentially the throne which God had committed to the first. It was a question between God and Israel that gave this monarchy its supremacy. It is the spirit of presumptuous idolatry, and of blasphemy against the God of Israel that leads to its destruction. Chapter 6 does not give the iniquity of the king, except as submitting to the influence of others. It is the princes of the people who will have none but the king acknowledged as God, and who undergo the same punishment that they sought to inflict on those who were faithful to the Lord.

The second part of the Book, which consists of communications made by God to Daniel himself, exhibits the character of the heads of the Gentiles in relation to the earth, and their conduct towards those who shall acknowledge God; and at last the establishment of the divine kingdom in the Person of the Son of mana kingdom possessed by the saints. The details of God's dealings with His people at the end are given in the last chapter. We may also remark that chapter 7 gives essentially the history of the western power, chapter 8 that of the easternthe two horns. Chapter 9, although

especially regarding Jerusalem and the peoplethe moral center of these questions, is connected on that very account with the western power that invaded them. From chapter 10 to the end of chapter 11 we are again in the east, closing in with the judgment of the nations there, and the establishment of the remnant of Israel in blessing.

Let us now examine these chapters consecutively.

**CHAPTER** 1 sets before us the royalty of Judah, formerly established by God over His people in the person of David, falling under the power of Nebuchadnezzar; and the king, Jehovah's anointed, given up by Jehovah into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, on whom God now bestowed dominion. That which was announced by Isaiah (chap. 39:7) falls upon the children of the royal seed; but God watches over them and brings them into favor with those that kept them. This was especially the case with respect to Daniel; The two characteristics of the faithful remnant in captivity are prominently marked in this chapter:firstly, faithful to the will of God, although at a distance from His temple, they do not defile themselves among the Gentiles; secondly, their prayer being granted, understanding is given them, as we see in chapter 2 in Daniel's case, even the knowledge of that which God alone can reveal, as well as His purpose in that revelation. They alone possess this understanding, a token of divine favor and the fruit of their faithfulness through grace. This is the case with Daniel in particular, whose faith and earnest fidelity marks out the path of faith for his companions. This did not interfere with their subjection to the Gentiles, whose power was the ordinance of God for the time being. But this is a most important element: the place of true knowledge, of intelligence of the divine mind, what is called the secret of the Lord, in the days of Babylonish corruption and power, is the thorough keeping oneself undefiled by the smallest contact with what it gives, with the meat with which it would feed us.

On the other hand, we see in the second chapter the mighty king of the Gentiles made the depositary of the history of the Gentiles, and of God's entire plan, as the recipient of these divine communications; yet in such a manner as to exhibit Daniel, the captive child of Israel, the faithful one who kept himself separate in Babylon as the one whom the Lord acknowledged, and who enjoyed His favor. But the details of this chapter, as a general picture of Gentile power, beginning with the dominion bestowed on Nebuchadnezzar, must be considered more attentively.

We may first observe that the Gentile kingdoms are seen as a whole. It is neither historical succession nor moral features with respect to God and man, but the kingdoms all together forming, as it were, a personage before

God, the man of the earth in the eye of Godglorious and terrible in his public splendor in the eyes of men. Four imperial powers were to succeed each other, as the great head of which God had set up Nebuchadnezzar himself. There should be in certain respects a progressive deterioration; and at length the God of heaven would raise up another power that would execute judgment on that which still existed, and cause the image to disappear from off the earth, setting up in its place a kingdom that should never be overthrown. In the progressive decline in principle and character of imperial power there would be no diminution of material strength. Iron, that breaks in pieces and crushes all things, characterises the fourth power. The peculiar excellency of the head of gold appears to me to consist in its having received authority immediately from God Himself. In fact the absolute authority of the first power was founded on the gift of the God of heaven; the others succeeded by providential principles. But God, known as supreme, bestowing authority on the head, replacing His own authority on the earth by that of the head of the Gentiles, was not the immediate source of authority to the others. Babylon was the authority established of God. And therefore we found in Ezekiel (and the same thing is seen elsewhere) that the judgment of Babylon is connected with the restoration of Israel and of the throne of God.

Observe, nevertheless, that God does not here present Himself as God of earth, but of heaven. In Israel He was God of the earth. He will be so again at the restitution of all things. Here He acts in sovereignty as God of heaven, setting up man, in a certain sense, in His place on the earth (see v. 37, 38). Although more limited, it is a dominion characterised by the same features as that of Adam. It differs in that men are placed under his power; it is more limited, for the sea is not included in his sovereignty, but it reaches to every place where the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven exist. Human strength is found at the end of its history; but the subsisting power is much more remote from the ancient relationship of God with the world.

The mixture of iron and of potter’s clay is a change wrought in the primitive character of the imperial Roman poweranother element is introduced into it; the character remains in part, but another element is added. The energetic will of man is not there in an absolute manner. It is the introduction into the imperial Roman power of an element distinct from that which constituted its imperial strength, namely, the will of man devoid of consciencemilitary and popular power concentrated in one individual without conscience. There are two causes here of weaknessdivision and the want of coherence between the elements. The kingdom (v. 41) shall be divided, and (v. 42) it shall be partly strong and partly brittle. The “seed of men” is, I think, something outside of that which characterises the proper strength of the kingdom. But

these two elements will never combine. It appears to me that the Barbaric or Teutonic element is probably here pointed out as added to that which originally constituted the Roman empire. The fact of a subdivision is seen in verse 43. It is then announced that, in the days of these last kings, He who rules from heaven will set up a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and that shall never pass into other hands. This is properly the only kingdom that, on God's part, takes the place of the kingdom of Babylon. The God of heaven had established Nebuchadnezzar in his kingdom, and had given him power, and strength, and glory, making all men subject to him. Doubtless the three others had followed, according to the will of Him who orders all things. But it is only with respect to the kingdom of verse 44, that it is once more said, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom." The character, and some leading features in the history, of the last four of the kingdoms are given. Nothing but the existence of the two preceding ones is stated, except the inferiority of the latter of the two to the first. So that the Spirit of God gives us the divine establishment of the first, the character of the fourth, and the divine establishment of the fifth or final kingdom.

We will now observe the manner in which this last kingdom is established; and we see that it is accomplished by means of a judicial and destructive act which reduces the image to powder, bringing about its complete dissolution, so that no traces of it are left (v. 34, 35). The instrument of this destruction was not formed by the wisdom or the schemes of man. It is "cut out without hands." It does not act by a moral influence that changes the character of the object on which it acts. It destroys that object by force. It is God who establishes it and gives it that force. The stone does not gradually increase in size to displace the image. Before it extends itself, it destroys the image. When it has become greatit is not merely a right given by God over men, it fills the whole earthit is the exalted seat of a universal authority. It is on the last form of power, exhibited in the image, that the stone falls with destructive forcewhen the empire is divided and is partly strong and partly weak on account of the elements of which its members are composed. We may observe, that it is not God destroying the image in another way to establish the kingdom. The kingdom which He is establishing smites the feet of the image as its first act. It is the outward and general history of that which, by God's appointment, took the place of His throne and His government in Jerusalem, and which had gradually degenerated in its public character with respect to God, and which at length comes to its end by the judgment executed by the kingdom established of God without human agency. The kingdom of Christ, which falls on the last form of the monarchy formerly established by God, destroys the whole form of its existence, and itself fills the world.

I have nothing particular to say on the four monarchies. We find Babylon, Persia, and Greece named in the book, as being already known to the Jews, and the Romans introduced by the name which their territory bore, the coasts of Chittim; so that I receive, without further question, the four great empires ordinarily recognised by every one as pointed out in this prophecy. It does not appear to me that these prophecies leave room for any doubt on the subject.

The effect of the communication, which proves that God is with the remnant who alone understand His mind, is that the haughty Gentile acknowledges the God of Israel as supreme in heaven and on earth. That which characterises the remnant here is that God reveals to them His mind.

After this general picture, we have, historically, the characteristic features of these empires, marking the condition into which they fall, through their departure from Godprimarily and principally Babylon.

In **CHAPTER** 3 we have the first characteristic feature of man invested with imperial power, but whose heart is afar from Goda distance augmented by the very possession of power. He will have a God of his own, a God dependent on the will of man; and, in this case, dependent on the depositary of the imperial power. This is man's wisdom. The religious instincts of men are gratified in connection with the supreme power; and the influences of religion are exercised in binding all the members of the empire in one blended mass around the head, by the strongest bond, without any appearance of authority. For the religious wants of man are thus connected with his own will; and his will is unconsciously subject to the center of power. Otherwise religion, the most powerful motive of the heart, becomes a dissolvent in the empire. But the will of man cannot make a true God; and consequently Nebuchadnezzar, although he had confessed that there was none like the God of the Jews, forsakes Him and makes a God for himself. The Gentile government rejects God, the source of its power; and the true God is only acknowledged by a faithful and suffering remnant. The empire is idolatrous.

This is the first great feature that characterises the dominion of Babylon. But the faithfulness that opposes this wise system which binds the most powerful motive of the whole people to the will of their head, uniting them in worship around that which he presents to themfaithfulness like this touches the mainspring of the whole movement. The idol is not God at all; and, however powerful man may be, he cannot create a God. The man of faith, subject indeed to the king, as we have seen, because appointed of God, is not subject to the false God which the king sets up, denying the true God who gave him his authority, and who is still acknowledged by the man

of faith. But power is in the king's hands; and he will have it known that his will is supreme.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are cast into the fiery furnace. But it is in the sufferings of His people that God in the end appears as God. He allows their faithfulness to be tried in the place where evil exists, that they may be with Him in the enjoyment of happiness in the place where His character and His power are fully manifested, whether on this earth, or in a yet more excellent manner in heaven.

We may observe that faith and obedience are as absolute as the will of the king. Nothing can be finer and more calm than the answer of the three believers. God is able to deliver, and He will deliver; but, happen what may, they will not forsake Him. The king in his fury defies God. "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" God allows him to take his own way. The effect of his headlong rage is that the instruments of his vengeance are destroyed by the fierce flames prepared for the faithful Hebrews. The latter are cast into the furnace, and (outwardly) the king's will is accomplished. But this is only to manifest more brightly the power and the faithfulness of God, who comes, even into the midst of the fire, to prove the interest He takes in the fidelity of His servants. The effect, to them, of the fire is that their bands are consumed, and that they have His presence whose form is like the Son of God, even in the eyes of the king who denied His almighty power. The result is a decree forbidding the whole world to speak against the God of the Jews, the glory of that weak and captive people.

Remark here that the remnant are characterised by their faithfulness and obedience. They manifest their faithfulness by refusing to have any God but their own God: no concessionit would be to deny Him. For, to acknowledge the true God, He alone must be acknowledged. Truth is but the full revelation of Him and can only recognise itself. To put itself on a level with falsehood would be saying it was not truth.

We find three principles marked out with respect to the remnant. They do not defile themselves by partaking of that which the world bestowsthe king's meat. They have understanding in the mind and revelations of God. They are faithful in refusing absolutely to acknowledge any God but their own, who is the true God. The first principle is common to them all. The second is the Spirit of prophecy, of which Daniel is here the vessel. The third is the portion of every believer, although there may be no Spirit of prophecy. The nearer we are to the power of the world, the more likelihood there is of suffering if we are faithful. It must be observed that all this is connected with the position and the principles of the Jews.

Remark also that the Gentile will and power recognise God in two ways, and by different means; both being the privileges granted to the remnant. The first of these privileges is having the mind of Jehovah, the revelation of His thoughts and counsels. This leads the Gentile to own the God of Daniel as God of gods and Lord of kings. That is His position in respect of all that was exalted above the earth. He was supreme in heaven and earth. The second is that He interests Himself in the poor remnant of His people, and has power to deliver them in the tribulation into which rebellious and idolatrous (and thus apostate) power has thrown them. The result here is that He is acknowledged, and His faithful ones are delivered and exalted. The first is more general and Gentilethe Gentiles' own recognition of God; the second, the effect of deliverance for this Jewish remnant.

The establishment of idolatrous unity in religion, and the pride of human power, are the characteristics here given of Babylon. This folly, which does not know God, fills the whole course of time allotted to this power"seven times." At the end the Gentile owns for himself and praises and blesses the Most High. This chapter then gives the Gentile power's own relationship with God, not merely his connection with the God and people of the Jews. Hence the title of God, in chapter 4, is the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men; in chapter 3 it was our God for the heart of the faithful remnant, and the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, for the world that saw the deliverance.

In **CHAPTER** 4 we see the manifestation of human pride; the king glories in the work of his hands, as though he had created his own greatness. This pride brings judgment. Power is reduced to the condition of the beasts that know not God, and are devoid of man's understanding. The only true privilege of man, that which ennobles him, is that he can look up to God and acknowledge Him. Without this he looks downward; he cannot suffice to himself; he is degraded. Dependence is his glory, for it sets him before God, gives him to know God; and his mind, associated with God, receives from Him its measure and its knowledge. Pride and independence separate man from God; he becomes a beast, devoid of real intelligence. Now this condition depicts that of the kingdoms of which the prophet speaks (looked at as a whole before God, and represented by the head established by God, Nebuchadnezzar). Seven times, or seven years, pass over the head of Nebuchadnezzar deprived of his reason. He had exalted himself; he had been humbled. The times of the Gentiles are characterised by the absence of all such understanding as would put governmental power in connection with God. To make idols, to build Babylon, and not to know God; such were the moral characteristics of a power that God had established in place

of His own throne at Jerusalem. Such is the moral capacity of man in possession of that power which has been committed to him. *

> [* David's throne had been characterised by power in obedience, the king having to write out a copy of the law and observe it; Nebuchadnezzar's throne is one of absolute power, man supreme in the exercise of his own willthe twofold way of testing man in the place of authority.]

But the scene closes with testimony to the glory of the Most High God, the King of Heaven. Nebuchadnezzar recognises His majesty and blesses Him, now that His judgment is removed. He acknowledges Him as Him who liveth for ever, who abases and exalts whom He will, doing according to His will in heaven and on earth, all men being but vanity before His power and majesty. Here it is not the deliverance of the faithful which produces its effect, but the judgment that fell on the Gentiles themselves, who, after the judgment, are delivered, and understanding given them with respect to Jehovah; and that in connection with the testimony committed to the Jews by the Spirit of prophecy which God had bestowed on the remnant. The king lifts up his eyes to heaven, instead of being only a beast that looks down upon the earth. He becomes intelligent and submissive, and joyfully blesses the Most High God.

We may remark this title of "Most High." It is the name given to Jehovah in the interview between Melchisedec and Abraham, in which is added thereto, "Possessor of heaven and earth." This is, in fact, the character that God will assume when He shall gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; and Christ shall be the true Melchisedec. The Gentiles shall be fully subjected to God. This will be the time of "the restitution of all things" spoken of by the prophets.

There are yet some detailed observations to be made. It is judgment, followed by deliverance, which produces this result. We may notice the force of this symbol of a great tree. It is a mighty one of the earth, capable of taking others under its protection. In this case it was one in the highest position possible for man. The fowls of the heaven had their habitation in it; that is to say, that all classes of persons sought shelter and protection in it. We learn also that God takes knowledge of the principles that guide the governments of the earth, considered as the depositaries of the power which they hold from God. Although it is not (as in Israel) His throne on the earth, God watches over all, and judges that to which He has committed authority. He does not rule immediately; but He holds responsible him to whom He has entrusted the rule, in order that he might own the authority of God as supreme in this world.

With respect to the term “watcher,” I do not think that intelligence as to who it was that brought the decree of judgment goes beyond Nebuchadnezzar’s religious condition. Daniel ascribes it immediately to the Most High. That angels may be its intelligent instruments, and that its administration may be in some sort committed to them, presents no difficulty; and the epistle to the Hebrews, as well as other scriptures, teaches us that angels are thus employed. The world to come will not be thus subjected to them.

We see, in verse 27, that Daniel sets his responsibility before Nebuchadnezzar, exhorting him to alter his conduct.

We may also remark here, that it is the “King of heaven” whom Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges. This was necessarily His place. The God of the earth had His throne at Jerusalem. But then Nebuchadnezzar would have had no place there. We never find the throne at Jerusalem in Daniel, either morally or prophetically. His prophecies always stop short of that. He is a captive among the Gentiles, faithful to God there, and taught of Him. But God cannot be to him the God of the earth. * It is the God of heaven, ruling everywhere and over all things, doing according to His will in heaven and on earth; but not yet reigning over the earth as the king of the earth. On the contrary, He had just renounced this; and had committed the power to Nebuchadnezzar, while He withdrew from the presence of His earthly people’s iniquity to shut Himself up in His supreme and immutable power; the results of which would not be shown till afterwards, but according to which He even then governed, although hidden from the eyes of men.

> [* The seed of David will not be in captivity at Babylon when God takes His place as the God of the earth.]

The reader may perhaps expect more detail. It will be found in the communications made immediately to Daniel. But those who have laid hold of the principles we have been establishing (and the great object of these chapters is to present them) will possess elements of the greatest importance for understanding all the prophecies of this book; and without these principles the meaning of its revelations will never be clearly apprehended. It must be remembered that we are on the ground here of the Jews in captivity among the Gentiles, understanding God’s dealings with them, and His judgment of their condition while the power had been left in their hands.

In **CHAPTER** 5 the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles with respect to the God of Israel reaches the highest point, and assumes that character of insolence and contempt which is but the effort of weakness to conceal itself. In the midst of the orgies of a great feast to his lords and courtiers

Belshazzar causes the vessels of the temple of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem, to be brought, that he and his guests might drink therein; and he praises the gods of gold and of silver and of stone. The madness of the king puts the question between the false gods and Jehovah the God of Israel. Jehovah decides the question that very night by the destruction of the king and of all his glory. The warning which God gives him is interpreted by Daniel. But, although subject to the king, Daniel does not treat him with the same respect that he had for Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar had taken the place of an insolent enemy to Jehovah, and Daniel answers him according to God's revelations of his doom, and to the ostentatious manifestation which the king made of his iniquity, magnifying his own gods and insulting Jehovah. Accordingly the warning was no longer remedial and left no room for repentance. It announced judgment; and the very annunciation sufficed to destroy all the insolence of the impious king. For he had neglected the warning given him by the history of Nebuchadnezzar. This narrative gives us the last character of the iniquity of the sovereign power of the Gentiles, in opposition to the God of Israel, and the judgment which falls in consequence upon the monarchy of which Babylon was the head, and to which Babylon had given its own character. For, whatever may have been the longsuffering of God, and His dealings in other respects towards the monarchy of the Gentiles, as the power to which He committed authority in the world, all was already lost for these empires, even in the days of Babylon.

Another form of iniquity appears besides that of Babylon (chap. 6). Cyrus, personally, had better thoughts; and God, from whom they came, made use of him for the temporary re-establishment of His people, in order that the Messiah should come and present Himself to them the last trial of His beloved people. It is not Cyrus, therefore, whom we find here the instrument of the iniquity which sought to destroy Danielof that human will which can never endure faithfulness to God. Here it is not idolatry, nor is it insult offered to Jehovah, but the exaltation of man himself, who would shut out all idea of God, who would have no God. This is one of the features that characterise the depths of the human heart.

Man in general is well pleased with a God who will help him to satisfy his passions and his desiresa God who suits his purpose for the unity of his empire and the consolidation of his power. The religious part of man's nature is satisfied with gods of this kind, and worships them willingly, though he who establishes them imperially may do it only politically. Poor world! the true God suits neither their conscience nor their lusts. The enemy of our souls is well-pleased to cultivate in this manner the religiousness of our nature. False religion sets up gods that correspond to the desires of the

natural heart, whatever they may be; but which never call into communion and never act upon the conscience. They may impose ceremonies and observances, for these suit man; but they can never bring an awakened conscience into relationship with themselves. That which man fears, and that which man desires, is the sphere of their influence. They produce nothing in the heart beyond the action of natural joys and fears.

But, on the other hand, the pride of man sometimes assumes a character that changes everything in this respect. Man will himself be God and act according to his own will, and shut out a rivalship which his pride cannot endure. A superiority which cannot be disputed, if God exists, is insupportable to one who would stand alone. God must be got rid of. The enemies of the faithful avail themselves of this disposition. Cruelty is less inventive, save that its subtlety is shown in this, that, in flattering the higher power, it does not appear to blame any except those who disobey and despise his word.

The contest being with God Himself, the question with men is decided with more carelessness and less passion as to them. Passion allies itself less with the pride than with the will of man. Man, whatever his position, is the slave of those who pay him the tribute of their flattery. Self-will is more its own master. In this case, deceived by his vanity, the king finds himself bound by laws, apparently instituted to guard his subjects from his caprices, under color of attributing the character of immutability to his will and to his wisdoma character that belongs to God alone. Daniel is cast into the lions' den. God preserves him. He will do the same for the remnant of Israel at the end of the age. The judgment, which the enemies of Israel sought to bring upon those who were faithful among that people, is executed upon themselves. But the effect of this judgment extends farther than in the former cases. Nebuchadnezzar forbade any evil being spoken of the God of Israel, and He extolled the King of heaven by whom he had been humbled. But Darius commands that in every place the God of Daniel and of Israel should be acknowledged, the only living God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and who had indeed delivered the man that trusted in Him. Historically it appears that Darius had some feelings of respect for God and for Daniel's piety. It was not his God, but the God of Daniel: still he honors Him, and even calls Him the living God.

Thus we see that idolatry, impiety, the pride that exalts itself above everything, are the characteristics of the great empires which Daniel sets before us, and the causes of their judgment. The judgment results in owning the God of the Jews as the living and delivering God and the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men. The same features will be found in the last days. This terminates the first part of the book.

We come now to the communications made to Daniel himself, which contain not merely general principles, but details relative to God's people, and the Gentiles who oppressed them historical details, though given beforehand prophetically.

The chief object of chapter 7 is the history of the fourth beast, or the last form of the Gentile empire, which commenced at Babylonthe great western power, in which was to be developed all that man in possession of power would become with respect to God and to the faithful. And with that its relation with the saints is given in the interpretation. But the introduction of this western beast is briefly given. Four beasts come up from the sea, that is to say, from the waves of human population. These powers are not looked at here as established by God, but in their purely historical character. We have seen the empire established immediately by God in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. But herealthough every existing power is established by Godthey are seen in their historical aspect. The beasts come up out of the sea. The prophet first sees them all at once arising out of the agitation of the nations. This part of the vision contains characteristic features, but gives no date.

In verse 4 we have Babylon in power and then abased and subdued. The body of a lion with eagle's wings; that which, humanly speaking, was most noble and energetic in strengththat which hovered over the nations with the highest and most rapid flightcharacterised this first energy of the human mind, when the will of God had committed to it the empire of the world. This place it loses.

The second beast devoured much, but had neither the energy nor the rapid flight of the first; it appropriated other kingdoms to itself rather than created an empire; twofold in its strength at first, it raised itself up more on one side than on the other. It is ferocious, but comparatively unwieldy; it is the Medo-Persian empire.

This chapter says but little of the third; lightness and activity characterise it, and dominion was given to it. It is the empire founded by Alexander.

The fourth is the subject of a separate vision.

It will be well to remark, in passing, that the chapter is divided into three visions, followed by the interpretation given to the prophet. The first vision comprises the four beasts seen together, and the character of the first three slightly sketched. The second vision contains that of the fourth beast with much more detail. The third vision presents the appearing of one like the Son of man before the Ancient of days. They commence respectively at the

first, seventh, and thirteenth verses; the interpretation occupies the remainder of the chapter from verse 15.

The features of the fourth beast are clearly drawn. It is strong exceedingly; it devours and breaks in pieces, and tramples the residue under foot. It has not the same character as the preceding monarchies. It has ten horns; that is to say, its strength was to be divided into ten distinct powers. Strength and rapacity, which spare and respect nothing, appropriating everything, or trampling it under foot without regard to conscience; such are morally the characteristics of the fourth beast. Its division into ten kingdoms distinguishes it as to its form. The uniform simplicity of the other empires will be lacking to it. But this is not all. Another very distinctive and special element attracted the particular attention of the prophet. While considering the horns, he saw another little horn come up among them: three of the first fell before it; it possessed the penetration and intelligence of man; its pretensions were very great. Such was its character. A power rises among the ten by which three of them are overthrown. This power is clear-sighted and penetrating in its intelligence. It not only possesses strength, but it has thoughts and plans besides those of ambition and government. It is a beast that works morally, that occupies itself with knowledge, and sets itself up with pretensions full of pride and daring. It has a character of intelligence, moral and systematic (in evil), and not merely the strength of a conqueror. This horn has the eyes of a man.

Afterwards the thrones are set, * and the Ancient of days sits. It is a session of judgment, the throne of Jehovah's judgment; it is not said where, but its effect is on earth. The words of the little horn are the occasion of the execution of judgment. It is executed on the beast, which is destroyed, and its body given to the flames. With respect to the other beasts, their dominion had been taken away, but their lives prolonged; the fourth loses its life with its dominion. The scene of judgment forms a part of the vision of the fourth beast, and especially relates to it.

[* This translation is almost universally considered to be correct.]

In verse 13 there is another vision. One like the Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days, and receives the kingdom and universal dominionthe rule of Jehovah entrusted to man in the Person of Christ, and substituted for the kingdom of the beast. Observe that this is not the execution of the judgment that had been spoken of, but the reception of the earthly kingdom; for, in all this, the government of the earth is the subject.

There are two parts in the interpretation. Verses 17, 18 are general; and then, with reference to the fourth beast (v. 19-28), there is more of detail. The general part declares that these four beasts are four kings, or kingdoms, that

shall arise out of the earth: but that the saints of the high places shall take the kingdom, and possess it for ever. These are the two great facts brought out in this history: the earthly empire, and that of the saints of the high places (the first being composed of four kingdoms). We are then given some details with respect to the fourth of these. It will be noticed here, that, in the interpretation, an element of the highest interest is added, which was not in the vision to which the interpretation belongs; namely, that which relates to the saints. In communicating to the prophet the meaning of the vision, God could not omit them. Verse 18 already presents them in contrast with the empires of the earth. These empires were seen to arise in the vision according to their public or external character. Here the Spirit of God tells of that which made their conduct a subject of interest even to the heart of God, who would testify this interest to the prophet. The saints are immediately brought into view, but in a suffering condition (v. 21). This is the first characteristic of the little horn, when his actions are in question.

But verses 21, 22 demand a few more remarks. The little horn not only makes war with the saints, but prevails against them up to a certain time (that is, until the coming of the Ancient of days). Something more definite is given here than the fact that God will judge the audacity of man. We are no longer occupied with the public history and with general principles, but with explanations for the saints in the person of the prophet. It is the coming of the Ancient of days that puts an end to the power of the little horn over the saints. Other important events are the result of this great change, of this intervention of God: first, judgment is given to the saints of the high places; and, second, the saints take the kingdom. Observe here the especial title “of the high places.” The little horn persecutes the saints on earth, and prevails against them until the Ancient of days comes. But it is only to the saints of the high places that judgment is given. “Know ye not,” says the apostle, “that the saints shall judge the world?” Nevertheless we must not go beyond that which is here written. It is not said, “to the assembly”an idea not found in these passages. It is the saints who are linked with the Most High * God in heaven, while the earth is in the hands of those who do not acknowledge Him, and while His government is not exercised to preserve them from suffering, and from the malice of the wicked. This applies in principle to all times since the fall, until the Ancient of days comes. But there is a period especially characterised by this spirit of rebellion, namely, that of the power of the little horn. There is another class of persons spoken of farther onthe people of the saints of the high places. “The kingdom is given to them.” But in this case the Spirit does not say, “the judgment.”

[* There are four names of relationship which God has taken with men: Almighty (Genesis 17) with the patriarchs; Jehovah with Israel (Exodus 6); Father, with Christians (John 17); and Most High, in the

millennium (<01401>Genesis 14) and here in Daniel. Compare Psalm go. The name of Father makes a difference in the whole position, associating us with Christ, the Son in whom He is revealed. John's Gospel specially brings out this.]

Thus, in verse 22, when the kingdom is mentioned, it is not said "the saints of the high places," but simply "the saints possessed the kingdom." We have thus the power of the little horn exercised against the saints, and prevailing against them, put an end to by the Ancient of days, the earth being the scene of that which is taking place. This event is accompanied by two other events. which result from it, and which change the whole aspect of the world. Judgment is given to the heavenly saints, and the kingdom is given to the saints. The first of these two events is confined to the heavenly saints. The second is more general, the saints on earth sharing it according to their condition, without excluding the saints in heaven according to their condition.

In verse 23 begin the historical details of the little horn. The general character of the fourth beast is set forth. It devours, treads down, and subjugates everything. It is not only a consolidated empire, of such or such an extent; it ravages the whole earth as by right. There are, then, ten kingdoms arising in the bosom of the empire, and dividing its power. This is its outward and general character. But when the ten are already existing, another power arises of a different character from the ten, three of which it subdues. Now this horn speaks against the Most Highmagnifies itself in words against Him. In its malice it destroys the saints who are united in heart to the God of heaven, and confess His name and His authority on the earth. It seeks to change the religious feasts and the laws; and they are given into its hand for three years and a half. In this last circumstance we find pretty clearly the oppressor of the Jews. Their whole system is given into his hands. These three characteristics are sufficiently plain and distinct: he speaks against the Most High; he persecutes those who own God in heaven, and whose hearts turn there (compare <19104>Psalm 11:4); and he does away with all public evidences of the earthly religion.

It will be remarked that there is no question at all here of the assembly, except in such general terms as must apply to any saints whatever on the earth who looked up higher. It is well also to observe, that it is not the saints (as has been thought) who are given into the hand of the little horn, but the forms of the Jewish religion. God may will and permit, for the good of the saints, that there should be persecution; but He never gives up His saints to their enemies. He could not do it. He cannot leave and forsake His own. In a word, whatever may be the general principles capable of application during the course of the ages, this prophecy, as an especial and definite

revelation, refers, like the whole Book, to the earth, of which the assembly is not, and to the Jews, with respect to whom God exercises His government on the earth.

This, understood, throws light on the three characteristics of the little horn. He rebels against the Most High. He speaks great words against God, and against all the saints who, rising in spirit above the earth, acknowledge the Most High God in heaven, and expect deliverance at His hand; whose hearts take refuge in Him, when the earth is given up, as it were, into the hands of the wicked. All those who thus maintain a true testimony against the man who arrogates to himself every prerogative on earth, and will have nothing to do with heaven, are persecuted by him. At length, the Jews having re-established their regular feasts and ordinances, his tyranny, which allows no power but his own, destroys all. traces of these ordinances; which, however vain, as restored in unbelief, were nevertheless a testimony to the existence of a God of the earth. But the judgment sits to take cognizance of all this pride. The dominion of the little horn is consumed and destroyed. We may notice here that it is in fact the little horn that in the end wields the supreme power. It is his dominion which is destroyed. Afterwards the kingdom and the dominion under the whole heaven is given to “the people of the saints of the high places.” It appears to me that the meaning of this expression, remarkable as it is, is yet sufficiently plain. The Most High reigns, but He reigns in connection with the system which makes it manifest that “the heavens rule” (as it is said on this subject in the case of Nebuchadnezzar). The man of the earth would reign, and he defies heaven; and, withdrawing the earth from the government of Him who dwells in heaven, he would possess it independently of God. But the judgment proves his folly, and the Most High reigns for evermore. The saints who have acknowledged Him are given the judgment and the glory, and the people who belong to them on the earth have the supremacy and reign. These are the Jews. But, definitely, it is God who reigns.

There are two words translated “Most High,” the one singular and the other plural. The latter signifies “the high (places).” I do not doubt that this word gave rise to the expression “heavenly places” in the epistle to the Ephesians, which however goes much farther in the revelation there made. For here government only is the subject, and in the Ephesians it is the things that belong to the heavenly places, or that are in them. This distinction enables us to understand the difference between the assembly, or even Christians, and the saints of the high places in Daniel 7. With respect to the Christians, it is those who enjoyin spirit at leastthe blessings of the heavenly places, sitting there in Christ, and wrestling against the spiritual wickedness that is there. Here, on the contrary, it is the government which belongs of right to

the heavens and to Him that reigns there which is to be recognised, in the presence of a power that denies and sets itself up against this, choosing to own no other power than itself on the earth. The meaning of the prophecy is plain and easily understood. To recognise the right of government in the heavenly places, and to be sitting there in the enjoyment of the blessings proper to them, are two very different things. Everything has its own place in the mind of God, where perfect order reigns.

In sum we have, besides the power of the four beasts in general, the western power divided among ten, and at last the empire in the hands of the little horn, which subdues three of the ten horns, and sets itself up against God in heaven, persecutes and prevails against the saints, destroying by its persecutions those who identify themselves with the God of heaven, abolishing all the Jewish ordinances, and finally is itself destroyed. This abolition of the Jewish system continues for three years and a half, or 1260 days; which period of time belongs only to this last point. All the others are characteristic and not chronological.

The government of the earth, formerly given to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, is not again establishedas it had been at Jerusalemin a merely earthly throne. During the interval, in the presence of the rebellion of the earthly power against the Most High, the saints have assumed a character which is the result of their looking to heaven and to Him who reigns there (God, with respect to His government of the earth, having taken the name of the God of heaven)a very intelligible position, seeing that He had forsaken Jerusalem.

It is the saints of the high places who will take the kingdom; but after the judgment of the rebellious horn, the earthly people possess the dominion under the whole heaven, in dependence on those who are seated in heaven.

So that we have three clear and important elements in the dealings of God. Firstly, the earthly throne at Jerusalem is forsaken; the Gentile throne established by the authority of God, the God of heaven; the rebellion of this Gentile power against Him that had given it authority. Secondly, the saints are distinguished by their acknowledgment of that God whom the earthly power denied; they are of the heavens, where God had now His place and His throne, being no longer on earth at Jerusalem. Thirdly, we have, then, judgment executed on the rebellious power; judgment given to these saints of the high places; the earthly people established in the kingdom under the heavens, in connection with them. This was the dominion of the God of heaven which should not pass away. In connection with this is the character given to Him that pre-eminently receives the kingdom. It is not now the Messiah, owned as king in Zion, but ONE in the form of the Son of man; a

title of far greater and more wide significance. It is the change from Psalm 2 to Psalm 8. * Nor this only; for, when the events are accomplished, we find that it is the Ancient of days Himself who comes and puts an end to the power which afflicted the saintsthat Christ (as the Psalms so largely show and the gospels too) is Jehovah.

[* Brought about by the rejection of the Messiah.]

We have here the great picture of man's governmentcoming into all its characteristic development at the endand its setting aside by the government of God, which establishes the faithful in authority, and, above all, the Son of man Himself, and His people on the earth.

The saints of the high places would be thus those who, when the assembly, not noticed here, is gone, look up and own power there, and, if put to death by power in rebellion, have their place above. We find them again in Revelation, specially in chapter 20, and there two classes. The people of the saints are the spared remnant on earth.

**CHAPTER** 8 gives details of that which takes place from another side of Judea, with reference to the Jews. The two empires of Persia and Greece, or of the East, which succeeded that of Babylon under which the prophecy was given, are only introduced to point out the countries in which these events are to take place, and to bring them before us in their historical order. The Persian empire is overthrown by the king of Greece, whose empire is afterwards divided into four kingdoms, from one of which a power arises that forms the main subject of the prophecy.

In the interpretation, we find the positive declaration that the events here related happen "in the last end of the indignation." Now it is the indignation against Israel that is here meant (chap. 11:36). This time of indignation is spoken of in Isaiah 10:25; it ends with the destruction of the Assyrian, who (v. 5) is its principal instrument. All these passages show us, especially in studying their context, that it will be in the last days that the events of these prophecies will be fulfilled. It will be "the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be delivered out of it." The Lord Himself alludes to this period (Matthew 24) calling His disciples' attention to that which Daniel says respecting it (compare Daniel 12:1-11 with the Lord's words). It appears to me that the prophecy in our chapter does not relate so absolutely to the last days as the interpretation does. * The thing spoken of in the prophecy is not the last end of the indignation; but the fact that a little horn arises out of one of the four kingdoms, which had succeeded Alexander. Nevertheless, the grand object of the Spirit is to reveal that which will happen at the time of the end (v. 17).

[* This appears to me to be the case, because events that took place under the successors of Seleucus, the first king of the north, have served as a type, or partial and anticipative fulfilment, of that which will happen in the, last days. In chapter 11 and here, there is a description of, or a strong allusion to, that which Antiochus Epiphanes did. The eleventh chapter relates it, I think, historically. The object of God in the prophecy is found in the events of the last days; and this is all that is given in the interpretation.It is well to observe, that no interpretation of a parable or obscure prophecy, either in the Old or New Testament, is simply an interpretation. It adds that which reveals by the result the meaning of the ways of God, or facts described in what is obscure, either by outward judgments which justify the spiritual judgment of His people when faith only would discern God's mind, or by some new features that give the true import of the events for the saints. Actual judgment makes openly plain what spiritual judgment alone discerned before, and thus is an interpretation. But other circumstances may be added in order to show the mind of God in the matter. In a word, it is God who communicates to His people that which gives its true value to that which precedes, or who directs them in their thoughts as to what has been said, by the revelation of His judgments. It is this which practically confirms them in His thoughts.]

Let us examine the principal feature of the little horn. The power designated by "the little horn" enlarges its territory towards the east, and towards the pleasant land, or ornament of the earth], that is to say, as it appears to me, towards Jerusalem or Zion. This horn exalts itself against the host of heaven, and casts down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and tramples on them.

Who are the persons intended by this expression"the host of heaven and the stars?" Let us remember, that it is the Jewish system that is before us. When once we have got hold of this, the application of the passage is not difficult. The expression applies to those who, professedly at least, surround the throne of God, and particularly those who shine eminent among them. It is not the faithful who look towards heaven, of which chapter 7 speaks. To be the host of heaven describes a position and not a moral state (compare v. 24). But this passage assumes that the Jews are again in this position before God, even although it would be but for judgment. That is to say, they are again under the eye of God as in relation with Him, as an object about which He concerns Himself, as a people still responsible for their former relationship with Him, although the Gentile power still exists. Now, if their condition does not answer to the position they reassume in His presence, they are, by the very fact of this position, the object of God's judgments.

Observe here, moreover, that transgression is the thing spoken of, and not the abomination which some one sets up, and which makes desolate; and in the interpretation also, the transgression is come to its height.

This horn is, then, the instrument of chastisement on the Jews, who have returnedas to professioninto relationship with Jehovah, and into their land, assuming the character of His people, yet carrying transgression against Him to the highest point. The horn completely destroys some of them. But this is not all; he (for the word is no longer it, in agreement with the word hornperhaps changed to designate the king in person) magnifies himself even against the Prince of the host. He carries his pretensions so far as to oppose himself to Him, to set himself against Christ in His character of Prince of Israel, against the Judge who comes, the Head of Israel, who is Jehovah Himself; for it is the Ancient of days who comes. Here, however, all is looked at in a Jewish aspect. He is the Prince of Israel. We see that it is Jehovah, because it is His sacrifice that is taken awayHis sanctuary that is cast down; but He is presented as the Prince of the host. * The daily sacrifice is taken away from Him, not "by him." ** The Jewish worship rendered to Jehovah is suppressed, His sanctuary cast down, and a time of distress appointed for the daily sacrifice (it is thus that I understand the verse), on account of transgression; and the little horn + (for here the it, agreeing with horn, is again used) casts down the truth, practices and prospers. The duration of the whole vision, with especial reference to the transgression which occasions it, and, it may be, comprising also the duration of the transgression that maketh desolate; in a word, the whole scene of transgression, and consequent desolation (the sanctuary and the host being trodden under foot), continues for 2300 evenings and mornings.

[* I have questioned a little whether the host of heaven may not mean the powers of the earth (the Jews only taking their place in it because they ought to be under the government of God, and are so to the spirit of prophecy). I do not reject this idea; but it appears certain that the Spirit has the Jews especially in view (see v. 13). Verse 24 might lead us to believe that He destroys others beside the Jews. Christ, exalted to the right hand of God, is the head of all power. But He is especially the head of the Jews. If any would even apply the title "Prince of princes" to this supremacy, the analogy of the word would justify the application. The connection between the host and the sanctuary in verse 13, appears to me to show, that the Spirit had those Jews especially in view who surround the place of the throne of Jehovah.]

[** There is no doubt that the text says, that the sacrifice is taken away from the Prince of the host. The question still remains, by whom? The Keri (which is generally, I believe, the best authority when there are variations in the Hebrew) reads, "was taken from him," without saying by whom; the Ketib, "he took away from him," which ascribes it to the little horn.]

[+ In the Hebrew there is a difference of gender. He who magnifies himself (v. 11) is masculine; while at the end of verse 12, the word, "it cast down," is feminine, agreeing with horn, which in Hebrew is a feminine noun.]

In verse 19 we see that the interpretation relates to the time of the enda very important notice for the understanding of the passage. * And this is what shall happen in the last end of the indignation (upon Israel) when the transgression of the Jews is at its height. A king of fierce countenance, who understands dark sentences, shall arise; a kind of teacher or rabbi, but proud, and audacious in appearance. He will be mighty, but not by his own power. He will make great havoc, will prosper and practice, destroying the mighty, or a great multitude of persons, and especially "the people of the holy ones," that is, the Jews (chap. 7:27). He is subtle, and his craftiness is successful. He will magnify himself in his heart, and will destroy many by means of a false and irreligious security. At length, he will stand up against the Prince of princes. He will then be destroyed without human intervention. That is to say that at the time of the end, when the purposes of God will be unfolded, when His indignation against Israel draws to an end, the transgression of this people being already at its height, a king shall arise in one part of the former Grecian empire, whose power will be characterised by its increase towards the east and south, and towards Jerusalem; that is, it will be established in the present Turkey in AsiaJerusalem being the point it aims at. This power will cause much destruction, and its strength will be great; yet, properly speaking, it will not be its own strength. The king will be dependent on some other power. He will also destroy the Jewish people. But there is something more than destructive power; there is a character of wisdom resembling that of Solomon in some respects. He is very subtle, and succeeds in destroying the Jews, by lulling them into a security in which they forget Jehovah. We see him then occupying himself about the Jews, not only as a conqueror, but as a teacher, by craft and by a deceptive peace. At length he stands up against Christ in His character of the Prince of princes or kings of the earth, that is, in His character of earthly supremacy. He is destroyed by divine power, without the hand of man.

> [* The vision speaks particularly of the Seleucidae, or Asiatic successors of Alexander; and their acts, I doubt not, particularly those of Antiochus Epiphanes, are referred to in the vision, though verse 11 and the first half of 12, as noticed, are distinct. Thus the 2300 evenings and mornings are not necessarily applicable to anything beyond the acts of the Seleucidae, and verse 26 confirms this. The interpretation (v. 23-25) applies only to the latter days. The sanctuary is not spoken of, but the destroying the "people of the saints" (the Jews), and standing up against the Prince of princes. In verse 26 read, "and thou, shut up the vision," not "wherefore."]

This king is distinct from the little horn of chapter 7, who rules the great western beast. He is a king of the east, who arises, not from the Roman empire, but from the former Grecian empire established in Syria, and the adjacent countries, who derives his strength from elsewhere, and not from

his own resources. He will interfere (in his own way) with the religious affairs of the Jews; but it seems to me that that which is said of him is more characteristic of the desolator, whom God allows the enemy to raise up on account of the transgressions of His people, than of the one who makes a covenant with them for a time, in order to ruin and drag them afterwards into the depths of apostasy. It is one who will oppress them, having his seat of action in the east, as the little horn of chapter 7 rules in the west. * The desolation is brought before us on the occasion of this little horn. Verse 11 ** is a kind of parenthesis which relates entirely to the Prince of the host; and the two last things it mentions (namely, that the sacrifice is taken away from Him and His sanctuary cast down) are introduced in connection with the Prince of the host, as a part of the desolation of Israel, to complete its description, without, as it appears to me, pointing out who it is that does these things. They are not spoken of in the king's own history, at the end of the chapter. They form a part of the desolation of the days alluded to in verse 11.

[* Chapter 7 gives the power or horn of the west; chapter 8 that of the east; chapter 9 gives the state of Jerusalem under the power of the west; chapter 10, 11 the state under the powers of the east, including the wilful king.]

[** The first half of the twelfth, closing with the word, "transgression," forms indeed part of this parenthesis. The 2300 days refer thus to the historical times. All we have of them, in the interpretation which unfolds what is yet to come, is that the vision is true. The parenthesis is from "Yea" (v. 11) to "transgression" in verse 12, connected with "he," not with "it."]

**CHAPTER** 9 gives us a vision concerning the people and the holy city, consequent on Daniel's confession and intercession. It is, as has been remarked, in connection with the oppression of the western power. Indeed, the details relate to oppression. The prophet had understood (not by a direct revelation, but by the study of Jeremiah's prophecy, by the use of those ordinary means that are within the reach of the spiritual man) that the captivity, the duration of which Jeremiah had announced, was near its end. The effect on Daniel's mind (true sign of a prophet of God) was to produce an ardent intercession on behalf of the desolate sanctuary, and the city which Jehovah loved. He pours out his heart in confession before God, acknowledging the sin of the people and of their kings, the hardness of their hearts, and the righteousness of God in bringing evil upon them. He pleads the mercies of God, and demands favor for Jehovah's own sake. The prophecy is God's answer to his prayer. Seventy weeks are determined upon the people of Daniel and upon his holy city. Jehovah does not yet acknowledge them definitely for His own; but He accepts the intercession of the prophet, as He had formerly done that of Moses, by saying to Daniel, "thy people and thy city." Daniel stands in the place of mediator. He has the

mind of GodHis words; and thus he can intercede (compare on this deeply interesting point, [1007]Genesis 20:7; [2478]Jeremiah 27:18; [3157]John 15:7).

At the end of these seventy weeks, separated from among the ages, the time should come, decreed of God, to finish the transgression, to seal up, that is, to make an end of sin, and to put it away; to pardon iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up all] vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies: this, observe, with respect to the people of Israel and to the city. It is the entire re-establishment of the people, and of the city, in grace.

This period of seventy weeks is divided into three partsseven, sixty-two, and one. During the first part, or the seven weeks, the desolate city and its overthrown walls would be rebuilt in troublous times, or in the strait of times. After sixty-two weeks, that is, after sixty-nine altogether, the Messiah should be cut off, and should have nothing (this is the true sense of the words). He to whom the kingdom and the glory belonged, instead of receiving them, should be cut off and have nothing. But after this event the city and the sanctuary, which had been rebuilt, should be destroyed, and the end should be like a desolating flood; and there should be an ordinance, or determinate decree, of desolation until the end of the war. This is, in general, the complete history of the desolations. Sixty-nine weeks have been accomplishedafter that, the Messiah is cut off; but the precise moment at which this takes place is not indicated. The course of the seventy weeks is thus entirely interrupted. The cutting off of the Messiah was not the moment of the re-establishment of the people and of the city. The result is plainly announceda period of desolation until the end: its duration is not given. We shall find in chapter 11 the same manner of treating an analogous period. The people of a prince who was yet to come should destroy the city.

After this, the Spirit of God takes up the seventieth week, the details of which were not yet unfolded. The prince that shall come confirms a covenant with the mass of the Jews. (The form of the word many * indicates the mass of the people). This is the first thing that characterises the week; the Jews form an alliance with the head, at that day, of the people who had formerly overthrown their city and their sanctuary. They form an alliance with the head of the Roman Empire. This refers to the week as a whole. But, the half of the week spent, ** things assume another aspect. This head causes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of idols, there is a desolator; and until the consummation that is determined, + there shall be poured judgment] upon the desolate.

[* The word “many” has an article prefixed to it in the Hebrew. The same thing is the case in other parts of Daniel, to which we shall draw the reader’s attention, and which clearly prove that the mass of the people are in

question”the many.” The same form of phrase is found in Greek. <470816>2 Corinthians 2:6; <470902>9:2.]

[** We may observe that the Lord only speaks expressly of the last half-week, of the time of tribulation which follows the setting up of the idol that maketh desolate in the holy place. Some have thought that there would be only this half-week to come, Christ having been cut off in the midst of the week. Others have thought that the seventieth week had entirely elapsed before the Lord’s death, but that it is not reckoned, Jesus having been rejected, and that this week is found again at the time of the Jews’ connection with the wicked one. What the passage tells us is this: first, the prince, the head that is of the Roman empire, in the latter days makes a covenant referring to one whole week; on the other hand, the Lord speaks of the last half of the week as being to take place immediately before His coming, as the time of unequalled tribulation that precedes it. If this were all, the foregoing history of the prince to come, who makes a covenant, would fall into the general history of the state of things. The question whether one or two half-weeks remain to be fulfilled, and in what way, during the manifestation of the power of evil, I reserve (as to its full development) for the book of Revelation; remarking only that Messiah is cut off after the end of 69 weeks. We know from the New Testament that His ministry lasted just half the week. Of this clearly the prince or Jews, with whom he makes alliance, would make no account. The interpretation of this passage is clear; the covenant for a week with the prince to come, as if 69 weeks alone were run out, Messiah and His cutting off being ignored, and a half-week of utter oppression because of idols, till the consummation decreed.]

[+ This is an expression constantly used for the last judgments that shall fall upon the Jews (see <232210>Isaiah 10:22; <232822>28:22). The second verse of this last chapter compares the desolator to a flood, as in verse 26 of the chapter we are considering. The attentive reader will observe that these passages refer also to the events of the last days. Remark also the covenant in <232815>Isaiah 28:15 &18.Some doubts might be thrown upon the translation “the desolate”; some render it “the desolator,” and “until the destruction that is decreed there shall be poured judgment] upon the desolator,” or rather, “until the destruction decreed shall be poured upon the desolator.” To any one that is not very familiar with the word, this seems to end the sentence better; but it appears to me that those who are conversant with the whole contents of the Bible and with its phraseology will allow that the reading I have given is its truer meaning. The import of the prophecy is the same in either case. The one translation says that the desolation shall continue until the end of judgment, fore-ordained by God; the other, that it shall not cease until the destruction of the desolator, which comes to the same thing. The translation I have given appears to me more exact, more in accordance with the word. Our English translation reads “desolate,” giving “desolator” in the margin. But the word has not the same form as that which is translated “desolator” in other places where the meaning is certain. The previous clause I have rendered “on account of the protection of idols.” The word is literally “wing”upon, or on the account of, the wing of abominations. And we know that the word wing is habitually employed for protection.]

That which is here announced, then, is, that seventy weeks are set apart for the history of the city and people of Daniel. During these seventy weeks, God is in relationship with Israel; * nevertheless, not immediately so, but in connection with the faith of the believing remnant, of a Daniel, of an intercession which, linking itself with the existence of a remnant, serves as a bond between God and the people: an intercession without which the people would be rejected. It is the same principle as that which governed the relations between God and the people by means of Moses, after the golden calfthe people being called the people of Daniel, as formerly the people of Moses. This position is remarkable, as taking place after the establishment of the authority of the Gentiles. The Jews are at Jerusalem, but the Gentiles reign, although the empire of Babylon is overthrown. In this anomalous position prophetic faith seeks the complete re-establishment of the city, the seat of government of God and of His people. It is to this that the answer of God refers. A brief but complete history is given of the period which should elapse until the judgment upon the Jews was accomplished and past.

[* The power of the Gentiles existing at the same time. We know from scripture that the restoration of Jerusalem took place under the reign of the Gentiles, as well as the whole course of the sixty-nine weeks which have assuredly passed away. The seventy have all the same character in this respect. It is only at the end of the seventy that pardon is granted. Whoever may be the instrument of establishing the covenant the fourth beast will be at that time the ruling power of the Gentiles, to whom God has committed authority. It is very important, if we would understand the seventy weeks, to remark this state of thingsthe Jews restored, the city rebuilt, but the Gentiles still occupying the throne of the world. The seventy weeks have their course only under these conditions. It must be well understood that it is the people of Daniel who are meant, and his city, which are to be re-established in their former favor with God. The longsuffering of God still now waits. The Gentile power has already failed in faithfulness; Babylon has been overthrown; by means of intercession, the Jews provisionally restored, and the temple rebuilt. The seventy weeks had very nearly elapsed when Christ came. If the Jews, and Jerusalem in that her day, had repented, all was ready for her re-establishment in glory. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could have been raised up, as Lazarus had been. But she knew not the day of her visitation, and the fulfilling of the seventy weeks, as well as the blessing that should follow, had necessarily to be postponed. Through grace we know that God had yet more excellent thoughts and purposes, and that man’s state was such that this could not have been, as the event proved. Accordingly all is here announced beforehand. (Compare <23404>Isaiah 49:4-6.)]

A new element of great importance is also introduced: the Messiah should be cut off. He would have nothing of that which in right belonged to Him. The consequence of this would be the destruction of the city and of the sanctuary, desolation and war. It would be the prince of another empire, not yet in existence, who should thus destroy the city and the sanctuary. The

relations between God and the people were now completely broken off for the timeeven as regarded a believing remnant. The faith of Daniel was rejected in the Person of Christ as the prophet, and in the denial of Christ expressed by the declaration that they would have no king but Caesar; and the people and the city were given up to desolation.

But there remained one week yet unaccomplished with this faithless and perverse, but yet beloved, race, before their iniquity should be pardoned, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and the vision and the prophecy closed by their fulfilment. This week should be distinguished by a covenant which the prince or leader would make with the Jewish people (with the exception of the remnant), and then by the compulsory cessation of their worship through the intervention of this prince. After that the Jews having placed themselves under the protection of idolsthis unclean spirit, long driven out of the people, having again entered into them with seven others worse than himself, the desolator comes, and the final judgments are inflicted on the peopleterrible judgments; but the extent of which is definitely fixed by God when their measure shall be full. Thus we find a very precise answer is given to the prophet's request; an answer which very distinctly unfolds the consequences of the connection of Daniel's people with the Gentile power. Their position is very clearly set forth, while the relationship with God, by means of the prophet's intercession, still exists.

The prophecy announces at the same time the general fact of the people's desolation after the sixty-ninth week was past, and (with a seeming lull from the favor of the beast), on to the end of the seventieth, occasioned by their rejection of the Messiah, which took place at the very time when the promise attached to the prophecy should have been on the point of fulfilment; and the rejection of whom (coming in the name of His Father) has led to the long dispersion of the Jews, which will continue until the time of their being gathered, a prey to the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles; the time, in fact, of their falling into the hands of the one who should come in his own namea sorrowful condition developed during the last week, but to which God has set a limit; and beyond that, no malice of the enemy can reach.

In **CHAPTER** 10 we return to the East. * Chapters 10, 11 and 12 form but one prophecy; only chapter 11 closes the history of the Gentiles, and chapter 12, as we remarked at the beginning, is occupied with the condition of the remnant during the last period of the Gentile power, and with their deliverance (concluding thus the revelation of God's mind with respect to the remnant who are preserved in the midst of the Gentiles).

[* It may be remarked that in both cases the revelation given to Daniel, as to his people, is in reply to his exercises of heart in intercession or fasting; the revelations in chapters 7, 8 as to the western or eastern destroying powers are not. They are given when God pleases. These were in the time of Belshazzar; the two former, after Babylon was taken The Jews were then really in a new position till Christ was rejected, and then the great forsaking came, when time does not count till they are in their own land, and God begins to deal with them again. Then, after the display of their unbelief in receiving the power of evil and in idolatry the last grand tribulation comes, and then judgment in the Person of the Lord from heaven.]

Daniel, ever intent on the welfare of his people, made supplication (v. 2, 3, 12) to God, with a renewed and a persevering desire to understand His dealings. After three weeks of fasting and prayer an angel is sent to him, revealing the opposition of the enemies of God's glory to the accomplishment of His purposes of favor to His people, and to the communication of these purposes for their encouragement. But if faith is exercised, God is faithful; and the perseverance of Daniel puts him morally in a condition to appreciate the communications of God, being a proof of his fitness to receive them. The angel informs him that the vision has reference to the Jews, and that it belongs to the latter days (chap. <27014>10:14). The strength which is given him enables him to receive the communication. The kings of Persia, under whose reign he received the vision, are enumerated; and the attack on Greece by one amongst them is announced. This gives rise to an attack on Persia by Greece; and the Greek empire is established; but it is afterwards divided into four parts. Two of these four monarchies shall be more powerful than the others. They are also territorially in relation with the Jews. It is on the territory of the latter that their wars are carried on. The history of the kings of these two monarchies, thus in conflict on the territory of Israel, is given with considerable detail under the names of king of the north and king of the south. I do not enter into these details.

The history is carried on until the intervention of the Romans, the ships from the coast of Chittim, * and the attack upon the Jews, and the temple, and the holy covenant. The king of the north allies himself with the apostate Jews; he pollutes the sanctuary, and sets up an idol; he takes away the daily sacrifice; he leads the wicked into apostasy (this is the force of the expression in verse 32). But they who know God shall be strong, and shall act with energy. They who understand, being taught of God, shall instruct the many. Thus far is the succession of the first kings, and the history of the Maccabees, and of Antiochus Epiphanes.

[* The intervention of these in favor of the young king of Egypt, whom Antiochus Epiphanes had conquered, led to his going back and raging against the Jews, profaning the temple, and forbidding Jewish worship.]

The result, on to the end, is then given in general termsthe last part of the preceding history being a type of what shall happen in the last days. The people again fall for a time under the hands of their enemies. They shall be helped a little: some shall cleave to them with flatteries. A few even of those who understand, who might have been expected to be preserved providentially by God, will also fall by violence, to try the faith of all, and purge them, until the time of the end. For this state of things is to continue until the period appointed by God. It is the condition of the Jews, especially in those days, that is, of the Seleucidae and Lagida, kings of north and south, and in general, until the last days.

Some observations on the details may here be of use to the reader. In chapters <27 09 27>9:27, <27 11 33>11:33, <27 12 03>12:3, the word translated “many” has the article in Hebrew, and signifies the mass of the people, which makes the force of these verses much more simple. The reader will also remark, in contrast with the masses (chap. 11:33), “the Maschilim,” a word found in the titles of many of the Psalms. They that understand, they that are taught of God, shall instruct the many: there will be the activity of love for the truth in these times of trial. In chapter 12:3, we have again those that understand associated with those that instruct the many in righteousness. Compare chap. 11:33. They become victims, in verse 35, to violence. This last verse reaches, as we have seen, to the end of this people’s history, while under the dominion of the Gentiles. But more positive details are given with respect to the end.

The king * is introducedthe wicked one who will exercise power in Judea at the end of the age; and will prosper until the indignation comes to an enda period of which we have already spoken. It is a king who acts in the land of Judea; one of an impious character, and who follows his own unbridled will, exalting himself above all, forsaking the religion of his fathers, regarding neither Christ nor any God, blaspheming the God of heaven, and establishing idolatry; but in a way of his own; “he shall cause them to rule over the many, and shall divide the land for a reward.” It is rather difficult to say who these are that he will cause to ruleI apprehend his followers; but the general character of this self-willed, impious, and idolatrous king who magnifies himself above all, is sufficiently plain. We find, as the chapter goes on, that the king of the south pushes at him, and the king of the north comes against him like a whirlwind, overflows and passes over and enters into the land of delight, Judea. But Edom, Moab, and Ammon escape his power, being reserved (<23 11 14>Isaiah 11:14) to be subdued by Israel itself. But he stretches out his hand over the countries and pillages them. Egypt does not escape, and they who dwell in Africa are at his feet. But, disturbed by tidings from the east and north, he sets up his tabernacles between

Jerusalem ** and the sea, and comes to his end, with none to help him. The end of the king is not given here. It is the end of the king of the north, the subject here being the nations and the land of Israel, and that which shall happen to the people of Daniel in the last days. In the land there will be the wicked and impious king, who shall be attacked by the king of the south. The king of the north then pillages all the countries round, with the exception of three, and he perishes in the land of Israel.

[* Compare <233330>Isaiah 30:33 (reading “for the king also”) and 57:9. He has the tide of “the king” in the eyes of the Jewsa title which of right belongs only to Jesus, the true Messiah and King of Israel.]

[** This is the regular meaning of the Hebrew.]

**CHAPTER** 12 gives us more of Israel’s own history. In the midst of all these events Michael, the archangel, stands up in behalf of the people of Daniel. There is a time of trouble, such as never has been nor will be. Nevertheless the people shall be delivered, that is to say, those who are written in the book (the remnant belonging to God). Jeremiah has already spoken to us of this period, and of the deliverance (chap. <243007>30:7). The Lord speaks of it also in <402401>Matthew 24, drawing the attention of His disciples to the abomination of desolation here mentioned, showing clearly that He speaks of Jerusalem, the Jews, and the last days, when the Jews shall be delivered. He also points out the way in which the faithful are to escape, while the tribulation continues. Taking these passages together makes it easy to understand them both. The second verse extends beyond the land of Israel, which had been the scene of the prophecy until this. But their condition is stated in a way not to own the countries of their dispersion. Many of the race of Israel arise from their long abasement, some to everlasting life, but others to everlasting shame. They that understand shall shine as the firmament. They who have instructed the many in righteousness shall shine as the stars (compare the host of heaven and stars, chap. 8). God will clothe with the brightness of His favor those who will have been faithful during this period of rebellion and distress.

After this one of God’s messengers inquires of the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, how long it should be to the end of the wonders (that is, of the tribulation) by the intervention of God in deliverance for Israel. The answer is, three years and a half, or 1260 days; and that, when God should have put an end to the dispersion of the holy people, all these things should be finished. Daniel asks for a fuller revelation with respect to the end; but the oracle is sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be tried and purified and made white, but the wicked shall do wickedly. Alas! this must be expected. None of the wicked shall

understand, but the wise shall understandthese “maschilim,” whom the Spirit of God has mentioned.

Now, from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be 1290 days. But the accomplishment of 1335 * days has still to be waited for; there shall be full blessing to him that waits and arrives at their fulfilment. Daniel himself shall have his part in this time of glory.

> [* I have thought it possible that this computation may arise from this. An intercalary month to the 1260 days, or three years and a half, and then 45 days, if the years were ecclesiastical years, would bring up to the feast of tabernacles: but I offer no judgment on it. At any rate, the statement is clear that then the sanctuary of God will be cleansed in Jerusalem.]

It is to be observed, that Daniel never describes the period that succeeds to the times of the Gentiles. He gives the history of those monarchies, the oppressors and seducers of the Jews in the latter days, and the deliverance of the people; but there he stops. He is the prophet of the times of the Gentiles until the deliverance.

One thing may here occur to the reader as desirable for the understanding of the whole, that is, to combine the agency of those instruments, which the prophecy of Daniel presents as acting in the land of Israel during the latter days, and to identify themif it may be donewith those that are mentioned in other prophets. But this would be to make a system of prophecy, and not to explain Daniel. The Spirit of God has not done so in this prophet, which is our present subject. I will, therefore, only allude to some striking points.

**CHAPTER** 7 gives the character of the Roman empire, especially under its last head. It is the close of the history of the Gentile power. Chapter 8 (although I have often thought that the king, who is described there, might be the instrument in Israel of the western empire) gives to the horn it speaks of a different characteras it appears to me, in carefully weighing the passagefrom that which constitutes the western power, * whether as a little horn, or exercised in some local instrument. It is an eastern power arising out of one of the four kingdoms into which Alexander’s empire was broken up. His power, however, is derived from another; it is a separate power acting in Syria. In chapter 9 we find the one who acts among the Jews in Jerusalem itself, in connection with the Roman empire, be the instrument employed who he may. It may be “the king” of chapter 11 who finds himself between the kings of the south and of the north. But it is very possible that the little horn of chapter 7 acts itself. Still there is another power dependent upon it, who acts at least religiously upon the Jews, and

leads them into apostasyone who comes in his own name, and does not regard the God of his fathers.

> [* We may compare <19401>Psalms 74 and <19830>83, which confirm the idea that there will be a destruction in Jerusalem, as well as the compelled cessation of the daily sacrifice accomplished in a religious way by the prince who is to come, the Roman of <27000>chapter 9, who will be among the Jews, and who had professed himself to be their friend.]

“The king” of chapter 11 is a king in Judea, despising the religion of his fathers, and acting in that country in a way morally unbridled, re-establishing idolatry, and dividing the territory among those in favor. The kings of the south and north are Egypt and Assyria in the latter days, who attack the king who has established himself in the Holy Land.

I suppose that “the king” answers to the second beast of Revelation, though in another aspect, as the first does to the little horn of chapter 7.

# THE MINOR PROPHETS:

## INTRODUCTION

Before entering on the study of the minor prophets, I will avail myself of the opportunity they afford to make a few remarks on the prophetic writings in general, pointing out the subjects of which they treat. We may divide these books into four principal classes according to the subjects on which they speaksubjects often connected with their dates.

**1st**. Those which speak of the great crisis of the capture of Jerusalem, and its consequences. These are Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel all the greater prophets excepting Isaiah. I place the book of Daniel in this class, though his chief subject be the consequences under Gentile rule, till the Lord come; because, in fact, that event changed the government of the world, setting aside (in judgment) the elect people; and, while speaking of the Gentiles, he does so in connection with the substitution of the Gentile monarchy for that of God in Israel, and in view of that people's destiny.

**2nd**. Those which speak of the judgment of the Gentiles as such. These are Jonah, Nahum, Obadiah.

**3rd**. Those which speak of the entire fall of Israel, and of the destiny that already threatened Judah, such as Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah. They announced a penal judgment on the people, while unfolding with more or less extent the dealings of God in grace at the end. With the exception of Amos, who prophesied in the reign of Uzziah, earlier than the other three, they belong to the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (this last king forming an epoch in these prophecies, the Assyrian having overthrown the kingdom of Israel during the reign of Hezekiah, and threatened Jerusalem).

**Lastly**, we have Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who prophesied after the captivity: the first two for the encouragement of the people; the last to bear witness to the failure of the Jews who had returned from captivity, and to announce the testimony and the judgment of the last days, which should separate the remnant from the wicked around them.

I have not spoken of Joel and Habakkuk, because these two prophets have each a peculiar character, not applying to the judgment of the Gentiles, like

Nahum and Obadiah, and having no date to indicate a moral import founded on the condition of Israel. They both point out, in an especial manner, the judgments of the last days. Joel speaks of a particular invasion of the land, and of the judgment of the nations, which is fulfilled at the same period, in connection with the blessing of Israel. The Spirit in Habakkuk, whilst availing Himself of the occasion of a particular judgment, brings out the spiritual affections and the exercises of heart produced by the sight of the evil, and of the consequent judgment, and shows the condition of a soul taught of God in view of these things.347 We find thus in the prophets (taking a moral view of their subjects), first, the judgment of the people in general, the house of David being spared for a time, God raising up Hezekiah; and on this occasion the true Son of David is announced. This is contained in Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah. Secondly the judgment of Jerusalem, and the substitution of the Gentile monarchy, the people of God being entirely set aside; Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel; the last discussing all the great principles of relationship with God, and the destiny of all Israel as a land and nation. Thirdly, the judgment of the worldJonah, Nahum, and Obadiah. Fourthly, the desolation of the last days, by the northern army, and the judgment of the nations; followed by the temporal blessing of Israel, and, in the Spirit, of all flesh. This is Joel. Fifthly, the chastisement of God's people by the successful violence of the man to whom God allows power for this purpose. The spirit of the prophet, overwhelmed by the evil which he beholds in the people, and yet, still more so when they are oppressed by their haughty enemies, understands that the just shall live by faith; and that this oppression was needed to chastise the evil, and to allow the pride of man to reach that height of iniquity which leads to the judgment that annihilates his pride for ever. This is Habakkuk. The last chapter is the expression of the sentiments produced by this instructionthe desires, the recollections, and the confidence of faith; a faith that rests on 'God Himself, in the midst of all those exercises of heart to which the history of His people gives birth in the faithful. Precious consolation, when we think of all that invests itself with the name of God! We next find, sixthly, that which appertains to the special circumstances of the Jews, who have been brought back to Jerusalem in view of the coming of Christ, and the consequences of that coming, as well as of the people's own responsibility with respect to the circumstances in which they already stood: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

There remain still some details to be pointed out. Jonah sets before us, in a very striking manner, the patient goodness of God towards a world of proud and careless sinners; and that in contrast with the impatience of the man to whom the oracles of God are committed, to see them accomplished for his self-satisfaction, even though it were by the execution of the

judgment which grace would set aside on the humiliation of those who were its objects.

Nahum however, shows us, that this judgment must in the end be executed, and that a long sufferingthe only result of which is to glorify Godwould at length give place to a judgment that should definitely and for ever put an end to all that exalted itself against God.

Obadiah reveals to us, not this general and public pride of the world, but the hatred to God's people which is especially seen in those who were outwardly connected with them, and who, according to the flesh, claimed a right to the inheritance of the firstborn.

The notice which God gives us in these prophets of His relationship with the world, and of the manner in which He looks upon it, is full of interest. Jonah presents the force of that expression in Peter, "a faithful Creator." In Isaiah we may have remarked the rich development of the ways of God in reference to Christ, and with Israel; and the connection of these things, both with each other, and with the judgment of the world. The purposes of God in government are largely opened in that book.

The three other great prophets instruct us in the vast importance of that crisis in the history of the whole worldthat critical moment when Jehovah ceased to govern it in the midst of His people, and removed the seat of His power into the midst of the Gentiles, and placed that power in the hands of men.

Amos and Hosea give us some precious light on the moral government of God; they furnish the reader of the Bible with striking pictures of the state of thingsthe facts, which were the procuring cause of the judgment that God inflicted; not only the facts which resulted from God's dealings, but the conduct that gave rise to those dealings with His people. This exposure of their conduct is full of humbling interest.

Micah (as well as Isaiah), while occupied with these same subjects, enlarges more on the promises in connection with Christ, the effect of which would raise up the people from the condition into which sin, and the judgment of God upon the sin, had cast them. It may have been already remarked, that the commencement of Isaiah, while speaking of the Lord Jesus, is essentially occupied with Judah, Israel, and the nations; the close of the book especially with Christ, and the consequences of His rejection by the people.

It will have been understood, from what I have already said on the three prophets who prophesied after the return from captivity, that they also are occupied with the same two subjects.

The Messiah appears in Haggai, and with still more detail in Zechariah. The condition and the destiny of the people are more seen in Malachithe whole in connection with the last days. *

[* I desire to add here, in a note, something more detailed and precise to that which I said on the subject of prophecy at the beginning of Isaiah. Prophecy is the intervention of God's sovereign grace in testimony, in order to maintain His relationship with His people when they have failed in their responsibility to God in the position they held, so that their relationship with God in this position has been broken; and before God has established any new relationship by His own power in grace. The subjects of prophecy are, consequently, the following:The dealings of God in government upon the earth, in the midst of Israel; the moral details of the conduct of the people which led to their ruin; God's intervention at the end in grace by the Messiah to establish His people in assured blessing by God's own power, according to His purpose.Two things are connected with these leading subjects: the judgment of the nations, which was necessary for the establishment of Israel in their own land; and the rejection of Christ by the Jews at His first coming into this world.Finally, Israel had been the center and keystone of the system that was established after the judgment upon Noah's descendants for their pride at Babel. In this system the throne and temple of God at Jerusalem were:the one, the seat of divine authority over all nations; and the other, the place where they should go up to worship Him who dwelt between the cherubim. Israel having failed in that obedience which was the condition of their blessing and the bond of the whole order recognised by God in the earth, another system of human supremacy is set up in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. Prophecy treats, therefore, of this unitary system also, and of its relationship with the people of God on the earth.Guilty of rebellion against God, and associated with Israel in the rejection of Christ, and at the close rising in revolt against Him, this power is associated with the Jews in the judgment, as being united with them in evil.What has been here said evidently applies to Old Testament prophecy with which we are here occupied. But this raises the question of the difference of New Testament prophecy. The assembly is not the scene of the earthly government of God, but sitting in heavenly places: hence prophecy cannot be the direct action of the Spirit on its present state, as it was in Israel. The communications are direct from the Father and from the Lord according to the relationship in which it stands to them, just as prophecy was with the Jews. But the Spirit can look forward in the assembly to the time when the decay of the outward system will prepare the way for the introduction of the direct government of God again in the Person of Christ. This in general we find in the Apocalypse, from the beginning of the assembly's declension until it is rejected, and then in the world. Hence we have also the prophecies which announce the decay and ruin of the assembly after the departure of the apostles, as in 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3 and 2 Thessalonians 2. The decay itself is spoken of in the

Epistles of John, Jude, and 2 Peter. Another subject belongs to this and introduces prophecy into the Lord’s mouth, with which James connects itself, but does not concern the assembly properly speakingthe connection of Christ as minister of the circumcision with the Jewish people, as in <4024>Matthew 24 and parallel passages in Mark and Luke, and even <4010>Matthew 10 from v. 15 to the end, where the portion of the residue in their service in Israel is traced on to the Lord’s coming. So that in the moral ruin of the assembly on earth, and the history of the residue, we have the connecting links of these days and Christ’s mission to Israel, with His coming in the last days.]

# HOSEA

The prophet Hosea prophesied during the same period of time as Isaiah; but he is more occupied with the existing condition of the people, and especially of Israel, although he often speaks of Judah likewise. His prophecy is more simple in its character than that of Isaiah. His style on the contrary, is extremely energetic, and full of abrupt transitions. The reign of that king of Israel, which is given as a date to the prophecy, was outwardly a moment of prosperity to that portion of the land. The prophecy itself will inform us of its moral condition. The patience of God bore long with the rebellion of His people taking pity on their affliction (see 2 Kings 17), even as long as this patience could be a testimony to the real character of the God who exercised it, and did not deny holiness and righteousness, nor give a sanction to sin, so that it was still possible to bless the people, without sacrificing all true testimony (even in the eyes of the heathen) to what God isin a word, “until there was no remedy.”

Jeroboam reigned during a period which commenced some years before the reigns of Uzziah, etc., kings of Judah. Uzziah began his reign fourteen years before the end of Jeroboam’s reign. He reigned fifty-two years; Jotham reigned sixteen years; Ahaz, sixteen years; Hezekiah, twenty-nine years. So that Hosea prophesied over fifty years, * and perhaps longer; being a witness, during those long years, to Israel’s rebellion against Jehovah, his heart grieved and broken by the iniquity of a people whom he loved, and whose happiness, as being the people of Jehovah, he had at heart.

> [* The reign of Jotham was as to some part, possibly the most of it, coincident with that of Uzziah, who was put aside as a leper.]

The prophecy of Hosea is divided into two parts: the revelation of God’s purposes with respect to Israel; and the remonstrances which the prophet addresses to the people in the name of Jehovah. In this latter part he frequently speaks of Israel as a whole; frequently also he distinguishes between Israel or Ephraim and Judah. But I do not see that he addresses himself directly to Ephraim (that is, to the ten tribes). He speaks of Ephraim, but not to Ephraim. Moreover, this is the general character of his prophecya kind of prolonged lamentation, expressing his anguish at the people’s condition, while unfolding all the dealings of God towards them, except chapter 14, in which he calls Israel to such a repentance as shall take place in the last days.

The first three chapters compose the first part, or the revelations of God’s purposes with respect to Israel. From the outset Israel is treated as being in

a state of rebellion against God The prophet was to unite himself to a corrupt woman (a prophetic type, I doubt not), whose conduct was the expression of that of the people. The son to whom she gives birth is a sign, by means of the name which the prophet is to give him, of the judgment of God on the house of Jehu, and on the kingdom of Israel, which should cease to exist. In fact, after the extinction of Jehu's family, although there were several kings, all was confusion in the kingdom of Israelthe kingdom was lost. It is evident, that, although the zeal of Jehu was energetic in extirpating idolatry, so that in His outward government God could sanction and reward it (and, as testimony, must needs do so), yet the motives that governed him were far from pure. God, therefore, while in His public government blessing Jehu, shows here, where He reveals His thoughts and His real estimate of the work, that He judges righteously and holily; and that that which man brings in of ambition, of cruelty, and even of that false zeal which is but hypocrisy, concealing the gratification of its own will under the name of zeal for Jehovahall, in a word, which is of self, is not hidden from His eyes, and meets with its just reward, and so much the more from its being masked under the great name of Jehovah.

Jezreel, formerly a witness of the execution of God's judgment on the house of Ahab, should be so now of the ruin of all Israel.

A daughter is afterwards born to the woman whom the prophet has taken. God commands the prophet to call her Lo-ruhamah (that is, "no more mercy"). Not only was judgment executed upon Israel, but apart from sovereign grace the exercise of which was reserved for the last daysthis judgment was final. There was no longer any room for the long-suffering of God towards the kingdom of Israel. Judah should yet be preserved by the power of God.

A second son is named Lo-ammi (that is, "not my people"), for now Jehovah no more acknowledged the people to be His. Judah, who for a time maintained this position, although the ten tribes were lost, has at length by her unfaithfulness plunged the whole nation under the terrible judgment of being no longer the people of God, and Jehovah being no longer their God.

God, having thus briefly but clearly pronounced the judgment of the people, immediately announces, with equal clearness, His sovereign grace towards them. "Nevertheless," saith He, by the mouth of the prophet, "the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered." But this grace opens the door to others besides the Jews. "In the place where it was said, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the sons of the living God." * The application of this passage to the Gentiles is stated by the apostle in Romans 9:24-26; where he quotes the end of

chapter 2 in our prophet, as expressing grace towards the Jews, and the verse we are now considering towards the Gentiles: while Peter (1 Peter 2:10), who speaks only to converted Jews, quotes the end of chapter 2 only. There is no doubt that the Jews will come in, according to this principle in the last days; but the Holy Ghost expresses Himself hereas He has done in a multitude of passages quoted by the apostle so as to adapt Himself to the admission of the Gentiles, when the time, foreseen of God, should come. But here He goes farther, and announces the return of the children of Judah and of the ten tribes, reunited, and subject to one head, in the great day of the seed of God. ** It is said, “they shall come up out of the land”; and this has been supposed to mean their return from a foreign land; but I have an idea that it is rather that they all come up as one people in their solemn feasts.

[* We may observe that it is not said, “they shall be my people” (an expression less suitable to Gentiles), but “the sons of the living God”; which is precisely the privilege bestowed by grace on those who are brought to know the Lord since the resurrection of Christ.]

[** This is the meaning of “Jezreel”: or, more exactly, “God will sow.”]

Thus the judgment of a corrupt and faithless people, and grace towards the Gentiles, and afterwards towards Israel as a nation, are very plainly announced, in words which, although but few, embrace the whole series of God’s dealings.

**Chapter** 2 introduces some new elements of exceeding interest; and, at the same time, a magnificent revelation of the dealings of God in grace, towards Israel. The opening words of the chapter appear to me to recognise the principle of a remnant, acknowledged by the heart of God as a people, and an object of mercy, while the nation, as a body, is rejected by the Lord. But the thought of Israel’s restoration, announced in the last verse of chapter 1, gives the remnant its value and its place, according to the counsels of God: “God has not cast off his people whom he foreknew.” Nevertheless, Jehovah says by the Holy Ghost to the prophet, not “I have married thy mother, and I will not put her away,” but “Say unto your brethren, Ammi (my people), and to your sisters, Ruhamah (received in mercy)”; that is to say, to those who, acted upon by the Spirit of God, really enter in heart into the mind of the prophet those who possess the character which made Jesus say, These are my brethren and my sisters. Such a position, in the eyes of the prophet, have the people and the beloved of God. It is thus that Peter applies chapter 2:23 to the remnant, that Paul reasons in Romans 9, and that the Lord Himself can take the name of “the true vine.”

The prophet, then (he alone could do it), was to acknowledge his brothers and sisters as in relation with God, according to the whole effect of the promise, although that effect was not yet accomplished. But, in fact, with respect to God's dealings, God had to plead with the motherwith Israel, looked at as a whole. God could not own her as married to Him: He would not be her husband. She must repent, if she would not be punished and made bare before the world. Neither would Jehovah have pity on her children, for they were born while she was going after false gods. Israel ascribed all the blessings that Jehovah had poured upon her to the favor of false gods. Therefore Jehovah had forcibly turned her back in her path. And since she knew not that it was Jehovah who filled her with this abundance, He would take it from her, and leave her naked and destitute, and visit upon her all the days of Baalim, during which Israel had served them and had forgotten Jehovah. But having brought this unfaithful woman into the wilderness, where she must learn that these false gods could not enrich her, Jehovah Himself, having allured her into it, would speak to her heart in grace. There it should be, when she had understood where her sin had brought her and was alone with Jehovah in the wilderness to which He had allured her, that He would comfort her, and give her entrance through grace into the power of those blessings which He alone could bestow.

The circumstance by which God expresses this return to grace is of touching interest. The valley of Achor should be her door of hope. There, where the judgment of God began to fall on the unfaithful people after their entrance into the land, when God acted according to the responsibility of the peoplethere would He now show that grace abounded over all their sin. The joy of their first deliverance and redemption should be restored to them. It should be a recommencement of their history in grace, only it should be an assured blessing. The principle of the relationship of Israel with Jehovah should be changed. He would not be as a Master (Baal) to whom she was responsible, but as a Husband who had espoused her.. The Baalim should be entirely forgotten. He would take every kind of enemy out of their land, whether wild beast or wicked man, and He would betroth her unto Him in righteousness and in judgment, in lovingkindness, in mercies, and in faithfulness. She should know that it was Jehovah. Israel being thus betrothed in faithfulness to Jehovah, and such being the assured principles of His relationship with her, the chain of blessing between Jehovah and His people on earth should be secured and uninterrupted. Jehovah should be in connection with the heavens, the heavens with the earth, the earth should yield her blessings, and these should meet all the wants of Israel, the seed of God. And He would sow Israel unto Himself in the earth, and her name should be Ruhamah (that is, received in mercy or grace), Ammi (that is, my people); and Israel should say, "Thou art my God." In a word, there should

be an entire restoration of blessing, but on the ground of grace and of the faithfulness of God.

**CHAPTER** 3 reveals another detail of the people's history during the time of their rejection, a rejection followed by their return to God. Israel should remain for a long time apart to wait for their God. They should have neither true God nor false God, neither king, nor priest, nor sacrifice; but afterwards they should return, and should seek Jehovah their God, and David their king. That is to say, all Israel should seek the true royalty originally bestowed by God, of which Christ is the fulfilment. They should bow their heart before Jehovah and His goodness in the latter days.

In **CHAPTER** 4 we see that the prophet addresses the whole people together. In verse 15 he distinguishes Judah from Israel, warning the former not to follow the apostasy of the latter. He dwells upon the sins (v. 2) of which the people were guilty. Israel is rejected from being a nation of priests unto Jehovaha glory which had been promised them (Exodus 19). This introduces the judgments of the priests, properly so called, who took pleasure in the sins of the people, that they might enrich themselves with their sacrifices. The proverb, "Like people, like priest," was exemplified in them. Whoredom and wine took all sound judgment from the heart; and the people of God asked counsel of their stocks and of their staff, sacrificed in the high places, and committed whoredom there. God would give them up to the fruits of their iniquity.

It is then that God exhorts Judah not to follow this course. Nevertheless, the Spirit of the Lord, in unfolding all the iniquity of Ephraim committed in His sight, shows that Judah also was guilty before Him (v. 10, 13).

Priests, people, king, all are addressed as objects of the judgment; all had given themselves up to violence. Although God had rebuked them, they would not return to Him. Afterwards they should seek Him and not find Him. He would have withdrawn Himself from them. Another sin is imputed to them both. Ephraim had perceived his weakness, the consequence of his sin, and Judah his wound; but they had gone too far from Jehovah to have recourse unto Him; they had sought help from the Assyrian. Could he deliver the sinful people from the judgment of Jehovah? Surely not. God would be to them as a lion that rends its prey; and then He would go and return to His place, until they should acknowledge their offense. In their affliction they would diligently seek Him.

**CHAPTER** 6. This calls forth a touching address from the prophet, in which he entreats the people to return to Jehovah. Faith has always this resource, because it sees the hand of God, its God, in the chastisement, and can appeal to the mercy of a well-known God. In verse 4 the Spirit expresses

the lovingkindness of God towards His rebellious children, and His readiness to meet the smallest movement in their heart towards good. Therefore had God sent unto them the testimony of the prophetsan extraordinary means, as we have seen, for maintaining in grace the relationship of the people with God, and that morally and in reality. In the heart and mind of God it was not a question of outward forms; the moral relationship with God had failed. He had raised up prophets, as a means of relationship with Himself, to bring back the hearts of the people. But, as Adam * did in the garden of Eden, they had broken the covenant on which the enjoyment of the blessings God had heaped upon them depended. They had acted treacherously towards Him. Jehovah their God was ready to raise them up from their ruin; but if He came in, His presence brought to light that iniquity which formed a moral barrier to this restoration. Thereupon the heart of the prophet overflows anew in lamentation over their iniquity. The prophecy of Hosea is important in this respect, that it furnishes us with the moral picture of the people whom God has judged, the condition of this people which made the judgment inevitable. There is nothing more affecting than this mixture, on God's part, of reproaches, of lovingkindness, of appeal, of reference to happier moments. But all was in vain. He must needs judge, and have recourse to His sovereign grace, which would bring Israel back to repentance and to Him.

[* It should be read, "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." Adam, in Hebrew, is a proper name and a generic name; but the latter generally with the article, The Adam, as in <01027>Genesis 1:27. It is to this passage Paul refers in <45514>Romans 5:14.]

They encouraged the king and the princes in their wickedness. Already the fruit of Israel's iniquity was seen in the weakness of the people; strangers also devoured them; yet, for all this they did not return to Jehovah. If at times, under the sense of their misery, they howled upon their beds, they did not cry unto God. What a picture of man under the effect of sin, who will not turn to the Lord!

In **CHAPTER** 8 it is especially the daring and continual violation of the law of their God, with which Israel is openly reproached, and which would bring judgment, with eagle swiftness, upon them. Observe here,. that the devastation with which Israel is threatened reaches even to the temple of Jehovah. Israel had forsaken the Lord to make altars of their own, and Judah had leant upon an arm of flesh. We may remark here, that the prophecy presents Ephraim, as having entirely forsaken God, and as being plunged in iniquity, and under impending judgment; Judah, as being yet faithful outwardly, although at heart unfaithful too (see chap. <28611>6:11; <28814>8:14; <28112>11:12). Judgment should fall upon them both.

**CHAPTER** 9. We have here that touching mixture of affection and judgment which we find again and again in this prophet. Ephraim should not remain in the land which was Jehovah's, for God would not abandon His rights; whatever might be the iniquity of the people. They should go into captivity, and come no more into the house of Jehovah. The prophet and the spiritual man should no longer be a link between them and Jehovah. God would confound them by means of that which should have enlightened and guided them. The prophet should even be a snare to their soul, although formerly a watchman from God. The corruption of Ephraim was as deep as in the days of Gibeah, the history of which is related at the end of the book of Judges; and they should be visited. God had chosen Israel from among the nations to be His delight, and they had gone after Baal-peor, even before they came into the land. If God is longsuffering, He yet takes knowledge of everything. Ephraim should now be a wanderer among the nations.

At the end of chapter 9 and in chapter 10 the Spirit reproaches Israel with their altars and their golden calves. They should be carried into captivity. Judah should also bear the yoke. The Assyrian should carry away these calves in which Israel had trusted. After all (chap. 11) God still remembers His early love for Jacob; He puts them in mind of all His lovingkindness, His goodness, His care for them. They should not return to their former condition in Egypt; Assyria should be the place of their captivity. But, however great the sin of Israel, the heart of their God cannot forsake His people: He will not destroy them; He is God, and not man; and, finally, He will place the people, trembling now and submissive, once more in their dwellings.

**CHAPTER** 12. The Spirit presents another aspect of the relationship of Israel with God. He would punish Ephraim, and the sins of Judah should be remembered. But He reminds them, that there was a time when Jacob could wrestle with his God, and make supplication to Him, and prevail; that afterwards He found him in Bethel, and there God, even Jehovah, spake to him, and revealed to him His name, which, in fact, He had not done in Peniel. Take notice here of the way in which God enters into all the details of His moral relationship with Israel, in order that the force, the meaning, and the righteousness of the "Lo-ruhamah," which He pronounces on His people, may be understood. His love for them at first, His tender care, the manner in which He had already been requited at Baal-peor, the horrible iniquity of Gibeah now renewed, their corruption, their idolatry, their refusal to hearken, all is recounted; and finally, the way in which Jacob had formerly succeeded in turning away wrath, and how God had then revealed Himself to him. Now, the name which He had proclaimed on that occasion was His memorial for ever. Let them then return unto God, and wait on

Him continually. But no; all is corruption, and Ephraim will not even confess his sin. He who had brought them up out of Egypt would make them dwell again in tents without a country. God had constantly spoken to them by His prophets, but the iniquity was there. Israel had already been poora fugitive and a wanderer. And God had interposed in sovereignty by a messenger of deliverance, when there was no covenant in force on which the people could reckon to deliver them.

**CHAPTER** 13 is the perpetual conflict of the affections and the judgment of God. The thought of their sin calls forth the announcement of the necessary and inevitable judgment. As soon as the judgment is pronounced, the heart of God returns to His own thoughts of grace (see v. 1-4, 7, 9, 12, 14, and the last two of the chapter). Nothing can be finer than this intermingling of the moral necessity for judgment, the just indignation of God at such sin, pleading to induce Israel to forsake their evil ways and seek Jehovah, who would assuredly have compassion; then God's recurrence to the eternal counsels of His own grace, to secure unto the people whom He loved that of which their iniquity deprived them; and, at the same time, the touching remembrance of former relationship with His beloved people. What condescension, and what grace, on the part of their God! Well had Israel deserved the sentence, "I will no more have mercy," painful and terrible as it was, in exact proportion to all that God had shown Himself to be for Israel. Well can the Lord Jesus say, "How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not."

The manner also in which God deduces the history of Israel's iniquity, ever since they came into the wilderness, and presents the means they had enjoyed for returning to Him; the way in which He sets forth His dealings when He had to resist the unfaithful Jacob, yet had blessed him when he wrestled in faithHe who never changes, and who was still the same for Israel; the whole behavior of Israel being marked by God, born in mind, and brought forward for the instruction of the people, if by any means it might be possible to spare them:the whole of this picture, in a word, drawn by God Himself, ministers profound instruction to us, teaching us to cleave closely to Him who, however great His patience may be, takes knowledge of all our ways, and has ordained that we should reap that which we have sown.

Nothing also exhibits more fully the prolonged and marvelous patience of the love of God. It is the special object of this prophecy to set forth the moral condition of the people which led to the sentence of Lo-ruhamah, and then to that of Lo-ammi, unfolded in the summary of God's ways with the people given in chapters 1 to 3the relationship that exists between the moral

dealings of God and His unchangeable counselsthe connection between these counsels and the affections according to which God accomplishes themthe ingratitude of man in his behavior with respect to these affectionsthe longsuffering which the love of God causes Him to exercise towards His ungrateful peopleat last, that withdrawal on God's part which left His people a prey to their own corruption, and to the snares of the enemy. The result is, that the condition of His people obliges God to bring the Judgment upon them which their sin called for, when all the warnings of God by His messengers had been unavailing. But this gives place to the accomplishment of the counsels of God, who brings His people to repentance, after having long given them up to the fruits of their own doings, and thus enables them to enjoy the effects of His counsels.

**CHAPTER** 14. It is this last work that we find in chapter 14 of the prophet. Israel, returning to Jehovah, acknowledges his iniquity, and addresses himself to the grace of his God. Thus only could he render Him acceptable worship. His heart, instructed now and cleansed, refuses the help of Asshur, whom he had sought in his unbelief, when he rejected his God who searched his ways; he will no longer lean upon an arm of flesh, nor on carnal strength, and he casts off the false gods to whom he had bowed the knee. His refuge should be with Him in whom the fatherless find mercy. God, therefore, who only waited for the return of His people (a return which He had wrought in their hearts by His grace, when the chastisement, necessary to His moral glory, and to the good of the people, was ended)God Himself would heal their backsliding; He would love them freely. His anger was turned away from His people. His blessing and grace should be as the dew unto them. Divine fertility and beauty should again be seen in Israel, His people.

Verse 8 I would read thus: "Ephraim shall say] What have I to do with idols?" Jehovah says, "I have heard him and observed him." Then Ephraim, "I am like a green fir-tree." And Jehovah answers, "From me is thy fruit found. There is repentance, which Jehovah acknowledges; and the joyful consciousness of blessing, which God causes to be felt, proceeds from Himself, who both secures and augments it. The last verse teaches us that which we have already endeavored to point out, namely, that this history makes known the ways of God, which the wisedivinely taught in heartwill readily understand. "For the ways of Jehovah are right. His path of action is straight onwards, however great His mercy may be. The just, sustained and helped by the strength of God, can walk there; but the transgressors, through the very power that is present, shall fall therein.

There is indeed no prophet who gives the dealings of God, as a whole, so completely as Hosea.

# JOEL

The import of the book of Joel is sufficiently plain, although a few passages may be obscure.

The Spirit of God takes the opportunity afforded by an unparalleled scarcity, caused by the invasion of innumerable armies of insects, to rouse the attention of the people with respect to the day of Jehovah; that great and terrible day which was to come, and in which His power should be manifested in judgmentin which He, who had shown long patience, would at length interpose to vindicate the glory of His name, and deliver it from the reproach cast thereon by the sin of His people, and to take vengeance on all that magnified itself against Him. That which is here presented to us as the rod of Jehovah is the northern armythe same that we so often find in the prophetsthe Assyrian. But, in the end, it is God Himself who, after having chastised His people by means of this enemy, intervenes for his destruction, and for the judgment of all the nations gathered round Jerusalem.

In examining the prophecy, the reader may observe that it distinguishes between the famine that ushered in the day of Jehovah, and that day itself. We have only to compare chapters <2015>1:15, and <2001>2:1, 11. The state of famine and desolation, interpreted by the Spirit of prophecy, calls on the people to present themselves before Jehovah, because the day of Jehovah was at hand.

**CHAPTER** 2:1 sounds the alarm, because the day is near. The day is then described as the invasion of a people, the like of whom had never been seen by Israel or the land. It was, in fact, the army of Jehovah. His power was with it as His rod. The voice of Jehovah was heard before it; the day of Jehovah announced itself as there (chap. 2:11). We find an instance here of that which is usual in prophetic teachingsome event which should act on the conscience of the people, taken up by the Spirit of prophecy, no doubt, to awaken their conscience at the very time of the event, but far more with the purpose of using it as a picture of some event in the last days of much greater moment. The judgment of God, already deserved by the people, and suspended by His longsuffering over their heads, awaits the hour in which this longsuffering will have no more effect, will become thenceforward useless, and in which the counsels of His wisdom shall have arrived at their development. The Spirit of God warns the people of this judgment: they should have given heed to it at that very time; but He describes for future days the instruments of God’s vengeance, when He shall actually execute the judgment. Thus chapter 1 of Joel takes up the ravages of these insects,

which, it seems, had caused a frightful scarcity, to act upon the conscience of the people at the time of the prophecy; but from the beginning of chapter 2 the prophecy throws itself into the future, and introduces a people, who, in their turn, will ravage the land of Israel in the last days. Yet, at the commencement of the chapter, it is only the alarm that is sounded; but with the announcement that the day is nigh at hand.

We are reminded here of the ordinance in Numbers 10, in verse 9 of which it is commanded to sound an alarm, or blow loudly with the trumpets, when the enemy should be in the land, and Jehovah would remember the people. In verse 7, if the congregation was to be gathered together, they were to blow the trumpet, but not to sound an alarm. Thus, in Joel 2:1, an alarm is sounded in Zion. A great and strong people, who devour the earth, are in the land. There is but one thing that gives hope (and that one is in itself the most terrible thing of all) Jehovah conducts this devouring people. It is His army. Faith takes hope from this. He who has recognised the trumpet of God, he who, awakened by the Spirit of prophecy when it sounded an alarm, and described this terrible evil beforehand (and it is the Spirit alone who does so) in its true colors, as Jehovah's doinghe, who has understood that it is God's judgment, that Jehovah is in it, can come before Jehovah according to His own ways, and plead with Jehovah according to His love for His people. This is the true character of faith in all times. It is the especial position of the remnant in the last days.

The day of Jehovah actually impending, and its true meaning understood, through the intelligence given by the Spirit of prophecy, is a call to repentance at the moment when repentance is necessary, at the moment ordained of God for His immediate intervention on behalf of His people. These are the ways of God. He to whom the moment is known acts outwardly to force His people to take heed; and He acts in testimony to direct their hearts. It was the same thing in the days of Jesus. The testimony of God was there before the terrible judgment which soon fell upon the people. He who had ears to hear profited by it, and enjoyed the effect of God's intervention in a deliverance which He has proffered, yet better, though of another character, than that which Israel shall enjoy in the last days. "The Lord added daily to the assembly such as should be saved."

Verses 12-14 give us the prophet's testimony, calling them to repentance, in view of the chastisements that were hanging over the people. In verse 15 the trumpet is sounded on God's part to gather the people together, according to Numbers 10:7, to plead with Him that He would turn away His wrath, to address themselves to Him, as One whose judgments were necessarily directed by Himself. Oh! how good it is to have to do with God, and to see

Him in the judgment, although He is a consuming fire. It was thus David judged when he had numbered the people.

The humiliation, we perceive, was to be universal and complete, for the priests themselves are called to stand outside the sanctuary, to cry with the people unto Jehovah, appealing to His faithfulness, that the heathen might not say, “Where is their God?” as the Jews said to Jesus. Jehovah would hear His people thus humbled. He would fill their land with plenty, and they should no longer be a reproach among the heathen; the northern army, which had devoured the land like locusts, should be driven out by the way of the east, judged on account of their pride, because they magnified themselves to do great things. But it should be Jehovah who would do great things, delivering them thus from all their fears. A full and abundant blessing should be poured upon the land of Israel; the children of Zion should rejoice in Jehovah their God; the people of Jehovah should never again be ashamed. They should receive the abundance of all the years which had failed. They should know assuredly that Jehovah was among themHe, Jehovah, their God, and not another; and they should never be ashamed. The blessing, and He who bestowed the blessing, should thus secure them from being a reproach among the nations.

But this was not all. This was temporal blessingthe re-establishment of Israel in the blessing of former days, on the ground of grace, which would prevent their losing it. But there was a new thing to be bestowed upon them. God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. The young men and the old men of the people should have visions and dreams: even on the servants and the handmaidens should this rain from heaven descend. Verse 30 * resumes the subject in another aspect, and does not follow in direct succession. Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah there should be signs and wonders in the heavens, and on earth the terror of Jehovah should be felt, and whosoever should call on the name of Jehovah should be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem should be deliverance, as Jehovah had said, and in the remnant whom Jehovah should call.

[* Verses 28, 29 are a short independent prophecy, and so are the verses from 30 to the end of the chapter, and still more so. Verses 28, 29 promise the outpouring of the Holy Spirit consequent on the repentance of the nation, which was also accompanied by temporal blessings. The repentance is the point of departure for both. So the partial fulfilment of Acts 2 was on those who repented, though the temporal blessings could not come on the nation. Thus, though there was that which was analogous in the destruction of Jerusalem already accomplished, signs and wonders will come before the great and notable day of Jehovah yet to come. The blood of the new covenant was shed and all things ready; but the nation would not repent and could not get the blessing. The remnant got the spiritual part of it with all flesh; the Jews will, all, when they say, “Blessed be he that cometh in the

name of Jehovah." The Holy Spirit, who foresaw all this, has ordered accordingly the structure of the prophecy.]

These, then, are the principal events of the last days, briefly but clearly set forth: a powerful enemy coming from the north, as the instrument of Jehovah's judgment, ravaging the whole land; judgment upon the people as an earthly people, according to their former position of temporal blessing in relationship with God; the people being called to repentance, by the Spirit of prophecy, in order that God might turn away this scourge. On their repentance God would restore temporal blessing, and drive away the northern army and destroy it. The reproach that rested on the people because of their sins should cease for ever. A double order of events is then announced, giving a precise statement with regard to the immediate relationship between God and the people; and that in two respects. First, the temporal blessing, granted to the people now restored to the favor of God, should be accompanied by a gift yet more excellent, and more expressive of His love. The Holy Spirit should be abundantly poured out; the most simple and the most humble should partake of it. But, in the second place, * before the coming of the great day of Jehovah He would send marvelous signs, and whosoever should call on His name should be saved. It would be the returning in heart to Jehovah which He would own; for in that dreadful day of the wrath of God there should be deliverance in Zion, and in Jerusalem His chosen city. It is He who intervenes in judgment; He would remember mercy: there should be a remnant called by His grace. The accomplishment of all this is evidently in the last days, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and He will manifest His government in righteousness and in goodness on the earth, though the repentant remnant get the spiritual blessing in a christian way, as in like manner that of the new covenant. The whole tenor of the prophecy, I think, makes it plain that Joel does not speak of the beast and Antichrist, but of the powers of the heathen from outside the apostate system. It will be remembered that it is said in Daniel 9 that because of the protection of idols there will be a desolator. Joel thus speaks, not of him who makes a covenant with Israel, but of this desolator. Hence Jehovah roars out of Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem. The judgment is not from heaven against the beast and his armies, but from Jerusalem against the enemies and desolators of Israel.

[* This is an entirely distinct prophecy, which goes by itself, preceding the day of Jehovah, as indeed is clearly stated, which day ushers in the blessing previously spoken of. The order in the last days will be repentance, deliverance by the day of Jehovah, temporal blessing, the Holy Ghost. Before the day of Jehovah signs will take place. This last stands therefore necessarily apart, as the calling on the name of Jehovah of course precedes the deliverance.]

But there is still something to be pointed out here. The Spirit of God has taken care entirely to finish His subject. In verse 27 the deliverance from the northern army is complete, and temporal blessing is so bestowed that Israel may enjoy it permanently, under grace. Jehovah is there, and His people shall never be ashamed. From verse 28 to 32 is quite apart, and this for every important reasons. On the repentance of the people the Holy Spirit should be bestowed; and, before the execution of the judgment, whosoever called on the name of Jehovah should be saved. Now the rejection of the Messiah necessarily brought in judgment on the Jew (although other counsels of God were to be accomplished with respect to the assembly, outside the Jewish system); their temple has been given up to the power of the enemy, who, as the army of Jehovah was to destroy these murderers, and to burn up their city. The last days therefore are come, the end of the age, with respect to the Jews, although it is all to resume its course for a little season for the definitive judgment, when the counsels of God with regard to the assembly are fulfilled. But if judgment thus hasted, mercy could not delay in coming and anticipating it. The Holy Ghost was given, according to this promise, to the remnant who in those days hearkened to the call of Jehovah, and it was poured out upon all flesh. Deliverance was found in Zion, although the redeemed (those who were to be saved) were translated into the assembly, the time for resuming the government of God not being yet comethe time when He to whom it was given should associate those with Himself who should have learnt to suffer with Him, that they might also be glorified together. Then the final accomplishment of all this mystery should take placethe great and terrible day of Jehovah: Christ should take His great power, and should reign.

What we have been saying will explain the true importance of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the place which that destruction holds in the development of God’s dealings; and the connection, with respect to His dealings on earth, between this destruction and that which took place on the day of Pentecost.

There is yet one thing to be remarked here, namely, that in view of the counsels of grace towards the Gentiles, the Spirit of God makes use of language that leaves the door open to them. The Spirit is poured out “on all flesh,” and “whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.” The apostle Paul frequently employs this last expression in this sense.

It is interesting to recall here the different occasions on which the expression “all flesh” is used. It implies, as to its full accomplishment, the important fact that will take place at the end of this age, namely, that God will come out of the narrow circle of Jewish ordinances to act with regard to all mankind upon the earth. This is already true morally by means of the

gospel. But it will be true as to the government of God at the end. Christ, in coming down to the earth, came into the narrow fold (although His work, as well as His personal presence, had a much wider extent), and He led His sheep out of it; and called other sheep also to form them into one flock, saved, set free, and finding pasture. The gospel afterwards was sent out into the whole world, in connection with Jerusalem or Galilee (I refer to its administration by means of the twelve), * and in connection with heaven by means of Paul. God will, in fact, deal at length with all flesh in His governmental power.

> [* As to this mission we have only the general statement of Mark, that they went everywhere (<41620>Mark 16:20). In verse 15 they are told to go into all the world. In <40100>Matthew 28 they are told in Galilee to disciple all nationsall the Gentilesbut this is another mission. As regards the passage in Mark, the reader will remark that the questioned passage, from verse 9, begins with Jerusalem and the ascension, as in Luke; in verse 7, they are told to go into Galilee, as in Matthew. These are distinct missions. In point of fact, wherever they went, the mission to the Gentiles (<48201>Galatians 2) was given up to Paul and Barnabas, who had already been on it. So far, the Matthew commission dropped. Mark's is individual, and a question of salvation; Matthew's is not. Luke's is carried out by the apostles, as the speeches show throughout the Acts, only the Gentile part was given up to Paul.]

<23405>Isaiah 40:5. "The glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Here the mind of the Spirit goes forward to the last days when Christ shall be revealed. But Jehovah, who was to bless, is come, and the divine testimony in the wilderness has been born, even as the blood of the new covenant has been shed, although Israel, as yet, has not acknowledged it.

Verse 6, 7. "All flesh"even the people"is as grass." Israel has not yet learned this, but the remnant have been blessed.

In <23616>Isaiah 66:16, God pleads "by fire and by his sword with all flesh." It is the judgment that extends to all.

Here, in Joel, it is the Spirit poured out upon all flesh, to manifest the presence of God, and the blessing that rests upon all men, and is no longer confined to the Jews.

We may compare the warning in <38213>Zechariah 2:13; the millennial song of Christ, <19521>Psalm 145:21: "Let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever"; the judgment of the apostates, <23624>Isaiah 66:24: "They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." See also <01062>Genesis 6:12

In Joel 3 the Spirit develops, with more detail, the circumstances of the last daysthose days, in which God would bring back the captives of Judah and

Jerusalem. This epoch precedes the time of peace and blessing, in which the curse shall be entirely taken away. It is the judgment of the nations, a judgment necessary for the vindication of the rights of God, with respect to His oppressed people, and for the manifestation, in the sight of the nations, of that which He is in His government of the earth. The ten tribes are not here in question, nor the general restoration of Israel. Before the full blessing of His people, God must resume His immediate government of them, in the same place where He had given it up, again taking possession of the seat of that governmenta seat which He had chosen Himself. There will He plead in His power with all the nations that dispute His rights, manifesting Himself in the midst of His people, and acting as dwelling with them, maintaining their rights as belonging to Himself. Israel is His inheritance. The word "Jehoshaphat" means "the judgment, or the sceptre, of Jehovah or Jah." There, in judgment, He pleads with the nations for His people, whom they had scattered; and for His land, which they had parted.

He recounts all the grievances of His people, as done to Himself. By their means the same evils should be recompensed in judgment upon the nations that inflicted them.

The nations are called upon to prepare for war, they are all to assemble, they are to wake up, quitting their peaceful occupations, and come to the valley of Jehoshaphat. There Jehovah will sit to judge all the heathen round about.

And if the Gentiles are to awaken all their mighty men for the day of God, God on His part will cause His mighty ones to come down (v. 11).

But, however great the pride of the men of war, it was, after all, the judgment of Godthe sickle of God reaping the earth. His press should be full, His vats should overflow; for the iniquity was great. In the Apocalypse the harvest is distinguished from the vintage, the first being the judgment that separates the good from the wicked and vice versa; the second, the execution of vengeance. Here it appears to me that the two together present the general idea of the execution of the judgment, although the symbol of the winepress is the more forcible. What multitudes in that day should learn the consequences of their contempt of the word of grace, and of the pride that raised them up in rebellion against Jehovah of hosts! All governmental order, its grandeur and its power, should disappear before the judgment of God.

But Jehovah Himself should resume the reins of government on earth, and cause His voice to be heard from Jerusalem. The heavens and earth should tremble at His intervention. But if this intervention was the judgment of the rebellious, He who intervened, Jehovah, would be the hope of His peopleHimself the strength of the children of Israel. And thus should they

know Him to be Jehovah their God; dwelling in Zion, His holy mountain. Jerusalem should be holy, strangers should no more pass through it, profaning it as their prey. Nor this alone; but there should be abundant blessing on the land of His people; wine should flow down from their mountains, and milk from their hills. The rivers of Judah should flow with waters, and a fountain should come forth of the house of Jehovah, and water the valley of Shittim (compare <26470>Ezekiel 47 and <38140>Zechariah 14:8). Egypt and Edom should be made desolate; but Judah and Jerusalem should dwell in everlasting blessing, for Jehovah should have cleansed them. We perceive that it is effectual and sovereign grace.

It will be remarked also, that this prophecy does not go beyond the blessing of Judah and Jerusalem; that the scene of the judgment of the nations refers to the judgment accomplished in the land of Judea, where their armies will be assembled accomplished to put Jehovah in possession of His throne upon earth; or rather, He takes possession of His throne by the execution of this judgment, and afterwards He bestows blessing on the people whom, in grace, He has cleansed. One devastating army is especially pointed out that which comes from the north. It appears also that the desolation of the land, before the intervention of Jehovah, will be very great, so that the people will be a reproach among the nations; but woe unto those who should despise the people of God!

If this army announces the day of Jehovah, Jehovah Himself will interpose, that it may be in truth His own; and, in interposing, He delivers the people whom He loves.

# AMOS

The prophecy of Amos is one of those that speak of the moral condition of the people, and especially of Israel, who, as we have already seen in the historical books, represents more particularly the people as such; while Judah was but as an appanage of the house of David, although containing always a remnant of the people.

This prophecy, which does not extend so far down in the history of Israel as that of Hosea, is less fervent than the latter; sin is not pursued with that consuming fire of jealousy and of moral revenge, which characterises the burning and broken style of the prophet Hosea. Nothing, doubtless, can be more decided against evil than Amos; but, although very simple, he speaks, as it were, from higher ground. In Hosea we see the anguish of heart produced by the Holy Ghost, in a man who could not endure evil in the people whom he loved as being the people of God; while in Amos there is more of the calmness of God's own judgment. There is much less detail with respect to sin. Certain prominent transgressions of a special character are pointed out, and the most complete and absolute judgment is proclaimed. In the outset Jehovah, proclaiming His own rights from the place of His own throne, roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem. Afterwards, quite at the end, the restoration of the house of David and of Israel likewise is announced. We may remark that, before the judgment of Israel and Judah is declared, that also of the surrounding nations is pronounced; and this, on account of their hostile and cruel behavior to the people of Israel, and on account of that also which was essentially cruel in them, and opposed even to the sentiments of humanity; for God takes cognizance of all these things.

Syria is to be carried away captive into Assyria. The means employed for the judgment of the others is not mentioned. Gaza and the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, pass successively in review; and, finally, Judah and Israel. God enters into much more detail with respect to the sins of His people. He had indeed specified that which characterised each nation judged; but with Israel He goes into detail. We may here again remarkthat which we have seen elsewherethat these judgments of Jehovah fall upon the nations that are established on the territory promised to Abraham, and belonging, according to this gift of God, to the people of Israel. God purges His land of that which defiles it, and consequently alas! of Judah and Israel likewise; but at the same time asserting and retaining His own rights, which He will exercise in grace on Israel's behalf in the last days. We see here the folly of the hope entertained by the enemies of the people, in seeking their ruin with

the idea of finding their own advantage in it. Doubtless God can chastise His people, for He must make His own character manifest; but the malice of their enemies brings His judgment upon them also.

With respect to Judah, Jehovah especially points out their contempt of the law and disobedience of His commandments.

In Israel the sin specified has a character more independent of the law (the reason of which is easily understood, if we consider the condition of that people), and connected with that departure from the fear of God, which allows man to give way to the selfishness of his own heart, and to oppress those whom God regards. They sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. They care not for the sufferings of the poor; but even at the altarsupposed, at least, to be that of Jehovahthey lie down upon garments pledged through poverty, and make merry with the fines inflicted for transgressions. Nevertheless God had brought them up out of Egypt, had destroyed their enemies to put them in possession of their lands, and had given them the tokens of an especial relationship with Himself, whether by persons set apart for Himself, or by those whom He had sent as messengers to them; but they had caused the former to defile themselves, and had commanded the latter not to prophesy in the name of Jehovah. The heart of God was crushed, as it were, by their sins; and His judgment should overtake them. The charge of despising the poor is often repeated in this prophecy (chap. Amos 2:7; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:11; Amos 8:6); and this in special connection with Israel.

After having specified each one of the nations that were found on the territory promised to Abraham, God addresses Judah and Israel togetherthe whole family whom He had brought up from Egypt. These only had Jehovah known of all the families of the earth; therefore would He punish them for their iniquities: a solemn but very simple principle. If we are in the place of testimonyof testimony to Godit is needful that this testimony should be in accordance with the heart and the principles of Godthat it should not falsify His characterthat our walk should agree with our position. And the more immediate this testimony is, the more jealous will God be with respect to His glory and our faithfulness. Judgment begins at His house. If there was evil in the city, it was that Jehovah had interfered in judgment. * Two cannot walk together except they are agreed. Two important declarations are attached to this principle. On the one hand, if God intervene and make His great and terrible voice to be heard, there is a cause: on the other hand, God would not act without warning His people. He would do nothing without revealing it to His servants the prophets. But the lion had roared: should they not tremble? Jehovah had spoken; the prophet could not be silent. This was the condition of Israel. It is this latter kingdom

that, for the moment, the Spirit of God particularly addresses. There should be left but a few little fragments of them, even like the morsels of a lamb that might be taken out of the lion's mouth after he had devoured it. Finally, in speaking here of Israel, Jehovah specifies their idolatrous altars, and declares that all the glory of the people shall perish. We may again remark, here, the way in which the kingdom of Israel is taken for the whole people, although Judah is spoken of and judged in its turn (see v. 9, 12-14).

[* Though some take it as moral evil which would lead Jehovah to interferethen shall Jehovah do nothing.]

With the exception of the first two chapters, which go together, each chapter in Amos is a distinct prophecy.

**CHAPTER** 4 presents the oppression of the poor, and the worship which the children of Israel rendered at will in the places they had chosen. God also would act as He saw fit. He had indeed already done so; nevertheless they had not returned unto Him. He had repeated His chastisements in the most significant manner, but in vain. Therefore He calls on Israel to prepare to meet Himself.

**CHAPTER** 5. After having deplored the ruin of Israel, He contrasts the places of their false worship with Jehovah, the Creator, and exhorts them to come unto Him and live. But Israel put off the thought of the evil day. Evil had the upper hand. The wise man kept silence, for it was an evil day. Nevertheless the Spirit calls to repentance. It might be that Jehovah would have compassion on the affliction of Joseph. Yet there were those in the midst of all this iniquity who professed to desire the day of Jehovah. The prophet tells them that it should be a day of terror and of judgment, of darkness and not of light. They should fall from one disaster into another. Jehovah took no pleasure in their offerings and sacrifices; He could not bear with their solemn feasts; He desired judgment and righteousness. But the people had been the same from the beginning: it was not Himself that they worshipped in the wilderness, but their Moloch and their Remphan, which they had made to themselves; and they should be carried away captive, beyond even the land that was now the object of their dread. This last appeal of the prophet involves deeply important instruction. The evil principle which was their ruin had been amongst them from the beginning: the interposition of God's power had checked it, and had turned aside its effect; but there it was, and with the decline of faith and godliness, when human interests no longer restrained it, the same evil had reappeared. The calves of Dan and Bethel were but a renewal of the calf they made in the wilderness. The people of Israel showed themselves in their true character, notwithstanding all the longsuffering of God; and the judgment dates from

the first act that displayed what they had in their heart. Here again we see all Israel looked at morally as one, when the ten tribes are spoken of. But this is made evident in a clear and striking manner by the whole prophecy.

**CHAPTER** 6 dwells upon the false confidence that deceived the heads of Israel. A similar judgment to that of Calneh and Hamath might fall upon Israel. Their chief men gave themselves up to luxury, as though all were prosperity. They had no sense of the affliction of Joseph. They should be the first to go into captivity. Jehovah would give up Israel to desolation. He would abhor the excellency of Jacob. For they trusted in that which was but vanityin their golden calf. But He whom they despised would raise up an enemy that should afflict them from Hamath to the borders of Egypt.

**CHAPTER** 7. God had long waited patiently. More than once He had been on the point of giving Israel up to judgment. The intercession of the prophet, that is to say, of the Spirit of Christ which wrought in the prophets (an intercession, indeed, that owed its efficacy to His sufferings; see [19]Psalm 18), had arrested the scourge. But now Jehovah would arise to judgment, with the measuring-line in His hand, and nothing should turn Him aside. With the house of Jehu Israel should fall. In fact this is what took place. It may be that the preceding judgments apply to the downfall of the family of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; and to that of the family of Ahab. Israel had been raised up again after each of those events, but not so after the house of Jehu had fallen.

A prophecy like this was out of place in the king's chapel. A religion, arranged by the policy of man without the fear of God, cannot endure the testimony of truth. Bethel was the house of the kingdom. The priest reports it all to the king. Let the prophet go away to Judah. There Judah was owned, and the truth might be proclaimed; but this was not the place for such unpalatable truths. The king was the ruler in all religious matters: man was master. But Jehovah does not renounce His own rights. Amos was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. He had not this function from man, nor from the desire of his own heart. Jehovah, in His sovereign will, had appointed him, and his word was the word of Jehovah. The priest, who opposed it, should suffer the consequences of his rashness, and Israel should surely go into captivity.

**CHAPTER** 8 renews the declaration, that the end of Israel was come on account of their iniquity. God would no longer pass it over. The prophet announces likewise the distress the people should come into from being deprived of all guidance from Jehovah. They who trusted in the vanities that Israel had set up for themselves should fall, and never rise again.

**CHAPTER** 9 presents Jehovah Himself as directing the judgment in such a manner that Israel should in no wise escape it, God treating them as He would the nations that were strangers to Him, as the Philistines or the Syrians, whom, in His providence, He had brought from other lands. Nevertheless God did not forget Israel. He executed the judgment Himself, so that, while Israel should be sifted among all the nations, not one grain should be lost. The wicked who did not believe in the judgment should be overtaken by it.

In that day (that is, in the day of Jehovah's final judgment) He would not raise up the tabernacle of Jeroboams and of Jehus, although He had given them a place for a time during His longsuffering government; but (fulfilling His own purposes of grace) He would raise up the tabernacle of David His elect, and rebuild it in its glory. He would raise it entirely from its ruins, that His seed might possess the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen that are brought to know the name of Jehovah. * At that time Jehovah would also bring Israel back from their captivity, and re-establish them in full blessing. They should enjoy the fruits of their land. Jehovah would plant His people upon their land, and they should be no more pulled up. It was the land which He Himself had given them.

[* This passage is quoted by the apostle James in <44150>Acts 15. Here (in Amos) it is quite clear that it applies to the last days, and it has sometimes been attempted to apply it to the same period in Acts also, laying stress on the words, "After this." But I am persuaded that those who do so have not rightly apprehended the meaning of the apostle's argument. He quotes this passage for one expression alone, without dwelling on the remainder; and this is the reason, I doubt not, that he is satisfied with the translation of the Septuagint. This expression is, "All the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." The question was, whether Gentiles could be received without becoming Jews. After having affirmed this principle, he shows that the prophets agreed with his declaration. He does not speak at all of the fulfilment of the prophecy; he only shows that the prophets sanction the principle, that Gentiles should bear the name of Jehovah"All the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." There would then be such. God knew all His works from the beginning of the world, whatever might be the time of their manifestation.]

Thus we find, in the prophet Amos, the judgment of the kingdom of Israel; but this judgment applied to the whole of Israel as a nation, and their assured restoration, in connection with the re-establishment of the house of David in the last daysa re-establishment accomplished by God, which nothing should again overthrow. He would plant them, and none should pluck them up: a testimony which assuredly has never been fulfilled, and as assuredly will be; Israel shall be in their own land and never again removed.

In general, then, this prophet sets before us, not great public events in the government of God, but the ways of God with His people, in view of their moral condition; the ten tribes, or the kingdom of Israel, being looked at as representing all Israel as a responsible nation, the link of their condition at that time with their original position (when, through the grace and power of Jehovah, they had come up out of Egypt), being the golden calves of Sinai and of Bethel.

The prophecy closes, as we have seen, with the re-establishment in blessing of the whole people, under the house of David, according to the sovereign grace of God who changes not. It should be, for the whole nation, the sure mercies of David.

# OBADIAH

Edom is frequently spoken of in the prophets. This people, who, as well as Jacob, were descended from Isaac, had an inveterate hatred to the posterity of the younger son who were favored as the people of Jehovah. [19]Psalm 137 tells of this hatred in the seventh verse. In [19]Psalm 83 Edom forms a part of the last confederacy against Jerusalem, the object of which was to cut off the name of Israel from the earth. [26]Ezekiel 35 dwells upon this perpetual hatred, shown from the first in the refusal to give them a passage through the land, and upon the desire of Edom to possess the land of Israel. Our prophet enlarges upon the details of the manifestation of this hatred, which burst forth when Jerusalem was taken. It is possible that there was something of this sort when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Edom is united with Babylon in Psalm 137 as the inveterate enemy of Jerusalem.

But it is evident that the prophecy extends to other events. Jerusalem shall again be attacked by these Gentiles, who seek to satiate their hatred to the city of Jehovah, and to gratify their ambitious purposes. Edom plays a sorrowful part on this occasion, and its judgment is proportioned to its sin. The nation is entirely cut off. When the rest of the world rejoice, the desolation of Edom shall be complete. Edom had purposed to take advantage of the attack of the nations upon Jerusalem, to possess itself of the land, and had united with them to take part in the attack, by lying in waitas was natural to a people whose habits were those of the Arab tribesto cut off the retreat of the fugitives, laying hands, when possible, on their substance, and giving them up also to their enemies. The men of Edom knew not that the day of Jehovah was upon all the nations, and that this conduct would but bring down an especial curse on their own heads. Their judgment is thus described: God takes away their wisdom, their pride deceives them, their strength fails them, in order that they may be entirely cut off. We have seen them joining the last confederacy against Jerusalem, and taking part in the destruction of that city. But it appears that their confederates deceive them (v. 7); and Edom, thus ill-treated by former allies, become “small among the heathen” (v. 1, 2). The nations are the first instruments of Jehovah’s vengeance. But another and yet more terrible event is linked with the name of Edom, or Idumea, and is the occasion of Jehovah’s judgment falling upon that people. It is in Edom that the armies of the nations will be assembled in the last days. We have the account of this in [23]Isaiah 34 and [23]63. See [23]Isaiah 34:5, 6, the rest of the chapter displaying the judgment of desolation in the strongest possible language.

Isaiah 63 shows us Jehovah Himself returning from the judgment, having trodden the winepress alone. Of the peoples there were none with Him.

Finally, Israel itself shall be an instrument in the hand of Jehovah for the judgment of Esau (Obadiah 18). The destruction in Isaiah relates especially to the armies of the nations, which, in their movements, find themselves assembled in Edom. The part which Israel takes in the judgment is on the people in general; and, I suppose, afterwards, when Christ is at their head as the Messiah (compare v. 17, 18); and Isaiah 11:14 appears to confirm this view of the passage. At all events it takes place after Israel's blessing.

That none shall be left of Edom is also declared in Obadiah 5, 6, 9, 18; Jeremiah 49:9, 10-22; and it will be observed that there is no restoration of a remnant, as in the case of Elam and others (Jeremiah 49:39). A part of the latter prophecy establishes the same facts as that of Obadiah, in nearly the same words. The same judgment is pronounced in Ezekiel 35, and in Isaiah 34, already quoted. We see in these chapters, as well as in Isaiah 63, that it is the controversy of Jerusalem, that Jehovah pleads with Edom (Ezekiel 35:12; Isaiah 34:8; 63:4). In these passages Jehovah does not forget His thoughts of love towards Zion and His people.

He closes the prophecy of Obadiah with the testimony of the effect of His call to repentance, of His unchangeable faithfulness to His promises and unwearying love. Power and might against those formidable enemies should be given to Israel, who should in peace possess the territory which their enemies had invaded. Deliverance should be on Mount Zion; from thence Mount Esau should be judged, and the kingdom should be Jehovah's.

As corrupt power had been judged in Babylon, so in Edom hatred to the people of God.

# JONAH

The prophet Jonah gives us the opportunity of applying his history to many sentiments that arise in the human heart in all ages. His personal historythe history of a man who was upright in the main, but who had not courage to follow out the will of God boldlyis so intermingled with his prophecy, as to make this individual application easy and natural. Nevertheless the history of Jonah is that of one who bears testimony on the part of God, rather than that of a believer in his ordinary life. It is the history of the human heart, when the testimony of God towards the world has been committed to it, and that of the sovereign and governmental dealings of God in connection with the workings of that heart. It is on this account that we find in the history of Jonah a picture of the history of the Jews in this respect, and even in some respects of that of the Messiah; only that the latter entered into it in grace, and was always perfect in it. I shall point out the leading features which the Spirit of God has been pleased to develop in this narrative, deeply interesting as it is in this aspect.

It is evident that in this prophecy the prophetic events are but the occasion, and, as it were, the frame of the great principles that flow from them; or rather the prophetic event. For the prophecy is confined to the threat of the destruction of Nineveh in forty days: a threat whose accomplishment was averted by the repentance of that city. Jonah's history forms the chief portion of the book.

Nineveh — which represents the world in its natural greatness, full of pride and iniquity, regardless of God and of His authorityhad deserved the righteous judgment of God. This is the occasion of all the development of God's dealings that we find in this book. Jonah is called to announce this judgment. The wretched tendency of the nature of man, to whom the testimony of God is committed, is to invest himself with the importance of the message with which he is charged. That God may so invest him in His grace we see in the history of that grace; that the man who bears the message should do so is but pride and vanity. The result with such is, that they cannot bear with the grace that God exhibits towards others, nor with any communication of His mind or nature through any other means than their own, even although it should be in grace. It is they who must do the thing themselves; it is they who must have the glory of it; and thus all their thoughts of God are limited to their own point of viewto the portion committed to them of God's message. Compare that which we have seen in the case of Moses and of Elijah, those eminent servants of God. The sense of that supremacy in God which can pardon is too much for the heart; it

cannot be born. The self-renunciation that seeks only to do the will of God, be it what it may, leaves God all His glory, and, if He glorifies Himself by showing grace, can bless Him for it most heartily. Without this we shall like to wield the sword of His vengeancea thing more in harmony, alas! with our natural hearts, and more adapted to increase our own importance.

“Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, as Elias did?” is the natural expression of the heart. For vengeance is the manifestation of power. Grace leaves sinful man to enjoy mercywill not bring in power, but spares those against whom power might have been exercised. On the other hand, it is God alone who can show grace.

The threat of vengeance is connected in the mind with the man who has received authority to announce it. The message and the messenger are both feared. A pardoned man is at the time more occupied with his own joy, and with Him that pardoned, than with the messenger of pardon. Moreover, when grace is shown, it connects itself with the alarm inspired by the threatened judgment. And if the messenger be not himself imbued with the spirit of love, he feels himself in the presence of a God who is above his thoughts; and he is afraid of Him, because he does not know Him. He fears also for his own importance, if this God should be more gracious than the narrowness of his heart would desire and the message committed to him expressed.

Such was the case with Jonah, although he feared God.

He flees from the presence of Jehovah, feeling that he cannot reckon upon Him to satisfy the little exigencies of his contracted heart (compare chap. 1:3; 4:2).

God is felt to be above the desires of man’s heart. On the other hand, the truth of God pleases us when we can invest ourselves with it for our own importance. Thus it was with Israel.

Israel were the depositary of God’s testimony in the world, and gloried in it as clothing themselves with honor, and Israel could not bear with the exercise of grace to the Gentiles. It was by their opposition to this that the Jews filled up the measure of their iniquity to bring the wrath of God upon them (compare Isaiah 43:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:16).

Two principles, then, on which in fact the testimony of God may be rendered, are unfolded in this prophecy. First of all, man is called to render this testimony as a mark of faithfulness to God, for which he is responsible. This is the position in which we have already seen that Israel was placed. Their whole history is before us in confirmation of this thought. Blessed by

God with nearness to Himself, Israel should have been a witness to the whole world of what the only true God was. But, wholly incapable of apprehending His grace towards the Gentiles (although the house of Jehovah was at all times the house of prayer for all nations), Israel failed even in maintaining their own faithfulness, and consequently therefore in that which was the only means of making the world, as such, to understand the true character of God. Instead therefore of being made a blessing to others, they only involved them in the divine judgments that were to fall upon themselves. This is the picture which Jonah sets before us in his own history at his first receiving the message of God. The same thing will take place at the end of the age. Israel, unfaithful to God amid the billows of this world, insensible through their blind unbelief to the judgment which is ready to swallow them up, will drag into the results of their own sin all the other nations; and then the intervention of God will bring the latter also to acknowledge His power and His glory.

Let us here remark, that the principle we are speaking of is always true. If those to whom God in His grace has committed a testimony, do not employ this testimony in behalf of others according to the grace that bestowed it, they will soon become unfaithful in their own walk before God. If they truly acknowledged God, they would feel bound to make known His name, to impart this blessing to others. If they do not own His glory and His grace, they will assuredly be unable to maintain their own walk before Him. God, who is full of grace, being our only strength, it cannot be otherwise.

The first picture, then, that is set before us is that of a man called to be God’s witness in the midst of a proud and corrupt world, which follows its own will, without regarding the authority or the holiness of God. But this man is not sufficiently near to God to enter into the spirit of His holy and loving ways; and therefore, knowing that He is gracious, shrinks from the task of representing such a God before the world. To invest himself with God’s name for his own honor, Jonah, the Jew, would not refuse. But to bear the burden necessary to the maintenance of the testimony of such a God, so gracious, so longsuffering, as well as holy, this was too hard a thing for the proud and impatient heart of a man who desired to have his own will carried out in judgment, if the others would not obey it in holiness.

Observe, that although Jonah ought to have lifted up his voice against Nineveh, it is from the presence of Jehovah he fled, not from the carnal opposition of the city. Christ, our blessed Lord, is the only One who accomplished the task of which we speak. He is the faithful witness. We may compare [1901]Psalm 40, in which He speaks of the manner in which He undertook and accomplished it mHe who dwelt in a glory that placed Him

so entirely above such a position, that sovereign grace alone could bring Him down into ita glory however which alone made Him capable of undertaking and accomplishing it, in spite of all the difficulties which the enmity of man put in His way. And great as His glory was, He accomplished the undertaken task of service as a duty in the humility of obedience, and that even unto death. See in [19]Psalm 40:1, 2 how far He went, and howsheltering Himself from nothingHe puts His trust in God. He becomes man to accomplish this task (v. 6-8). He performs it faithfully (v. 9, 10), not concealing the truth and righteousness of Jehovah from the congregation of Israel. In verse 11 and following verses, under the deep pressure of the position He was in from man's iniquity and His taking up the cause of His people, He commits Himself to the tender mercies of Jehovah, praying (after having rendered testimony with a perfect patience) for judgment on His enemies, the enemies of God's testimony. For it is the time, under the Jewish economy, of judgment.

We have seen that the judgments which fall upon the unfaithful witness, being at length acknowledged by himself, are the means through which the name of Jehovah becomes known and worshipped among the Gentiles. Here begins the second picture of the testimonythe complete and entire rejection of the witness considered as the depositary of the first message. He undergoes the judgment of God, and is cast out of His presence into the depths of hades.

This is the just lot of Israel, unfaithful to the testimony of God, and incapable of rendering it. Christ, in His infinite grace, came down into this place, being rejected because He was faithful. We most distinctly see the spirit of the remnant of Israel in Jonah's prayer. Verses 7-9 of chapter 2 prove it most clearly.

In fact the remnant of Israel, although upright by grace, are but flesh; the testimony is committed to them, and they fail. The flesh being without strength, sentence of death must pass on all that is of man. He is but vanity; and if he goes down into death, who can raise him up? Who can make a dead man the witness of God?

But, blessed be God! Christ went down into death; and, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so also the Son of man went down into the heart of the earth for the same period of time. But who could prevent His rising again? It was death here that was without strength, and not man. Death combated with One who had the power of life; and whether we consider the power of God, from whom Christ had merited resurrection, or the Person of the faithful witness Himself, it was not

possible that He could be holden in the bands of Sheol. He is not only the faithful witness, but the firstborn from the dead.

And now the second testimony begins. All that Israel could have been, all that belonged to man as responsible in himself, as far as testimony was concerned, has failed for ever. Christ Himself, the faithful One, has been rejected. Israel, consequently as the vessel of God's testimony in the flesh, is set aside. It is the risen One only, who can now bear testimony; and, we may add, bear it even to Israel, who is now become the object of mercy, instead of becoming the vessel of promise and of testimony. But this makes God return, so to speak, into His own character of lovingkindness. If Israel cannot, as a righteous one, be the vessel of the testimony of righteousness (and even, as a sinner, has rejected it), God returns to His own gracious character, as a faithful Creator; from which, moreover, in the depth of His own being, He never departed, although He put man to the proof, by bringing him into relationship with Himself, under every possible advantage, to see whether he could be a witness of righteousnessof God on the earth. Jonah knew at heart that there was grace in God. Assuredly he and his nation had experienced it. But in this case, unless righteousness were apart from mercy, so that he who stood as witness of this righteousness might be honoredunless it were vindictive, so that he as its witness might be exaltedhe would have nothing to do with it. Thenceforward he became incapable of it. For, in truth, God was gracious; and such a witness of Him as Jonah would have had was impossiblewould not have been true.

It is on this account that grace (that is, the revelation of grace) is identified with mercy towards the Gentiles. Is He the God of the Jews only? Nay, verily, but of the Gentiles also. And the casting-off of the Jews, as Jews, becomes the reconciling of the world. The same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him, that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy *

> [* Hence, also, we may add, it is connected with resurrection in its accomplishment. This indeed, has a deeper causethe state of man by nature; but this was brought out, in dispensation, by the failure of the Jews in connection with Christ after the flesh.]

This is God's controversy with Jonah at the end. He would refuse God the right of showing mercy to His helpless creatures, and insist upon His rigorous execution of the sentence upon the Gentile world without even leaving space for repentance. God answers him, not at first by unfolding the counsels of His grace, but by appealing to the rights of His sovereign goodness, to His nature, to His own character. Nineveh has hearkened to God. Now, if God threatens, it is in order that man may turn from his

iniquity and be spared. Why else should He warn the sinner? Why not leave him to ripen unwarned for judgment? But these are not the ways of God.

And we may remark here that, in the case of Nineveh, it is not faith in Jehovah, as in the case of the terrified mariners. The effect of the dreadful troubles that will fall upon Israel in the last days, as judgment upon the unfaithful witness of Jehovah, will be to make this God of judgment known, and to cause the great name of Jehovah to be glorified in all the earth (chap. <3014>1:14, 16). With respect to the last days, we have seen that this is the testimony of all the prophets, * as well as that of the Psalms. **

[* See Isaiah 66; <2666>Ezekiel 36:36; <2628>37:28; <2607>39:7, 22; <3021>Zechariah 2:11; 14; and a multitude of other passages.]

[** See <1905>Psalm 9:15, 16; <1983>83:18; and all the Psalms at the end of the book.]

Here it is simply God. The inhabitants of Nineveh believed God. It is the effect of the word of God on their conscience. They confess, and turn away from their sin. They acknowledge the judgment of God to be just and His word true; and God pardons them and does not execute His judgment. Moreover, this is in accordance with His ways as revealed by Jeremiah.

The God of grace has compassion on the works of His hands, when they humble themselves before Him and tremble at the hearing of His righteous judgments. But Jonah, instead of caring for them, thinks only of his own reputation as a prophet. Wretched heart of man, so unable to rise up to the goodness of God! If Jonah had been nearer to God, he would have known that this was truly the God whom he proclaimed, whom he had learnt to love by knowing Him. He would have been able to say, Now, indeed, the Ninevites know the God whose testimony I gloried in bearing, and they will be happy. But Jonah thought only of himself; and the horrid selfishness of his heart hides from him the God of grace, faithful to His love for His helpless creatures. Chapter <3002>4:2 exhibits the spirit of Jonah in all its deformity. The grace of God is insupportable to the pride of man. His justice is all very well: man can invest himself with it for his own glory; for man loves vengeance which is allied with the power that executes it. God must proclaim His justice. He does not save in sin. He makes man know his sin, in order to reconcile him to Himself, in order that his restoration may be realmay be that of his heart and of his conscience with God. But it is to make Himself known in pardoning him.

But God is above all the wretched evil of man, and He treats even Jonah with kindness, yet making him feel, at the same time, that He will not renounce His grace, His nature, to satisfy the frowardness of man’s heart. He relieves the suffering of Jonah, disappointed at the non-fulfilment of his

words; and the selfishness of Jonah's heart delights in this relief. He almost forgets the vengeance he had desired, in his satisfaction at being sheltered from the burning heat of the sun. Having gone out of Nineveh, and seated himself apart that he might see what would become of this city whose repentance vexed his evil heart, he rejoiced, in the midst of his anger, at the gourd which God prepared for him. But what a testimony to the utter iniquity of the flesh! The repentance of the sinner, his return to God, irritates the heart. It is really this; for the city is spared on account of its repentance. Will God smite one who returns to Him in humiliation for his sins? He who does not know the heart of man could not understand the application of such a word as "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity." We see it here in the case of a prophet. There is the same thinghaving also the same application, and the same patient grace on God's partin the case of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. But if man is content with that which relieves his own distress, and is even angry in his selfishness when that which relieved him is destroyed, shall not God spare the works of His hand and have compassion on that which, in His goodness, He has created? Assuredly He will not listen to the man who would silence His kindness towards those who need it. Most touching and beautiful is the last verse of this book, in which God displays this force, this supreme necessity, of His love; which (although the threatenings of His justice are heard, and must needs be heard and even executed if man continues in rebellion) abides in the repose of that perfect goodness which nothing can alter, and which seizes the opportunity of displaying itself, whenever man allows Him, so to speak, to bless himthe repose of a perfection that nothing can escape, that observes everything, in order to act according to its own undisturbed naturethe repose of God Himself, essential to His perfection, on which depends all our blessing and all our peace.

It is well to remark here, that the subject of this book is not the judgment of the secrets of all hearts in the great day, but the government of God with respect to men on the earth. This is the case, moreover, with all the prophets. We may observe, also, that God reveals Himself in this book as God the CreatorElohim. We know that even the creatures still groan under the effects of our sin; and they share also the kindness and the compassions of God. His tender mercies are over them. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. The day will come when the curse shall be removed, and they shall enjoy the liberty of the glory of the children of God, set free from bondage and corruption. If God becomes our Father, He takes also the character of Jehovah, who will judge Israel, and who will accomplish His promises and His purposes with respect to them in spite of the whole world. He never ceases to be the Creator God. He does not lay aside one of

His characters in order to assume another, any more than He confounds them together; for they reveal His nature, and what He is.

It is sweet, after all, to see Jonah's docility in the end to the voice of God, manifested by the existence of this book, in which the Spirit uses him to exhibit what is in the heart of man, as the vessel of God's testimony, and (in contrast with the prophet, who honestly confesses all his faults) the kindness of God, to which Jonah could not elevate himself, and to which he could not submit.

We may remark, that the case of Jonah is used in the New Testament in two ways, which must not be confounded together: as a testimony in the world, by the word of Goda service with which the Lord compares His own: and afterwards as in the belly of the fisha circumstance used by the Lord as a figure of the time during which He lay in the grave. Jonah, by his preaching, was a sign to the Ninevites, even as the Lord was to the Jews, harder of hearing and of heart than those pagans who were afar from God. Jonah was also (in that which happened to him in consequence of his refusal to bear testimony) a type of that which befell Jesus when He bore the penalty of the people's sin, and when, being raised from the dead, He became the testimony of grace, and at the same time the occasion of judgment to those who had rejected Him. We have seen in his history that Jonah is a remarkable moral figure of Israelat least of Israel's conduct.

# MICAH

The prophecy of Micah is of the same date, and, up to a certain point, has the same character as that of Isaiah. That is to say, it treats especially of the introduction of the Messiah into the scene of the development of God's dealings towards Israel, and even speaks particularly of His presence in connection with the attack of the Assyrian This prophecy has nevertheless its own peculiar character; it enters, like those of Hosea and Amos, into the moral condition of the people, and connects the judgment of the world at large with the condition of the Jews, as we have had it typically brought before us in Jonah. Samaria also is in part the subject of this prophecy, so that its application extends to all Israel.

The Lord speaks in this book from His temple, and addresses all the peoplesthe whole earth. That is to say, He takes His place' upon His earthly throne to judge the whole earth, in testimony against all the nations. But He comes from on high, coming forth out of His place to tread upon the high places of the earth. And all that is lifted up shall be molten under Him, and all that is abased shall be as wax before the fire. And wherefore this intervention in judgment? Why does He not leave the nations still to walk in their own ways, afar from Him, in long-sufferance to their folly? It is because His own people, the witness for His name upon the earth, are in transgression against Himhave given themselves up to the service of other gods, or to iniquity. There is no longer any testimony of God in the earth, except indeed it be a false testimony; and God must therefore render it to Himself. All the sins of the nations then come into remembrance before Him, and spread themselves out before eyes that cannot endure them. He leaves His people to the consequences of their sin, so that they fall under the power of their enemies, whose pride on this account rises to such a height that it brings down the judgment of God, who intervenes to deliver the remnant whom He loves and to take His place of righteous Ruler over all the nations.

We have already seen, more than once, that the Assyrian plays the principal part in these closing scenes of the ways of God upon the earth. We again find him here as the rod of Goda prominent subject in the prophecy of Micah.

**CHAPTER** 1:6-8. The iniquity of Samaria, and her graven images are the cause of the terrible scourge, according to the just judgment of God; and the waves of this flood reach even to Judah.

It will be remarked here, that the events which took place in the days of the prophet who speaks, having the same moral character as the definitive judgment of the last days, are used to introduce the grand action of that judgment, while also as a warning to the people for the time then present. We have already seen this, more than once, in the prophets.

Shalmaneser and Sennacherib are doubtless in view here; but they are only the occasion of the prophecy, looked at in its full extent. The Assyrian comes up to the gates of Jerusalem. His progress is described in verses 11-16, as in Isaiah, only that the description is more intermingled with the causes of the judgment upon the different cities that he attacks than it is in Isaiah, who enumerates them rather as the stages of his march.

In **CHAPTER** 2 the prophet points out the moral causes of the judgment of Godviolence and shameless oppression. They formed plans of violence to gratify their covetousness, and Jehovah formed also plans of judgment upon them (v. 1-5). They refused the word of testimony. It shall be taken from them accompanied by this terrible judgment, that the spirit of error and drunkenness should be prophecy for them. * They rose up as an enemy: their wickedness spared neither women nor children (v. 8, 9). Jehovah calls on all who have ears to hear, to arise and separate themselves from all this iniquity. A state of things like this could not be the rest of God's people. How could the saints of Jehovah rest amid pollution? (v. 10, 11). Nevertheless Jehovah in no wise renounced His settled purpose of blessing with respect to Israel. He would gather them all together, the numerous flock of His protection. The breaker, He who would clear the way and overthrow every obstacle, should go before them. They should go forth from the place of their captivity. Their king should pass on before them, and Jehovah at their head (v. 12, 13).

> [* Verse 6 is exceedingly obscure. I doubt that the Authorised Version is correct: 'take shame' is to be ashamed. The Hebrew has hardly this sense. It is literally, Prophesy (Drop) not. They prophesy. They shall not prophesy to them; it shall not depart shame (literally shames). That is, I suppose, Shame shall not depart. Chapter <3307>3:7 explains it perhaps.]

**CHAPTER** 3. The prophet again denounces the heads and princes of Jacob. They should cry unto Jehovah. But He would not hear them. No prophet should enlighten them with the light of His word. The seers should be confounded; there should be no answer from God (v. 1-7). It was not thus with the prophet, full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah to declare unto Jacob his transgression and unto Israel his sin (v. 8). This he does by again denouncing the chiefs among the people who judged for reward, and the prophets who divined for money, while they claimed the privilege of Jehovah's presence, granted indeed exclusively to this people. Nothing can

be more offensive to Jehovah than that those who have the name of His people should clothe themselves with the privilege of His presence, and use this pretension to honor self and justify evil, or maintain a divine claim in spite of it. Therefore should Zion be plowed as a field, and the mountains, now ornamented with palaces, should be made like the heights of a forest (v. 9-12).

**CHAPTER** 4. But again the prophet, in the spirit of Isaiah, concludes his denunciations of sin, and his prophecies of judgment and desolation, by announcing the full re-establishment of blessing and glory in Zion. The Spirit repeats (there was no room for change) the declaration of the glory of Zion in the last days, given in [2]Isaiah 2. But, the prophecy being much less developed, it connects this declaration immediately with the events of the last days. Israel should dwell in perfect peace, consequent on God's rebuking the strong nations and judging among the peoples (v. 3, 4); and Jehovah is exalted amongst them. Each nation, say they, will boast of its God: but Jehovah is our God for ever and ever. Jehovah is the glory of His people. In that day Jehovah will accept the remnant of His people; He will assemble the poor, feeble, halting Jacob, and reunite that which He had scattered and afflicted. It should be the remnant of His desire; that which He had cast off should be a strong nation. Jehovah Himself would reign over them in Zion for ever.

Nevertheless, though the prophecy be less developed, the order of the events through which the people had to pass is brought out only so much the clearer by the shortness of the prophecy, which is thus a key to the more lengthened developments of Isaiah. The prophet announces that "the first dominion," the kingdom of David and Solomon, shall return to Jerusalem: and with this statement the direct announcement of the millennial state of blessedness closes. But, meanwhile, the royalty with which the glory of Jerusalem was connected had to be set aside (v. 9): a double judgment on Jerusalem connected itself with this. The daughter of Jerusalem must go to Babylon, and there be delivered and redeemed from the hand of her enemies, by the power of God. She was to be their captive, far away from Zion. That is, the captivity of Jerusalem amidst the Gentile monarchies is announced. It was while in this condition deliverance would be granted to her. But another event was to characterise these last days of her history. Many nations should be assembled against her, seeking to profane her and to gaze insultingly upon her (this is the attack made upon Jerusalem when Jehovah was dealing with her in her own place); but they who came up against her knew not the thoughts of Jehovah. He had gathered them together as sheaves into the threshing-floor. The daughter of Zion should trample on them and beat them in pieces, and consecrate their spoils unto

Jehovah, who in that day will magnify His name of the God of the whole earth (compare <23172>Isaiah 17:12-14; and <38142>Zechariah 14:2; <38122>12:2, 3; <19830>Psalm 83).

**CHAPTER** 5. But there was something more definite still to be declared; the principal enemy of the last days was to be pointed out, and this in special connection with another and fatal sin of Jerusalem and her people. The Messiah and His rejection are introduced. The daughter of troops gathers herself in troops to besiege Jerusalemthe Assyrian army (see v. 5). But here it is quite a different thing from the attack of Sennacherib. Judah had now plunged much deeper into sin and rebellion. The true Judge of Israel should be smitten with a rod upon the cheek. The Christ should be mocked and beaten.

Verse 2 describes Him in a striking manner. It was on this verse that the scribes and chief priests rested, when they certified Herod that Christ should be born in Bethlehem. It represents Him as being born at Bethlehem, and at the same time as eternal, and as the true Ruler in Israel.

The second verse is in parenthesis. It declares the birthplace, whence He that should rule over Israel for Jehovah should go forth; and, at the same time, it reveals the eternal glory of His Person.

Verse 3 is connected with verse 1, and exhibits the consequences of the sin there pointed out. Israel, and more especially Judah, is given up, yet only for a season, the period of which is designated in a remarkable and instructive manneruntil she which travaileth hath brought forth. Israel (exercised, travailing, long preferring to stand on the footing of Hagar rather than on that of Sarah) must pass through all the afflictions, the anguish, the judgments, the chastisements of God, necessary to lead her to the acceptance of the punishment of her iniquity; being at length by His grace thoroughly convinced of the need of that grace, and of the mercy of God, and thus brought into a condition fitted to her being the vessel of the manifestation of that Son who should be born unto her the Naomi brought back by grace, to whom (with respect to His manifestation in this world) the King is reputed to be born. Compare <23901>Isaiah 9, where the idea is developed in connection with Israel, “to us a Son is born”; and <66120>Revelation 12, where the historical fact, and its connection with Israel in the last days, are brought together.

Another very important element of this last scene of the present age is pointed out in this verse. Israel is given up to judgment, forsaken of God, in a certain sense, for having rejected the Christ, the Lord. But now she who travaileth has brought forth. Afterwards (and this is the element I refer to) the remnant of the brethren of this first-born Son, instead of being added to

the church (Acts 2), return unto the children of Israel. The Christ is not ashamed to call them His brethren; but at this period they no longer become members of His body. Their relation is with Israel. This is the position in which they are placed before God.

He, then, who had been rejected becomes the Shepherd of Israel, and that according to the strength of Jehovah in the majesty of the name of Jehovah His God. Israel dwells in safety, for His King becomes great unto the ends of the earth. By Him the Assyrian should be overthrown, and his land laid waste by that Israel whom he had sought to overthrow.

Israel in that day possesses a double character. The remnant of Jacob is the instrument of refreshing, in the precious grace that comes from God, and waits not for the labored and varied efforts of man. They shall be as the showers upon the grass, that tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. But, nevertheless, Israel is also that which rises up among the nations, as a lion among the beasts of the field, from whom none can deliver. They are the instruments and testimony of the power of God. The blessing and the strength of Jehovah is with them. The prophet declares. that all the enemies of Israel shall be cut off and perish. But Jehovah will at the same time destroy out of the midst of Israel all their false human strength, their chariots, their strong citiesall that ministers to the pride of man and leads him to trust in himself. He will destroy all their idols; Israel shall no longer worship the works of their own hands; every trace of idolatry shall be taken away. At the same time vengeance and wrath, such as had not been heard of, shall be executed upon the nations.

This division of the prophecy ends here: the first at the close of chapter 2: chapter 4:9-13 giving, in general, the two evils with which judged Jerusalem had to doBabylon and the gathering of the nations in the latter day, and her glorious deliverance; and chapter 5 the connection of Messiah both with the judgment and with the deliverance from the latter of these evils and the introduction of the blessing, of which the description had been given in chapter 4:1-8, as being the purpose of Jehovah. In that sense, chapter 4:8 closes the second part; but from thence to the end of chapter 5 are two appendices, so to speak, which unfold the double evil which comes on Jerusalem, and the connection of the people with their deliverers in judgment first, and then deliverance.

**CHAPTER** 6. After having thus declared the counsels of God in grace, the Spirit returns to His pleadings with Israel in respect of their moral condition, calling the whole earth as audience to hear His controversy; for Jehovah had a controversy with His people. In a touching appeal to their heart and conscience He asks what they could have against Him. He had

redeemed them from Egypt, had led them by the hands of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; He had refused to hearken to Balak and Balaam, who had done their utmost to curse Israel. If they would but consider, they would know His faithfulness. After this He lays before them, in detail, the universal wickedness that reigned among them, contrasting their ceremonies with practical righteousness: therefore also the judgment must surely fall upon them (v. 13-16). Still the man of wisdom would know it as the discipline of Jehovah, and see Jehovah's name in ita deeply important and also precious principle. They bore the reproach of His people.

In **CHAPTER** 7 the prophet takes the place of intercessor before God, in the name of the peoplepresenting to Him at once their deep misery and their iniquities * speaking in their name, and identifying himself with them; or, more exactly, he takes up the reproach of the city (chap. 6:9), beginning with her grief at the state she is in, but passing on, as we see often in Jeremiah, to his own distinct prophetic office, and so marking out the position of the remnant; speaking, but with the divine mind, as in the midst of the peoplehave their place, but judging their conduct in ityet with all the interest attached to the love God bore them. He seeks anxiously among the people for something suitable to their title of the people of God; he finds nothing but fraud and deceit, and lying in wait for blood, that they might do evil with both hands earnestly. Still all is said in the way of the city's confession; so that out of this she can look, as bowing to God's handto one who will Himself plead her cause and execute judgment for her.

> [* This character is one of the most touching features of the prophetic office. "If," said Jeremiah, "he be a prophet, let him make intercession to Jehovah, that that which is left may not go to Babylon." "He is a prophet," said God to Abimelech, in speaking of Abraham, "and he will pray for thee." In the Psalms also it is written," There is no prophet leftnone to say, How long?"that is to say, none who knew how to reckon upon the faithfulness of Jehovah their God, and, knowing that it was only a chastisement, plead with Him for His people (compare Isaiah 6). The Spirit of God declares judgment indeed on God's part, but, because God loved the people, becomes a Spirit of intercession in the prophet for the people. With us the same thing is developed in a rather different, but more blessed and perfect manner. Intelligence of the will of God enters more into it: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And all are prophets in this (1 John 5:16).]

We find here a striking circumstance. The Lord Jesus declares in the Gospel, that that which the prophet describes, as the height of iniquity, should be produced by the preaching of the gospel. Such is the iniquity of the heart which the light brings into activity, stirring up a hatred which is only the more exasperated by the nearness of its object.

The effect on the prophet of that which he sees around him (that which the Spirit of Christ produces, where he acts in view of the all-pervading evil) was that he looked to Jehovah and waited for the God of his salvation. He takes the position pointed out as that which Jehovah could recognise. He accepts the indignation of Jehovah, until He Himself should plead the cause of His servant. In fact Jehovah would bring him forth to the lightwould show him His righteousness. The deliverance should then be complete; and she who said to Jerusalem, “Where is thy God?” (the constant cry of the unbeliever, who rejoices in the chastisement of the people of Christ, as in the sufferings of Christ Himself, mistaking these righteous dealings of a God whom he knows not)she who rejoiced in the abasement of those whom Jehovah loved, should be trodden down as the mire of the streets (v. 7-10).

From that time they should come from Egypt, from Assyria, from the seas and the mountains, to the rebuilded city; but before this the land should be desolate. Nevertheless Jehovah would lead His people as a shepherd and plant them again in their land as at first; and God would show forth His marvelous works, as when He brought them up from Egypt; and the nations should be confounded at all the might of Israel and should be afraid before Jehovah their God.

The last three verses of the prophecy express the faith and the sentiments of adoration that fill the prophet’s heart at the thought of the goodness of God, who pardoned the iniquities of the people and cast their sins into the depths of the sea; who delighted in mercy, and who would perform His promises to Abraham and that which He had sworn unto the fathers in days of old.

Who was a God like unto Him, who manifested Himself in His ways of grace towards His beloved people, towards the feeble remnant despised of all, but whom Jehovah in His love never forgot, in His faithfulness never forsook, in spite of all their rebellion?

# NAHUM

If we were to examine closely the different characters of the nations who have been connected with the people of God, we should perhaps find in each a specific form of evil pretty clearly delineated. At all events it is so in the principal enemies of that people. Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, are prominently marked by that which they morally represent. Egypt is the world in its natural condition, whence the people have come forth. Babylon is corruption in the activity of power, by which the people are enslaved. Nineveh is the haughty glory of the world, which recognises nothing but its own importancethe world, the open enemy of God's people, simply by its pride. She shall be judged like all the rest, and disappear for ever under the judgment of the Almighty. Jehovah has given a commandment against her, that no more of her name be sown. This judgment is so simple, that the prophecy which declares it requires very little explanation.

It commences with an exhibition of the character of God, in view of that which He has to bear from the pride of man. God is jealous, and Jehovah revengeth. It is a solemn thought that, however great His patience, a day is coming which will prove that He does not bear with evil. Yet it is a comforting thought; for the vengeance of God is the deliverance of the world from the oppression and misery of the yoke of the enemy and of lust, that it may flourish under the peaceful eye of its Deliverer.

No doubt, He has long allowed evil to go on. He is not impatient, as our poor hearts are. He is slow to wratha wrath so much the more terrible that it is the justice of One who is never impatient. He is great in power, and will not at all acquit the guilty. * Who can stand before His indignation, or abide the fierceness of His anger?

> [* This is ever true, and of immense importance. God never holds the guilty for innocent. It is contrary to His nature. It would not be the truth. He may put away sin, and receive the cleansed sinner; but He cannot act as if it did not exist when it does, nor be indifferent to it while He remains Himself. He may for good chastise, and to show His government (that is, deal with sin in this respect); or He may have it entirely put away and blotted out, according to the exigencies of His own nature and glory, which is salvation for us; and both are true. But He cannot leave it anywhere as not existing or indifferent.]

But this is not all: His indignation is not vague and devastating without distinction when He gives it free course. He is good; He is a stronghold in the day of trouble. When the evil and the judgment overflowthe evil which is a judgment, and the judgment before which nothing that it reaches can standHe is Himself the sure refuge of all that trust in Him: He Himself

knows all that do so. As for the glory of the enemy, it shall be destroyed, blotted out, brought to nothing. Reckless in the midst of their pleasures, drunken and suspecting nothing, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

In **CHAPTER** 1:11 we find the one so often mentioned by the prophetsthe Assyrian, who imagines evil against Jehovah. verse 12, although obscure, applies, I think, to Israel. Israel, too, alas! boasting of their security and strength according to the spirit of the world, will undergo the invasion, the overflowing of the great waters, the scourge of God. But when this passes through the land (that is, of Israel), they shall be cut down * (compare <23]28]18, 19; <23]14]25). But this scourge completes the judgment of God; and the deliverance of Israel, the prophet says, should now be complete and final (compare <23]10]5, 24, 25). The yoke of the Assyrian should be broken for ever, and the proud and hostile power of the world destroyed, as the anti-christian corruption and rebellion had already been judged. The good tidings of full deliverance should be spread abroad, and Judah should keep her solemn feasts in peace.

> [* If not, the thought is, though the Assyrians be prosperous and safe in full prosperity, yet (as Sennacherib) when they come into Judah they shall be cut down, and then (as in <23]10]) Israel's deliverance should be final.]

I doubt not that the invasion of Sennacherib was the occasion of this prophecy; but most evidently it goes much beyond that event, and the judgment is final. This is another instance of that which we have so frequently observed in the prophetsa partial judgment, serving as a warning or an encouragement to the people of God, while it was only a forerunner of a future judgment, in which all the dealings of God would be summed up and manifested.

The wicked should no more pass through Judah; he should be utterly cut off.

If God permitted the total devastation and ruin of Jacob, it was because the time of judgment was comea judgment that should not stop there. He began, no doubt, at His own house, but would He stop there? No. What, then, should be the end of the enemies of God's people, if He no longer endured evil in His own people? Let Nineveh, then, now defend herself if she could. But no, that den of lions should be invaded, and the young lions destroyed and unable to defend themselves. See the same argument at the end of Isaiah 2 and the commencement of chapter 3. Jacob was judged; the whole family, as well as Israel, emptied and ruined; and now it was the turn of the world. However great the pride of Nineveh, she was no better than others of whose ruin she was probably herself the instrument (Assyria and Egypt had long been rivals). The strongholds of the Assyrians should be

like figs that fall with the first shaking, and their people without strength should be but as women. The ruin should be entire. Fire should devour them. No doubt, this had an historical fulfilment in the fall of Nineveh; but its complete accomplishment will take place when the Assyrian shall returnI do not say with respect to this city itself, which has been destroyed, but the power that will possess the territory and inherit the pride of the land of Nimrod.

# HABAKKUK

How diverse and perfect is the development of the ways of God in His word! Not only does it contain the great events that establish the fact of His government, and the character of that governmentnot only the proofs of His fidelity to His people, and His estimate of the evil that led to judgment, but also His answer to every feeling caused by the series of events by which He chastised them, the relief which He affords to the anguish that must be felt by one who is faithful, on account of the affliction of God's beloved people, together with the profitable exercise of his faith. The perfect ways of God are unfolded on the one side, and on the other the heart is formed to the intelligence of those ways, and to the enjoyment of the full effect of the faithfulness of the God of love; while, during the expectation of this effect, confidence in God Himself is established, and the links of the heart with God are abundantly strengthened.

It is of the latter part, the development of faith and of spiritual affections amid the trial, that Habakkuk treats in his prophecy. It speaks of the exercise of the heart of one who, full of the Spirit, is attached to the people of God. Still, it is Israel that is brought before us.

First of all, the prophet complains that the evil which exists among the people is insupportable. This is the natural effect of the working of the Spirit of God in a heart jealous for His glory and detesting evil. The heart of the prophet, formed in the school of the law, speaks perhaps of the evil in the spirit of the law. The Spirit of God does not bring him out of this position, which was properly that of a prophet before God, and he judges the evil in a holy manner, according to a heart that was faithful to the blessings of Jehovah.

Thereupon Jehovah reveals to him the terrible judgment by which He will chastise the people who thus gave themselves up to evil. He would raise up against them the Chaldeans, those types of pride and energy, who, successful in all their enterprises, sought glory only in the opinion they had of themselves. Their head, forsaking the true God who had given them their strength, would worship a God of his own. *

> [* Sad effect of pride, which, unknown to itself, is the parent of weakness! Man cannot sustain himself; and the pride which rejects the true God must and does make one for itself, or adopts what its fathers have made, for pride cannot stand in the presence of the supreme God. Man makes a God: this, too, is pride. But he cannot do without one; and after all, the natural heart is the slave of that which it cannot do without.]

But all this awakens in the prophet a different sentiment from that which he before experienced. Here was his God denied by the instrument of vengeance, and the beloved people trodden down by one more wicked than themselves. But faith knows that its God, the true God, is the one and only Lord, * and (already a profound consolation assuring the heart of salvation) that it is Jehovah who has established the wicked in power for the correction of His people. But shall they continue to fill their net with men, as though they were but fish?

[* To Habakkuk of course Jehovah; to us the Father is revealed in the Son, and so one Lord, Jesus Christ.]

There the prophet stops, that God in His time may explain this; watches, like a sentinel, to receive the answer of God to the anxiety of his soul. God, in order to comfort His prophet and all His faithful people, commands him to write the answer so plainly, that he who runs may read it. He bears in mind the affections of His people; He appreciates them, for in truth they are given, according to His own heart, by the Holy Ghost.

He will, even before the deliverance, comfort the heart that is oppressed by the feelings to which faith itself gives birth. If faith produces them, the answer to that faith will not be wanting. Deliverance would not yet come. The vision was yet for an appointed time, but deliverance on God’s part would assuredly come. God, who sets value on faith, would Himself intervene. If deliverance tarried, the faithful should wait for it. It would surely come and would not tarry. To the heart of man it tarried. Patience was to have its perfect work. The patience of God had been long and perfect. The time of deliverance should not tarry one moment after the hour appointed by God in His wisdom.

God had judged the spirit of pride, whose effects had overwhelmed the heart of the prophet. The oppressor was not upright, but the portion of the just was to live by faith, and by faith he should live. A deliverance for the people, which did not, so to say, require this faith, might have been preferred. But God would have the heart thus exercised. The righteous must pass through it and learn to trust in Jehovah, to count on Him in all circumstances, to learn what He is in Himself (come what may).

Nevertheless, although God allowed His people, on account of their sins, to be crushed by injustice and oppression, the conduct of the oppressor cried unto heaven, and brought judgment on his own head. Woe unto him! for, even apart from God’s relations with His people, it is He who judges the earth and delivers it from the oppressor and the wicked. His graven image shall not profit him: what can the dumb stone do for the man that set it up? But Jehovah was in His holy place, in His temple. All the earth should keep

silence before Him. It should be filled with the knowledge of His glory, as the bed of the sea with the waters that cover it. The people of the world should labor as in the fire for very vanity, and this from Jehovah; for He will fill the world with the knowledge of Himself.

This answer brings home to the heart of the prophet the solemn presence of God, and leads him to look for a revival of God's working in the midst of the people in grace, and turns him back to God's first favor, and recalls to the prophet all the glory of Jehovah, when He appeared for His people at the beginning, when He came out of His place and overturned every obstacle in order to establish His people in blessing.

At this remembrance of His power, the prophet trembles, but in the consciousness that it is the source of a perfect and assured rest in the day of trouble, when the destroyer should come up and invade the people.

He concludes his prophecy with the blessed result of all these precious lessons, namely, the expression of perfect confidence in Jehovah. He would rejoice and be glad in Him, if all the blessing should fail. Jehovah Himself was his strength, his trust, and his support, and He would set him on the high places of His blessing, giving him, as it were, hinds' feet to ascend there by His favor.

There is nothing finer than this development of the thoughts of the Spirit of God, the sorrows and anxieties produced by Him, the answer of God to give understanding and strengthen faith, in order that the heart may be in full communion with Himself.

It will be remarked here, that it is the idolatrous oppressor who especially appears, although the first invasion is described, for that was the immediate cause of the prophet's anguish. The Chaldeans, therefore, are distinctly named. It is that people, as we know, who reduced the people of God to captivity.

In sum, in this prophet we have (for the comfort of the faithful heart, which loves God's people because they are His, and hence is distressed by the wickedness found among them, and still more by the judgment which falls upon them) the answer of God, explaining His ways to faith, and His sure faithfulness to His promises. He knows the oppressor, but the just must live by faith.

# ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah sets before us the judgment of the Spirit of God with respect to the condition of the testimony rendered to the name of God in this world, at a moment when there was some outward restoration by means of a king who feared God.

God has granted this favor more than once to His people, even as He has endured with longsuffering their rebellion and revolt; and in both cases He would have us see the true moral condition of that which bore His namethe judgment which a spiritual heart would form, which His Spirit formed, with respect to that condition: a judgment which should be authenticated by that which God would execute upon His people and upon the Gentiles, when longsuffering should no longer be of any avail.

These two subjects constitute the two principal divisions of the prophecy: the announcement of God's purposes with respect to the judgment that He would execute, and the display of that condition which led to the judgment. This, as always, is accompanied by the revelation of His counsels in grace, and of the coming of the Messiah, in order to encourage and sustain the faith of the believing remnant of His people.

Israel having been appointed the witness for God, when the nations had given themselves up to iniquity and idolatry, the general judgment of the world could be delayed, so long as (that testimony being maintained) the true character of God was presented; for God is slow to anger. Accordingly He raised up prophets, beginning with Samuel, to remedy the wanderings and unfaithfulness of His people, when they themselves had failed. So long as this extraordinary testimony of grace, and the warnings and chastenings that accompanied it, served to maintain some glimmerings of truth and righteousness on the earth, Jehovah withheld His hand ready to destroy that which dishonored God and oppressed man. We have seen elsewhere, in the transfer of sovereignty to the empire of the Gentiles, the introduction of a new system, as we find in the New Testament the establishment of the assembly. I do not dwell upon it here. As to the government of the world, in view of the testimony rendered to the name of Jehovah, when Israelwho maintained this testimony amid the nations that were apostate and rebellious against Godhad so failed that there was no more remedy, then those nations also had to undergo the judgment they had long deserved. They will bring this judgment upon themselves by filling up the measure of their iniquity and rebellion against God, and by manifesting hatred to God's people, in the joy with which they come forward to accomplish the chastisements

which that people had deserved: for God is longsuffering unto them also. He even sends the gospelwhether that of full grace, which we enjoy, or the announcement of His coming judgmentsin order that all who have ears to hear may escape these judgments. But, in principle, the definitive failure of Israel's testimony left the nations exposed to the judgment their sinful state deserved, this judgment having been suspended, because a true testimony was rendered to God. This is the reason why we have constantly found in the prophets the definitive judgment of Israel. The establishment of the Gentile empire, represented by the image and the beasts, the introduction of Christianity, the apostasy which breaks out in its bosom, bring in other objects of the judgment of God, but do not alter the judgment to be executed upon the nations apart from these objects.

The judgment of the apostasy and of the Gentile empire comes immediately from heaven, whence flowed the authority of that empire, and the blessing of those who are become apostate; and against which they are in rebellion. The judgment of the nations, as such, has Zion for its starting-point Zion, now under the judgment, but then delivered through the judgment executed upon the beast that oppressed her (see Psalm 110). The events spoken of in Daniel, the New Testament prophecies, and, in part, Zechariah, are omitted by those of the prophets who have for their subject the proper relations of the earthly people with God in Zion; and the judgment of Jerusalem and the Jews is connected in their prophecies with that of the nationsthe judgment of the latter being involved in that of the people, who no longer rendered any testimony to Jehovah, but caused His name to be blasphemed. This judgment commenced, in regard to the Jews, with Nebuchadnezzar himself. Afterwards, on the decline (at the end of the age) of the empire which commenced originally with him as golden head, the nations, resuming their strength, use it against Israel, then connected with, and subject to, the apostate empire; a yet more terrible judgment. Thus all the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem, and filling up both the judgment of the people and their own iniquity, will occasion the intervention of the God of mercy in favor of His people, according to His promises and purposes of gracethe deliverance of Israel being accomplished in the judgment executed upon those who come up against them, and who, in coming against them, are against Jehovah and His Christ also. This will be the judgment that shall go forth from Zion, while the beast will have been destroyed by Him who came forth out of heaven.

The dates attached to the books of the prophets are connected with the different characters of this series of events. Isaiah and Micah, as well as Hosea and Amos (although the latter two less directly), are occupied with the revelation of the Son of David, the Deliverer and Defender of His

people in Jerusalem. Hezekiah, raised up after the miserable reign of Ahaz gave occasion for these revelations, which taught the faithful (while unveiling the iniquity and the real condition of the people), that they must look forward and rest only in God's thoughts, who had raised up this pious king for the temporary restoration of His people, and who would grant them a complete and eternal deliverance by the true Emmanuel. Isaiah (in the first three, as well as in the last, chapters of his prophecy) dwells on the connection, of which we have spoken, between the judgment of Israel and that of the nations. Josiah did not present in the same manner the coming Redeemer. Spared the sight of the ruin of Jerusalem on account of his piety, he falls himself by the hand of strangers. The glory and peace, the hope of Jerusalem for the time being, disappear with him, and its judgment succeeds.

Zephaniah prophesied under his reign. The prophet takes no notice of the temporary piety of the people, who (see Jeremiah 3) at heart were not changed. He takes the general ground of Israel's condition and consequent judgment, in connection with its effect on the nations. We have seen that Nebuchadnezzar is the first who executes this judgment; although both the judgment and the prophecy that speaks of it go much farther.

The prophet begins by declaring that the land should be reduced to complete desolation; afterwards, that Judah, Jerusalem, their false gods, and their priests, should be smitten by the hand of Jehovah. The idolaters, those who mingled the name of Jehovah with that of other gods, those who had turned back from Jehovah, those who had not sought Him, each one is called to hold his peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah was at hand. He had prepared His sacrifice, He had invited His guests; and in the day of His sacrifice, the king, the prince, and the king's children should be visited by His hand. Violence and deceit should receive their just reward.

The day of Jehovah should cause a cry to be heard from the gates of Jerusalem. He would search Jerusalem as with candles, and make manifest the folly of those who denied His intervention either for good or for evil. The prophet then declares, in general but most forcible terms, the terrors of the day of Jehovah. The whole land should be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. We have here the whole landJerusalem and Judahjudged in the great day of God. This division of the prophecy ends here.

**CHAPTER** 2, while revealing the character of the nation, addresses itself to her, in order that all those at least who fear Jehovah may be hidden in the day of His anger. They are called to gather themselves together, and to seek Jehovah, before the decree of judgment should have brought forth, and His

fierce anger should overtake them. Thus the remnant are distinguished; the meek who have wrought righteousness are called on to seek meekness and righteousness, in order that they may be hidden, although the testimony is addressed to the whole nation. For, after all, God remembered the counsels of His grace. His dealings in this respect are developed in a remarkable manner in the rest of the prophecy. The judgment should be upon the whole territory of Israel, occupied in many parts by strangers hostile to the people.

The effect of the consequent desolation should be (for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance) to leave the whole land free for the possession of Israel. For Jehovah would visit them, and would bring again His captives; and the remnant of His people should possess it. Jehovah would judge and famish all the gods of the earth; and all men should worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations.

Ethiopia, Nineveh, all the mighty ones of the nations, should fall and be made desolate.

This is the judgment of the nations of which we have spoken, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the first instrument, but which is here introduced in view of the last days, when the power established by God shall be in its last rebellion against Him.

Amid this judgment of the nation Jerusalem holds the chief place. In chapter 3, the Spirit of God, while laying open the iniquity which occasioned it, turns towards the remnant, and exhorts them to wait upon Jehovah, since all hope was gone. He enlightens them with respect to His dealings, and reveals to them in what manner these will result in blessing to Israel.

God had been in the midst of the holy city, now polluted, but she would not draw near to Him nor obey Him. Her princes were the violent of the earth, her judges were rapacious, her prophets vain and treacherous, her priests polluted the sanctuary. Jehovah was there to show them their sins and His judgment; but the wicked were shameless in their iniquity. Doubtless Jehovah had cut off the nations and made them desolate; but surely Israel, however chastised, would receive instructionJehovah would not be compelled to cut them off. But they had diligently corrupted all their doing. Because they would not hearken to Jehovah, who had shown them such lovingkindness, who had been so near unto them, Israel, unnamed, sinks to the level of the nations, who are the objects of the just judgment of God, and the remnant is called (v. 8) to wait upon Jehovah alone, who is about to execute this judgment, to await the moment (since nothing touched the hardened hearts of the people) when Jehovah should rise up to the prey. Until that moment nothing could be done. Israel would not hearken.

Judgment did not belong to the remnant. And this judgment alone could put an end to their distress. God would assemble all the nations to pour His fierce anger upon themthe solemn and universal testimony of the prophets. But then would He turn to them * a pure language, that they should call upon the name of Jehovah to serve Him with one consent. He would also gather together all the dispersed of Israel from the most distant lands.

> [* This is a very clear testimony, when it is that the nations of the earth learn righteousness.]

Jerusalem should no longer remember her shame; her transgressions should be entirely blotted out. The proud should be taken away from among her: a humble and despised people should be in the midst of her, whose refuge should be Jehovah alone; the little remnant should do no iniquity, neither should they speak lies. They should feed and lie down in safety; none should make them afraid. Verses 14-17 contain a song of praise, which the Spirit indites and teaches to Zion whom He calls on to sing it with thanksgivings to Jehovahwho has put away her condemnation for everwho is in the midst of herwho rejoices in His love towards her. All those who had grieved for the reproach of Zion, and who had sighed for her solemn assemblies, should be gathered together; her enemies should be destroyed, and her children should have praise and fame in every place where they had been despised and reproached. Israel should be a subject of praise among all the nations of the earth.

It will be observed that the prophecy of Zephaniah relates to the nations, and not to the Gentile empire (of which it says nothing at all); and that the relations of Israel, of which it speaks, are with Jehovah: their conduct towards the Messiah is not in view. It is Israel, Jerusalem, and Jehovah. Christ is only seen in this character. The special ways of God in the Gentile empire, in the mission of His Son, and in the state of the Jews, consequent upon His rejection, are quite left out, in order to dwell only on the judgment of Israel on account of her relationship with Jehovah her God. Christ appears only in a very general manner, and as Jehovah the king (chap. 3:15).

The judgment of all the nations and its moral effect, the absolute necessity of this judgment, since Israel among whom God dwelt would not hearken, are most plainly declared; and their object and their practical effect are pointed out with more precision than perhaps in any other prophecy, with the clear and distinct statement that it is when God executes judgment upon the gathered nations that they will learn the pure language and call on Him. The address to the remnant, and their character, and Jehovah’s delight in them, are stated with exquisite beauty.

# HAGGAI

The last three prophets prophesied after the Babylonish captivity. God, as we have seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, brought back a small remnant of His people, who were re-established in Jerusalem and in the land; but the throne of God was not again set up there, neither was the royalty of the house of David reinstated in its original authority. The empire of the Gentile head had been in a certain sense judged as not having fulfilled its duty to God, who had given it its authority. But another empire, raised up among the Gentiles, had taken the place of the first; and, while under the overruling hand of God (who disposes of the hearts of all) favorable to the Jews, still held the people of God in subjection to its yokethe yoke of those who were not in covenant with God, but still aliens to His promises. God recognised the power of the empire which He had established. Israel was therefore dependent on the favor of those who ruled over them because of their sins, and had to wait upon God to render them favorable, worshipping Him according to His merciful appointments, until the Messiah should come, who would be their Redeemer and Deliverer.

Deprived of almost everything, Israel were not deprived of the lovingkindness of their God, on which they should have reckoned, and of which they had received a striking testimony, in the return of the remnant from the lands in which they had been captive. If all else were lost, the fear of God and His law in their hearts remained to them; and godliness might now be exercised in the manner which He had prescribed (compare [Deuteronomy 30]).

The three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, set before us the encouragements which God gave the people, that they might be faithful in their new position; and the testimony against their unfaithfulness, called for by the decay of their piety, and the total want of reverence for Jehovah into which the people had fallen. The temple was necessarily the center of this imperfect and intermediate state of the people. It was there, if God allowed the re-establishment of their worship, that the hearts of the people should center. That was the outward form in which their piety as a people should be expressed. It was thus that the return of their heart to God should be manifested. Whatever deficiencies there might be in the restored Levitical service, still, it was the house of God, to which was attached all that could be re-established, and was the center of its exercise.

But the faith of the Jews was quickly enfeebled, and they ceased to build. There were difficulties, no doubt. It was not now as in the days of

Solomon, when everything was at the disposal of the king whose power extended over all the neighboring countries. But God had shown His goodness towards His people by inclining the heart of the king of Persia to favor them; and Israel should have had confidence in the kindness of God, and have expected its fruits; but, full of unbelief, they were speedily discouraged.

God chastised His people, but He did so at the fitting time. He employs the means which His sovereign grace so often used in the history we have been considering. He raises up a prophet, and even two, to revive their courage and stimulate them to the work. In the dealings of God, two things aid in deciding the right time for His intervention, namely, moral considerations and God's arrangement of events. In this case God had sufficiently chastised His people, to make manifest His governmental dealings in the relations of grace, which He now established with them by means of the prophets; and He had raised up a prince who was disposedif the people acted in faith to acknowledge the will of God and the decrees of Cyrus.

Having thus prepared all both morally and providentially (for He makes everything work together for our good), He sends His prophets to animate their courage and their faith, so as to lead them to accomplish that which had always been their duty.

They should always have leaned directly upon God, and have gone on with the work, unless hindered by force. * Now, also, they are called to proceed with it, resting on God, without knowing the king's mind. Their confidence must be in God, Himself. Moreover, without this, there would have been neither piety nor faith in their labors. The king's support had been prepared by God for the moment in which their faith should have been manifested. In fact, the difficulty did not fail to arise; but, faith being in exercise, they continued to build in spite of their enemies, being directed in their reply to these enemies by the wisdom of God, and the king gives it his sanction. A difficulty may be a real one, but it is only for the unbelief of hearts that it is an obstacle, if on the path of God's will; for faith reckons upon God, and performs that which He wills, and difficulties are as nothing before Him. Unbelief can always find excuses, and excuses too that are apparently well founded: they have only this capital defect, that they leave God out.

[* This actually happened (see <15024>Ezra 4:24): but it is evident that, in consequence of the spirit of unbelief working in them, its effect was to discourage them entirely, so that they made no effort to recommence their work, saying, "The time is not come that Jehovah's house should be built." It was only the testimony of the Spirit by the prophet that aroused them from their moral torpor.]

The subject of Haggai is the temple. God having brought back the captives, they immediately seek their own ease without seeking to rebuild the house of Jehovah. Was it then a time to rebuild their own? There was tranquillity enough for the latterit required no faiththe world made no opposition. The prophet exhibits the practical effect of this, the sensible chastisements of God even as to their temporal interests. And why these chastisements? They neglected God in neglecting His house. In truth, if they had thought of God, His house would have been their first object.

The people, moved by the fear of Jehovah, hearkened to the words of His servant the prophet. But another difficulty stands in the way of faith; the painful inferiority of all that can be accomplished by the remnant of His people, when God brings them back from captivity. They can do nothing in comparison with the former manifestation of His glory in the midst of His people. The effect of the people's fall and of the captivity they had suffered is felt in everything. God cannot identify His glory with an authority different from His own, exercised over His people (and which must needs be so) as the result of His righteous judgment, of His government on earth. He may lift them upmay restore them, because He loves them; but it is no longer the same thing. He cannot re-establish that direct connection which brings with it the manifestation of His power and glory. That relationship had ended in the judgment. The consciousness of this inferiority tends to weaken faith.

The grace of God meets this difficulty by the testimony of the prophet. It is a very sorrowful thing to see the ruin of that which God established in blessing, and the weakness and imperfection of that which is raised upon those ruins, although even this is the fruit of His precious grace.

The prophet, without troubling himself as to the king's intentions, encourages the people by turning their thoughts to Jehovah Himself, and showing them that, after all, Jehovah reigned, cared for them, and would have them act in view of what He was for them, and seek His glory. For, weak as they were, He would thus be in relationship with them.

But the testimony of God graciously takes into account also, the natural effects of the mean appearance of that which they could do for Him, for God thinks of everything that concerns His people. He was as faithfully their God now as at the best period of their history. The proof of it was indeed stronger. He was with them. The word that went forth from His mouth when He brought them up from Egypt He would maintain. His Spirit should remain among them. They were not to fear. But, while sustaining the faith of this feeble remnant by His tender mercy, He goes much farther. If He could not manifest Himself among them, on account of

their fall and of the establishment of another order of things, the time would come for His own intervention by His own power. He would shake all things, because the creature could not sustain the weight of His glory, and would establish this glory by His power, and would fill His earthly dwelling-place with His glory.

Not only should the earth be shakenthis had often happened; but the enemy who exercised the power of darkness had always led men to corrupt everything afresh, and to degrade all that God had established in blessing. But now, the heavens and the earth, the sea authority on high, and all that was organised below, all established order, and all that floated unorganised in the worldand all the nations, should be shaken; and the object of desire to all nations should come; and the house which they were now rebuilding with so much trouble, which was so contemptible in comparison with its former glory, should be filled with glory by the Lord.

The expression which I have rendered by “the object of desire shall come” is very difficult to translate. It appears to me that, looking at the context, I have given the sense, * and that the Spirit of God designedly expressed Himself in vague terms, which, when the mind apprehended the true glory of the house, would embrace the Messiah. The object of the passage is to certify that the house shall be filled with glory. ** Meanwhile outward glory should be granted it. The silver and the gold were Jehovah’s. But the nations, overthrown, oppressed, and oppressing one another, not knowing where to look for happiness, strength, and peace, shall find in that One who alone should establish the glory of Jehovah and bestow true peacein a word, shall find in Christ alone blessing and deliverance; and He shall be the glory of the house which the poor remnant were building.

[* Diodati’s Italian version, which is considered very accurate, agrees with the English. De Wette renders it, “The precious things.” But it is not what is very generally used for mere costly things, though the same root. This is Chemdath, that Chamudoth. The difficulty is that “shall come” is in the plural. Perhaps this is De Wette’s motive for saying “things,” taking Chemdath, as “vahu” comes first, as a description of the things that come. The Italian has la scelta verra, the chosen object (the choice one) of the nations shall come.]

[** If not, and the sense is to be governed by the following verse, it would refer to the desirable things of the Gentiles, which would glorify the house; but I prefer what is in the text.]

The latter glory of the house should be even greater than the former. It is not “the glory of the latter house”; the house is always considered as the same house. God will fill it with more glory at the end than at the beginning, and the peace of Jehovah Himself shall have its seat there. This shall be

accomplished in the last days. He who shall fill it with glory has indeed come; but, even while making eternal peace for our souls, the world was in such a state that He was obliged to say to the people, “Think not that I am come to bring peace, but a sword.” Having shaken all nations, He will, coming in His glory, set peace in the earth. *

> [* It is remarkable that in Luke, when Christ rides into Jerusalem, it is said: “Peace in heaven” (Luke 19:38). For it is indeed, when Satan is cast down thence after the final war with the heavenly powers, that blessing upon earth can be really established. Up to then it has been always corrupted and spoiled by the power of evil, or spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Then that will be for ever over. Satan may come up on earth if permitted, as an adversary, but his heavenly power as spiritual wickedness is for ever over. The prince of the power of the air is gone, his place was found no more in heaven.]

Two other prophecies close the Book of Haggai, relating, like the rest of its contents, to the house. The people, who neglected Jehovah, had become, as it were, profane. That which is holy cannot sanctify profane things; but an unclean thing defiles that which is holy; for holiness is exclusive with respect to evil. The presence of evil destroys holiness by the very fact of its presence, unless the holiness be of that nature which, by its own existence, excludes all that is contrary to itsuch as the nature of God. But when God is admitted and acknowledged, He can bless by the power of His presence. Thus, from the day that the people even sought to recognise and to realise that presence among them, blessing proceeded from it.

The second prophecy returns to the shaking of all things. In that day, the governor of Judah, the heir of David, should be as a signet on the hand of Him by whom all things were shaken. While encouraging the people at the time of the prophecya time when they so greatly needed itthis prophecy, in naming Zerubbabel, has Him in view who, when God will shake the heavens and the earth, shall be the true seed of David and the heir of his crown according to Godthe Christ of God, the Elect from among the people.

The judgment mentioned in verse 22 appears to me, not the judgment of the throne of the beast, but that of the nations who, at that day, will come up against Jerusalem. All that sets itself up against the rights of Jehovah established according to His counsels at Jerusalem (rights that were identified with the house they were building) should be overthrown. No doubt this is true, in general, of the kingdom of the beast: but the conditions of its existence are quite different. God had put Jerusalem under the power of the head of this empire. The crimes that draw down judgment upon him, are yet more audacious and intolerable than those of which the nations are guilty.

In sum, the object of this prophecy is to connect blessing on the earth with the house; and to show that, mean as it might be, its latter glory should be greater than the former. God, in establishing all in glory according to the counsels of His grace, would introduce something much more excellent than that which had been committed to man, and established by his means. This is connected with the shaking of all things by His mighty hand, and with the establishment of David's heir as the object of God's love, and the vessel of His power.

It will be observed that the Spirit of God, although He is present to bless His people, to encourage them, and to connect them with God in the worship that was to be offered Him in His house, yet acknowledges the authority of the Gentile empire. These prophecies are dated according to the years of the reign of the Gentile king. It is His will that the things of God be rendered to God, and the things of Caesar to him who then held the place of Caesar. It was God who had placed him there. We shall thus understand the perfect wisdom of the Lord in His reply (Mark 12:17), and the way in which the word is its expression.

Malachi neither places nor establishes anything as Haggai does, and Zechariah. He only pronounces judgment upon the result in Israel of that which God had done in grace, by re-establishing the remnant; showing how little the worship, by which He had connected Israel with Himself, had been maintained in such a manner as to glorify Him.

# ZECHARIAH

Zechariah is more occupied than either of the other two post-captivity prophets with the Gentile kingdoms under whose yoke the Jews were placed, and with the establishment in its perfection of the glorious system that was to accompany the presence of the Messiah; and, on the other hand, with the rejection of that Messiah by the remnant who had returned from captivity; with the state of misery and unbelief in which the people would be left, and by which they would at length be openly characterised; and, finally, with the last attacks of the enemies of Jehovah upon Israel, and especially those directed against Jerusalem. He announces the destruction of these enemies by the judgment of God, and the glory and holiness of the people after their deliverance by the arm of Jehovah, who should thenceforth reign and be glorified in all the earth. It is the complete history of Israel, and of the Gentiles in relationship with Israel, from the captivity to the end, as far as connected with Jerusalem, the restoration of which especially occupies the prophet. For if the house was the primary object in Haggai, Jerusalem is the central point in Zechariah; although in the course of the prophecy the temple, and still more the Messiah, have the most prominent place in the scene.

The date of Zechariah's prophecy is nearly the same as that of the prophecies of Haggai. There are two in Zechariah, besides that of the introduction; in Haggai, four. The first date in Zechariah is only a month or two before the last two in Haggai, which were given on the same day. At the date of the second prophecy in Zechariah (chap. 7) the temple was not finished as a whole, but sufficiently so to serve as a place of worship, although the dedication had not yet been celebrated.

**CHAPTER** 1. The Spirit of God begins with an exhortation, founded on the proofs that the history of the people supplied of the manner in which the word of the prophets had taken hold of them. Jehovah's displeasure, of which these prophets had not failed to warn the people, had born its fruit; but God was now taking knowledge of the conduct of the Gentiles, to whom He had committed the place of power, and who, being at ease themselves, did not care for the misery and ruin of God's people.

But Jehovah cares for it. He is sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, and very jealous for Jerusalem. He is returned to Jerusalem with mercies; and prosperity and abundance shall be the portion of His people. We may remark here, that the judgment of Babylon, already accomplished, was in principle the judgment executed on the oppressor among the

Gentiles, the head of the empireof the image; and that the promise of blessing extends to that which shall be the portion of Jerusalem, when the oppressor shall be finally judged.

Three empires were existing in the eye of the Spirit. And the world was at peace under the authority of the second of the four, the first of these three. A horse is the symbol of divine energy of government in the earth, and here, in the empires succeeding Nebuchadnezzar. There are here three, besides the one that stands among the myrtle trees. But they have the character of the providentially administering spirits of the empires rather than of the empires themselves. The first of the three horses is of the same color as that of the man who stood among the myrtles (perhaps because Cyrus and the Persians had delivered and favored the people of God, as the Lord Jesus Himself will do in the greatness of His power).

Such, then, is the import of the first part of this prophecy: the judgment already accomplished displaying the virtue of Jehovah's word; God returning to Jerusalem with mercies and consolation, moved with jealousy for her, and sorely displeased with the nations that were at ease while she was in ruins.

The vision controlled the whole action of the empires of the nations, and showed that everything was subject to the providential government of God, who inquired into all for His people's sake; and who, looking on to the end of these times of the Gentiles, announced that He was occupied with the prosperity and blessing of His chosen city. Meanwhile, remark, Judah had been restored provisionally to the privileges of its own worship, and to a position in which it might be ready to receive the Messiah for the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

The vision at the end of the chapter embraces all the empires who shall have been in relation with Judah and Jerusalem, and have oppressed them, until their final deliverance. The horns appear to symbolise powers; and the carpenters, the instruments employed by God to break them to pieces. We observe that Israel is included in verse 19, as a part of the whole it appears to me, without entering into detail. Nineveh having come under the yoke of Babylon, and Israel being subject, as it was, to the empire, all is put together.

From chapter 2 to the end of chapter 6, the Spirit presents the circumstances, the principles, and the result of the re-establishment of Jerusalem and of the house; and also the judgment of that which was wicked and corrupt. Each chapter has a distinct subjecta vision detached from the others, while forming a portion of the whole. The present

responsibility, on which the blessing depended, and the sovereign grace that would assuredly accomplish all, are both set before us, each in its place.

The restoration of Jerusalem is described in chapter 2 in a very remarkable manner, which throws much light on the connection, already spoken of, between the return from the Babylonish captivity wrought by Cyrus, the servant, the righteous man from the east, and the deliverance to be granted by the manifestation of the Messiah. First of all, the full and entire restoration of Jerusalem is announced, Jehovah Himself being her safeguard, and securing prosperity and peace to her inhabitants, Himself, her glory, dwelling in the midst of her. We can easily understand what an encouragement such a promise, and such an interest on the part of Jehovah in Jerusalem, would be to them in their then state, even if the accomplishment were not then brought about.

Jehovah calls to the people, and bids them come forth from the land of the north, an expression used for Chaldea, for they had been scattered to the four winds. The Babylonish captivity was the real sentence of Lo-ammi, as the return thence (Babylon being judged) was the earnest of a better deliverance from that which, in the last days, will represent Babylon. Zion is delivered, from her captivity in Babylon. But if, up to a certain point, this took place by means of Cyrus, it was by no means the full accomplishment of God’s purposes. They were continuously, and yet are, subject to the heathen image and superscription. And, in a more special manner, the Jews will again be in subjection to that which bears the character of Babylon, and will be delivered from it; but it will be in those days when Jehovah shall manifest Himself in a glory that will admit of no resistance to His will. After the glory He will send to the nations that have spoiled Israel. The glory of Jehovah shall appear, and the enemies of His people shall be judged; for he who touches Israel, the beloved of Jehovah, shall bring judgment upon himself in that which is most dear and precious to him. The judgment of the nations shall justify the word of God to His people Israel.

The daughter of Zion should sing with joy, for Jehovah would dwell in the midst of her. Many nations should come and join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and should be His people; and He would dwell in the midst of Israel. And then the word of prophecy (the accomplishment of which had been so long suspended that it appeared like a dream of the night) should be justified to Israel by its entire fulfilment. Jehovah should inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land, and should again choose Jerusalem. Solemn period! Let all flesh then be silent; for Jehovah has risen up from His holy habitation to accomplish all the good pleasure of His will.

We see, that, however great might be the encouragement for the Jews in that day, the mind of the Spirit goes on to the end of the age, and to the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah, and the blessing of Jerusalem and of the whole earth. The return from Babylon, already accomplished historically, was still future as the true deliverance of Zion. All flesh should acknowledge the coming of Jehovah. These were judgments which should take place after the glory.

But in order that Jerusalem (the center of God's dealings in Israel) should be thus re-established in blessing, something more than the mere exercise of God's power was necessary. The people were guilty and polluted. How could they be brought into the presence of God, and clothed with glory, in such a condition? Nevertheless they must be there in order to be blessed. Moreover this is the history of every sinner. It is this question, so important, so essential, that is solved in chapter 3. Joshua, the high priest, who represents the people (it is not a question here of interceding, but of answering for them), stands before the presence of Jehovahbefore "the angel of his presence," that is to say, before God as He manifested Himself in Israel since the departure from Horeb. Satan, the adversary to the blessing of God's people, stands there to resist him. How is this to be answered? Joshua could not do it. He was clothed in filthy garments. It is Jehovah Himself who, unknown to them, undertakes the cause of His people (as He did in the case of Balaam), and employs divine authority against their adversary. Jehovah had chosen Jerusalemhad plucked the people as a brand out of the fire; and Satan desired to cast them into it again. The will of Jehovah was to save them, all guilty and polluted as they were. Nevertheless the defilement existed and was unbearable to God. But God was acting in grace; and thus acting, since He must needs remove the sin from before His eyes (for this very reason, that it is unbearable to Him), He puts away the sin and not the sinner. He makes sin to cease from before Him. He takes it away, and, clothing Joshua with new garments wrought of God, and according to His perfection, makes Him a priest before Him. This will be the position of Israel in righteousness, and in service before Goda nation of priests, clothed in the righteousness which their God has given them. We anticipate them in this in a higher and heavenly way.

Verse 7 puts Joshua, as the representative of the people, under responsibility for the time being. If faithful, he should have a place in the presence of Jehovah of hosts. Verse 8 treats him as a type of Christ, having the nation of priests associated with Himself in the blessing that shall be accomplished in the last days. The foundation-stone that was laid before the eyes of Joshua was but a feeble image of that true stone, the immovable foundation of all the blessing of Israel, of all the government of God in the

earth. Jehovah Himself stamps it with its true character. It should represent the thoughts of Jehovah Himself in His government. It should have, or rather it should be, the signet of God; and the iniquity of the earth should be definitively taken away by the absolute, efficacious, and positive act of God. In this stone shall be seen also the perfect intelligency of God. The seven eyes shall be there.

I would add a few words on this expression. In 2 Chronicles 16 we find the eyes of Jehovah represented as running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him. This is the faithfulness of God in taking cognisance of all things in His ways of government. In Zechariah, the eyes are found upon the stone that is laid in Zion. It is there that the seat of that government is placed which sees everything and everywhere. In verse 10 of the next chapter these eyes, which behold all things, which run through the whole earth, are said to rejoice when they see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel, that is to say, the house of Jehovah's habitation entirely finished. In this case they are not presented as established in the seat of government upon earth, but in their character of universal and active oversight, and in this providential activity, never resting until Jehovah's counsels of grace towards Jerusalem are accomplished; and then they shall rejoice. The active intelligence of providence finds its full delight there in the accomplishment of the unchangeable purpose of the will of God. Finally these eyes are again seen in Revelation 5, in the Lamb exalted to the right hand of God, who is about to take possession of His inheritance of the earth. Here it is the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; for the government is in the hands of the Lamb, although He has not yet exercised it in the earth, of which He is about to be put in possession.

I return to our chapter. When the seat of Jehovah's perfect government shall be set up in Jerusalem, and the iniquity of the land of Israel shall be taken away, then peace shall be fully established, and each one shall rejoice in the peace of his neighbor, and each one be neighbor in heart to all. It is the Prince of Peace who reigns there.

All this hangs upon the introduction of Christ the Branch. Here He is not presented as king. It is His Person which is introduced, and the effect of His intervention. Observe that the word does not say that iniquity is taken away, until the effect of the work of Christ is applied by faith in Him, a faith which, with respect to Israel, depends on sight. Their hearts will have been previously drawn to Jehovah, as were the remnant by the preaching of John the Baptist; but the peace that flows from iniquity being taken away, and the joy of complete deliverance, comes after. They will then sing, "Unto us a son is born."

After this Zechariah is, as it were, awakened by God to see all the perfect order of that which He was going to establish. Here also the present grace furnishes the occasion for the revelation of the ulterior purposes of God. The prophet sees the vessel of the light of God on earth ordained in all its perfection. The candlestick was one, but it had seven branches. It was unity in the perfection of spiritual co-ordinationperfect unity, perfect development in that unity. Each thing was in its place as a means, and the two sources of spiritual grace which fed the light, were placed one on each side to sustain the light that shone before Jehovah. These are, as it appears to me, the royalty and the priesthood of Christ, which maintain, by power and spiritual grace, the perfect light of divine order among the Jews. The work was divine, the pipes were of gold. The thing ministered was the grace of the Spirit, the oil which fed the testimony, maintained in this perfect order. But the Spirit first places Israel, at the moment of the prophecy, in a very definite position. It was not yet the time for the exercise of outward power, or for Jehovah to put forth His might, and establish His glory and His worship among His people. It was His Spirit acting in the remnant of Israel, if they would hearken, to bring them into relationship with God morally, and in a worship that He would accept, ifimperfect as it must needs be, since the nation was not re-established by the power of God, but remained still in bondagethis worship was rendered to God in Spirit and in truth, according to that which He bestowed on the people. And at the same time, outward providence was exercised to accomplish all that was necessary for the maintenance of the relationship with God, and that God's grace had established for Israel, after their fall and their deliverance from Babylon by the providential interposition of God. The seven eyes which ran to and fro throughout the earth should see with joy the house in which the restored remnant would be in relationship with God, completed by the hands of Zerubbabel.

This clearly defines the position of the people, and the two orders of things set before us in this prophecy. The present condition was that of relationship with God, established in sovereignty by His Spirit, through which He could accept their worship, His Spirit being in the midst of the restored remnant, and providential power being in exercise to secure blessing, but no immediate government on God's part. Government was left in the hands of the Gentiles.

That which was prophetically in view, was the perfect order established in Jerusalem as the vessel of divine light on earth, maintained by the ministry of the two sons of oilthe royalty and the priesthoodwhich stood before the Lord * of the whole earth. The God of Israel had had His throne at Jerusalem. The God of heaven had bestowed the dominion of the whole

earth on the head of the Gentiles. Now the Lord * of the whole earth would establish earthly order, according to His will, at Jerusalem; and would there maintain divine light by a royal priesthood in His presence.

[* ‘Adon.’ Chap. 4:14; 6:5.]

**CHAPTER** 5 shows us the other side of the picture, that is to say, the judgment of the wicked in Israel in the last days. The prophet sees an immense roll filled with a curse for the wicked, for those that sin against their neighbor and against the name of Jehovah, to cut off both them and their houses.

The people, as a whole also, are then put in their true position. That which called itself Jerusalem and Israel and the people of God, belonged in fact to Babylon. God, by His mighty providence, takes them up and sets them on their true base; and their house is built in the land of Shinar. Its Babylonish character is fully evidenced by its position.

In **CHAPTER** 6 we are shown the government of God in the four monarchies, but neither as immediate government on God’s part nor merely that of human government. We have seen power committed to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, and that he had failed therein. But it was not the will of God immediately to resume the reins of government in the earth, neither to leave the earth to the wickedness and the will of man without any providential bridle, without any government. He controls them, not by acting directly, so as to maintain the testimony of His character and His ways, but by means of instruments whom He employs, the result of whose activity is according to His will. The only wise God can do this, for He knows all things and directs all things to the accomplishment of His purposes. This is the reason that we see all sorts of things morally in disagreement with His ways in government, which yet succeed: a chaos as to the present, but the issue of which will furnish a clue, that will make manifest a wisdom even more profound and admirable than that which was displayed in His own immediate government in Israel, perfect as this was in its place. It is that universal providence, which, in its results, satisfies the moral exigencies of the nature of God; while in the intermediate course of things free scope is left to the active energies of man’s will.

This mediate power, exercised by means of instruments proceeding from the presence of the Most High God, is employed in connection with His rights over the whole earth. This is the character of God in the prophecy of Zechariah. It is the character also of His government for the time being, that is, during the four empires. When Christ shall reign, the government will again be immediate in His Person, and Jerusalem be its center.

I think that the judgment executed upon Babylon answers to that which is said in verse 8. We know that Chaldea was always the north country to Israel. The spirits employed by God have accomplished the will of God there. The seventh verse appears to indicate the Roman empire, comprising everything from its first establishment to the present time, and its historical character at all times. The white horses would be the representatives of that which God has done by means of the Greek empire. The grisled and bay appear to indicate a mixture of Greek and Roman powerat least, these horses have a double character, which becomes afterwards two distinct classes (the last only having the character of universality, which goes to and fro throughout all the earth). I doubt not that all these proud instruments of His government will be found again as spheres of judgment in the last days, when God begins to assert His rights as the God of the whole earth, unless Babylon geographically may be an exception in virtue of what is said in verse 8.

The full result is given in verses 9-15 in which the Branch is looked at as born and growing up in the place of His earthly glory, building the temple of Jehovah, bearing the glory, ruling upon His throne, a priest upon His throne, the true Melchisedec, maintaining for the earth the enjoyment of perfect peacethe “counsel of peace” with Jehovah. This counsel of peace is maintained between Jehovah and the Branch (compare Psalms 85 and 87). Therefore should they come from far to build in the temple of Jehovah; and the testimony of prophecy should be made good by its fulfilment.

Again we see the two elements which link the events and the dealings of God in the prophet’s day, with the glorious circumstances of the last days. First, the overthrow of Babylon has already executed the judgment on the first oppressors of Jerusalem who led her captive. The whole system is thus judged in principle; as in the New Testament it is said of the adversary, “Now is the prince of this world judged.” And then, the fulfilment of the promise is attached to the obedience of the remnant (v. 15). This continues with respect to Israel unto the end (see Acts 3, and even Hebrews 3 and 4). But meantime the fulness of the Gentiles must come in independently of this on other grounds. At the end Israel, obedient (that is in fact, the remnant) no longer united to the order of the assembly, but connected with the promises to Israel in the earthwill enjoy the fulfilment of these promises.

We may remark that in Zechariah (Babylon being already judged) we have neither man invested with the government, nor the moral character of the empires presented under the form of an image or that of beasts; but the government of God hidden, providential, but real, in connection with these empires. This is an element of much importance, if we would understand

the whole system existing from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and the return from captivity, until the end, when Christ shall reign in righteousness. The first part of the prophecy closes with the end of chapter 6.

The prophecy, from chapter 7 to the end of the book, has for its special object the introduction of the Messiah in Israel, with the consequences of His rejection. The same principles of responsibility and blessing, which we have already seen established with respect to the remnant on their return from Babylon, are found again here. The prophecy begins by calling to mind the insincerity of their lamentations and humiliation during the seventy years' captivity, and the example set them by the hardness of the people's heart, before that sorrowful period, which led to their dispersion among all the nations, the pleasant land being made desolate. But now Jehovah's love for Zion, His chosen city, excited His jealousy and His wrath against those who oppressed her. He was returned unto Zion, and she should be blessed as a city of truth, and the mountain of Jehovah should be His holy mountain. Jerusalem should be abundantly blessed, her streets full of inhabitants, and her old men full of days. God would bring back His people from all the countries in which they had been scattered and captive. From the day in which His people had turned to Him and laid the foundation of the temple, blessing should flow as a river, even as misery and judgment had done before. The Jews who had returned from Babylon were placed under conditions of truth and uprightness for the enjoyment of these blessings (v. 16, 17).

Besides this, Jehovah declares, unconditionally, that their fast days should be joyful feasts, and that men should come from all nations to worship Jehovah at Jerusalem, and should take hold of the skirt of a Jew, knowing that God was with that people. Here are, then, the moral consequences of disobedience, already accomplished in sincerity and hardness of heart pointed out; present blessing introduced by grace, and bestowed on the people under the condition of a godly walk, such fulness of blessing as the presence of Jehovah in their midst would involve; and, finally, the purposes of God in grace, which, depending on Himself, should be never-failing.

But this last thought introduces many consequences and important events. The first two consequences are, that Israel should be put in possession of the whole territory which God had given them. Enemies from without would come, but Jehovah Himself would defend His house; and the result of this direct intervention would be, that no oppressor should pass through them any more. Jehovah Himself had already looked into this matter.It was a day in which the eyes of all mankind should be turned towards Jehovah, as well as those of the tribes of Israel. Compare this part of chapter 9 with [2970]Isaiah 17.

Now this immediate intervention of Jehovah, who encamps about His house (it is the defence of the city against the last attack of the Assyrians, which we have found more than once in the prophets), necessarily introduces the Messiah, in view of the events of the last days. Verse 9 speaks of this. It presents the Messiah in His personal character as King Messiah, but in a twofold aspect. And this is the reason why, in the New Testament, that portion only is quoted which relates to Jehovah's first coming. The King of Zion comes unto her. He is just, and brings in Himself power and salvation. This is the general idea, that which Zion needed, and which shall be accomplished in the last days. The Holy Ghost adds to this the personal character of the Lord, the spirit in which He presented Himself to Israel lowly and riding upon an ass. We all know the fulfilment of this at His first coming.

The Messiah Himself having been thus presented, the definitive effect of His presence is announced in that which follows, as the continuation of verse 8, remembering who has been introduced. He will put an end to war in Israel, will establish peace among the nations, and His dominion shall be unto the ends of the earth (the land of Israel being the center of His power). Jehovah, having delivered the people that is, the believing remnant, who shall become the nation by the blood of the covenant, will restore them double for all their affliction, and use them to establish His power over the isles of the Gentiles. The might of Jehovah should accompany and save them, as the flock of His people. He would pour out blessing upon the land at the prayer of the remnant of His people, who had been wandering like a flock without a shepherd, and had sought help in vain from their idols. But Jehovah had now visited His flock, the house of Judah, and out of them strength should go forth. Judah should be as His goodly horse in the battle. He would strengthen Judah and save Ephraim. Jehovah would gather them in such numbers that there would be no place for them. He would dry up the sea and the river to make a way for them, and the pride of their enemies should be brought down. They should be strong in Jehovah their God, and walk up and down in His name.

To the end of chapter 10 it is the general proclamation of the blessing that should crown Judah and Ephraim, when, by the favor of Jehovah, they were restored to their land.

**CHAPTER** 11. In connection with the judgments that should attend it, the Spirit enters into more detail with respect to the rejection of the Messiah, and the particular circumstances of the last days, in consequence of this rejection. It is the history of Israel in connection with Christ.

I think that the beginning of chapter 11 speaks of the invasion of Israel by the Gentiles. The first three verses give a picture of the general condition of the land. In verse 4 Jehovah takes up the case of His devastated flock. Their Gentile possessors only made a spoil of them. Their own shepherds pitied them not. Jehovah, while giving up the nation to the fruit of their iniquity, was moved with compassion for the poor of the flock, and cares for the oppressed. It is the spirit of the life of Christ in Israel.

The two staves represent His authority, as uniting all the nations under Him, and binding Judah and Israel together the double effect of the presence of Christ. But the shepherds of Israel are cut off; and Christ, grieved with the wicked and corrupt people, Himself abhorred by them, leaves them to themselves and to the consequences of their behavior. As the result of this, He renounces for that time the inheritance of the nations, since it is in Israel that He is to take possession of it. But the poor of the flock have recognised in His ways the fulfilment of the word of prophecy: they have not waited for the manifestation of the Messiah's public glory in Israel, but have attached themselves to Him personally, in consequence of the proofs He gave of His mission from God. It appears to me that this comprises the apostolic work in Israel, as well as the life of Christ. The prophecy only speaks of the fact itself. Verses 12 and 13 relate the price at which the nation estimated their King and their Savior. The fulfilment of this is known to all. The prophet here performs the thing prophetically, marking that so it was to be according to the counsels of God. We see also that Christ appears here as Jehovah Himself. The connection between verses 6 and 9 brings out the same truth. The thoughts of Jehovah with respect to that which He will do find their accomplishment in the Person of Jesus. The union between Judah and Israel, of which Christ should be the bond, is also deferred. In verses 15-17 the prophet is seen assuming the features of the Antichrist, to represent him in type (as previously, the actions of Judas), in order to announce that foolish shepherd who should be raised up in judgment from God, and who should himself suffer the judgment he deserved. Christ came in the name of the FatherHe was not received. Another should come in his own name, and him the people would receive.

The introduction of Antichrist, a shepherd * in Israel, brings in also the events that crowd around Jerusalem in the last days. All the nations should be gathered round Jerusalem, but only to find it a burdensome stone that should crush them. God would judge the power of man, but would raise up His people in sovereign grace. He would destroy the nations that had come up against Jerusalem. The deliverance of the people by the power of Jehovah comes first. This is sovereign grace to the chief of sinnersthe feeble

but beloved Judah, who had added to all her rebellion against God, the despisal and rejection of her King and Savior.

> [* The worthless shepherd (v. 17), I suppose, is the same. He deserts the Jews, and identifies himself with the Gentile power when the Jewish worship is put down. He is "a thing of nought," as Jeremiah 14:14.]

The grace of God takes the lead over all the resources of man. The audacity of the enemies of God's people stirs up His affection, which never diminishes; and thus, by compelling God to act, this very audacity becomes the means of proving the faithfulness of His love. Judah, guilty yet beloved Judah, is delivered that is to say, the remnant, to whom the affliction of Israel had been a burden; but the question of her conduct towards her God still remained. Nevertheless the grace shown in her deliverance had wrought upon her heart. The law we know was written in it, but much more. To be loved by a God against whom one has so deeply revolted melts the heart. Grace then goes farther, and presents to the people the Messiah whom they had pierced. The Rejected One is the Jehovah that delivers them. It is now no longer merely the cry of distress, that has no refuge but Jehovah. Israel, more strictly Judah, no longer a prey to the terrible anxiety which her distress occasioned, is entirely occupied with her sin felt in the presence of a crucified Savior. It is no longer a common grief, that of a nation crushed and trodden down in its most cherished sentiments. It is now hearts melted by the sense of what they had been towards One who had given Himself up for them. Each family, isolated by its personal convictions, confesses apart the depth of its sin; while no fear of judgment or punishment comes in to impair the character and the truth of their sorrow. Their souls are restored according to the efficacy of the work of Christ. It is this which definitively brings the people into relationship with God. We have seen the same moral order in the typical history of Davidfirst, the ark on Mount Zion, and then the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

In **CHAPTER** 13 all is cleansed. The fountain is open to the house of David, whose sin had ruined the people, without abrogating the rights or weakening the grace of God; and also to the people of Jerusalem, who were more than partners in the sins of their rulers. Here it is practical cleansing with water. Faith in Him whom they had pierced was already in their hearts. The idols and the false prophets, the two chief sources of the misery of the Jews, should be entirely taken away. No one, not even the very parents of the guilty, would tolerate these abominations and deceits. Christ is the pattern, and all shall be judged of by it. Everything takes its moral character according to the relationship of the redeemed with Him. This gives occasion to a full historical development of that which has happened to Him. How

He has been pierced, and its consequences, are detailed with respect to Jerusalem, Israel, and the world.

In verse 5 read, “I am no prophet, but a husbandman; for man Adam] has acquired me as a slave from my youth.” That is to say, Christ takes the humble position of One devoted to the service of man, in the circumstances into which Adam was brought by sin (that is, with respect to His position as a man living in this world). Verse 6 directs our attention to that which befell Him among the Jews, where He was wounded and treated as a malefactor. The true character of His Person and of His sufferings is then revealed in verse 7. It is the sword of Jehovah, which awakes against the man who is His companion, His equal. This verse requires no comment. It is most interesting to see that, when Christ is looked at in His humiliation as man, He is treated by the Spirit as the equal of Jehovah in His rights; and when (Psalm 45:7) He is seen upon His throne of divine glory, and addressed as God, those that are His are acknowledged as His companions in glory, sharing His position.

The result of this rejection of Christ, the center of the history of eternity, of man’s connection with God, and the revelation of bothfor this event is here considered in connection with the history of Israelis the scattering of the sheep who had been gathered around the true Shepherd. Nevertheless God stretches out His hand over the little ones. The result for Judah, when the current of their history shall be resumed in the last days, is that two-thirds shall be cut off in all the land (compare Ezekiel 20:34-38 with respect to Israel); and the third that is left shall pass through the fire, shall call upon the name of Jehovah, and shall be heard. Jehovah will abolish the name of Lo-amminot My peopleby saying, It is My people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God. This is the definite result of His dealings with His people; and here especially with Judah, of whom He had said Lo-ammi, and the remnant of whom He acknowledges as His people.

**CHAPTER** 14 announces the final events that shall bring in this result, as chapter 13 had especially detailed that which regarded Christ. The two subjects of chapter 12 are thus resumed in detail.

We may remark here, that the effect of the staff being broken, which united Judah and Israel, is here realised. The prophet speaks only of Judah, of the people who in the land were guilty of rejecting the Messiah, and who will suffer the consequence of so doing in the land during the last days, the mass of them at that time joining themselves to Antichrist. Jerusalem, as we have said, forms the center of the prophecy. No prophet could perish outside her borders. What a terrible thing to be outwardly near God when one is not so inwardly, and when the heart invests itself with the name of God as with a

cloak of prideas a buckler, so that His arrows no longer reach the conscience!

Nevertheless, in spite of her pride and her confederacy with evil, Jerusalem shall be taken in the last days. We have seen, when studying the other prophets, that this will be the case; and then afterwards, when again besieged, Jehovah will intervene for the destruction of these enemies. This is very distinctly announced here. The nations shall be assembled by Jehovah; the city shall be taken and the houses rifled, and half the people led captive. Jehovah will then come forth against those nations, as we read in chapter 12 (compare [2360]Isaiah 66 and Micah 4). He comes in the Person of Christ to the Mount of Olives, whence He ascended. The Mount of Olives cleaves in the midst, forming a great valley, spreading terror among the people who are there. But if Jehovah identifies Himself thus, so to speak, with the meek and lowly Jesus formerly on the earth, in order that the identity of the Savior and Jehovah should be clearly acknowledged, it is not the less true that He will come from heaven in all His glory (as He Himself predicted, as well as the prophets beginning with Enoch). The heavenly saints will accompany Him in His public manifestation to the eyes of an astonished world. Marvellous glory for those that are His, with whom He will manifest Himself before all the wicked! For here it is Jehovah's public coming to the earth, as the righteous Judge, making war upon all that rebel against Him.

I do not see that the last-mentioned event follows that which precedes it in the chapter. There is a division in the middle of verse 5. "And Jehovah my God shall come" begins a fresh subject, introducing a grand distinct event, which affects the whole earth in a manner that characterises its future existence. The presence of Jehovah upon the Mount of Olives renews, we may say, His visible relationship with Judah. This part of the subject closes with the words, "Uzziah, king of Judah." That which follows is intimately connected with the return of Christ to the Jews, in the very spot from which He left this earth; but it looks at it from a higher point of view, and takes up the subject of the relationship of Jehovah with the whole earth, when He comes from heaven with the saints. This is another part of the subject and a very important one.

The meaning of the rather difficult passage that follows has, I think, been given, as to its general sense, by Martin in his French translation. The Hebrew is acknowledged to be obscure. It may be, perhaps, translated, "there shall not be a precious light which] shall be withdrawn." It is "a light of preciousness and denseness"; the last word may be taken for "shall be withdrawn." It shall not be a day of mingled light and darkness, but a day appointed by Jehovah, a day characterised by His intervention and His

mighty presence, and that could not be characterised by the ordinary vicissitudes of night and day; but, at the moment when the total darkness of night might be expected, there should be light. Living waters should flow from Jerusalem towards the east and towards the west, into the Dead Sea and into the Great Sea. The heat of summer should not dry up their source.

Jehovah shall be God over all the earth; there shall be but one Jehovah, and His name one. It shall be truly one universal religion, the dominion of the one Jehovah, the God of the Jews, over all the earth. The land round Jerusalem shall be entirely peopled, and Jerusalem lifted up and securely inhabited in her place. There shall be no more any destruction of the city which Jehovah has chosen. A deadly plague shall smite all those that have fought against her. They shall mutually destroy each other. Judah shall also fight against them, and their riches shall be her prey. The remnant that are spared among the nations shall come up to Jerusalem, to the feast in which the entrance of God’s people into their rest is celebrated. And all shall be holiness; everything in Jerusalem shall be consecrated to Jehovah.

# MALACH

The prophecy of Malachi deals with the people brought back from the captivity of Babylon, and is most important as showing the moral condition of the people consequent upon their return. Its last verses evidently close the testimony of Jehovah to the people, till the coming of him who should prepare the way of Jehovah, in a word, till John the Baptist. The law and the prophets were until John, and Malachi is professedly, and from the nature of his testimony, the last.

The great moral principle unfolded in the book, is the insensibility of the people to that which Jehovah was for them, and to their own iniquity with respect to Jehovah their want of reverence for God, their despisal of Jehovah. Alas! this insensibility had reached such a point that, when the very actions that proved their contempt were laid before their consciences, they saw no harm in them. Nevertheless this did not alter the purposes and counsels of God, although it brought judgment on those who were guilty of it (see chap. 1:2, 6; 2:14; 3:7, 13).

Malachi also distinguishes the remnant and that which characterised them, while proclaiming the punishment of the wicked, and the call of God to those who had ears to hear to bring them back to repentancea ministry which would restore moral order in the hearts of parents and childrenthat relationship, from the maintenance and exercise of which, all earthly peaceful order according to God flows; and that order is what God is considering here.

At the commencement of the prophecy Jehovah sets forth His love to Israel, slighted alas! by an ungrateful people, yet proved by their election from the beginning. Even while exhibiting the sad ingratitude of the people, Jehovah adheres to His own thoughts toward them. He will bless Israel, and He will judge Edom, in spite of the pride of the latter.

The sin of Israel, and their offensive indifference in the service of their God, is shown (v. 6-10). This gives occasion to another expression of gracethe revelation of the name of Jehovah among all nations. Thus, the election of Israel, and mercy towards the Gentiles, are established amidst, and even on occasion of, the sin of the restored people. Verses 12-14 also display their offenses against Jehovah and their contempt of His majesty. Chapter 2:1-9 proclaims the fallen condition of the priests, who ought to have been the faithful depositaries of the mind and ways of God; verses 10-12, their misconduct towards their brethren, and their intimate relationship with

idolaters, are pointed out; verses 13-16, the lightness with which they were in the habit of divorcing at their pleasure. But Jehovah was coming.

Here again we find the Lord's * first coming connected with the full result of the second. John the Baptist is announced as His messenger to prepare the way before Him; and then, the Angel of the covenant, whom they so earnestly desired, should come; but it would be in judgment, to purge the people and take away all their dross. Then should their offering in Jerusalem be acceptable to Jehovah, an offering in righteousness. But all the evil-doers should be judged; for God was unchangeable, both in righteousness and grace. It was this which, after all, secured the existence of Israel, happen what might. Let Israel then return unto Jehovah, and Jehovah would return unto them. But the pride of Israel is excited by this, and they say, "Wherein shall we return?" Their sins with respect to the offerings and the ordinances are then shown. But grace again displays itself in prospect of the people's return from their practical alienation from God. They had but to return and prove the goodness of God.

[* It is, note distinctly, Jehovah's.]

In the midst of the pride of the wicked in their apparent success, the remnant are distinguished as being drawn together by their common spiritual wants and feelings, founded on the fear of Jehovah which governed them all. In their affliction they spake often one to another of these things; * and Jehovah hearkened and heard and wrote it down in His book. And they shall be His in the day when He maketh up His jewels. After this they should discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that served God and those that served Him not. For the day was coming which should burn as an oven, and the proud and the wicked should be as stubble. But to those that feared the name of Jehovah, the Sun of Righteousness should rise. It should be no longer the sorrowful night of darkness and affliction and of the enemy's dominion, but a day which God would cause to shine by the presence of His Son, by the reign of His Beloved One on the earth. The righteous would have dominion over them in the morning, for the time is a time of judgment, and the wicked would be as ashes under the soles of their feet.

[* See the lovely picture of this in the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, before he begins the general subject of it. Only then the Savior was rejected, and the remnant passed into the assembly, the deliverance of Israel being deferred to the coming of the Lord in power. Here it is looked at as the remnant in Israel connected with that deliverance.]

It will be remarked here, that all is in connection with the authority of Jehovah and His dispensations towards Israel, and with the conduct of

Israel, as a nation, towards their God. That which belongs to the first coming of Christ, and its consequences to Israel, is not brought in here. John the Baptist is presented as the forerunner of Jehovah, who without doubt is Christ Himself, but who here comes as the Angel of the covenant, coming suddenly to His temple, and trying everything in Israel by fire and by His judgment, in order that the offering of Judah may be pleasant to Jehovah as in the days of old. The transgressions here spoken of are those of the people brought back from Babylon against Jehovah. The Gentiles, and their empire, are not seen here. All takes place between Israel only and Jehovah, the God of their fathers, as in former days between the people loved of God and Jehovah who loved them. A strange God is that which Jehovah will not endure. It is Levi, with whom His covenant had been; it was the priests, whose lips should have kept the true knowledge of Jehovah.

There is even no king here spoken of; except that Jehovah, whose name is terrible among the heathen, is their king. Finally the people (Israel) are commanded to return to the law of Moses given at Horeb for all Israel.

Thus we have here Jehovah's unchangeable love for the people whom He gathered to Himself at Horeb, His controversy with them on account of their sins, the marking out of a faithful remnant, and the sending of a messenger before the execution of the judgment. Israel is looked at nationally, in their own relationship with Jehovah, as returned from captivity and awaiting the judgment of their God, who sends His messenger to forewarn them.

All was prepared to put the people morally to the proof, with respect to the accomplishment of this, at the time when John the Baptist was sent; but Israel had not ears to hear, and all was lost.

The perfect and entire fulfilment will take place at the end, after that other glorious work of God with regard to the assembly shall have been accomplished.

The longsuffering of God towards Israel had been great; for, when they had rejected His Son, He sent them through the intercession of that same well-beloved Savior on the cross the message by the mouth of Peter, that, if they repented, the Christ whom they had slain would return. But their leaders were more than deaf to this grace on the part of God, and their house still remains empty and desolate.

At the time of the end, Elias whose mission was to call back an apostate Israel who had forsaken Jehovah to own Him in truth, and that, by the sovereign grace of God, although in connection with the law, and that

Mount Horeb, whither he went to lay down the burden of his prophetic office, when rendered useless by the unbelief of the people Elias shall effectually accomplish his mission before the great and terrible day of Jehovah; in order that the curse of God may not fall upon the land of His delight in that day when He will definitively execute His judgments. It is on this account that John the Baptist is spoken of as being Elias, if Israel could receive it; for he answered to verse 1 of chapter 3, whilst, at the same time, he said he was not Elias; for in fact he did not at all fulfil verses 5, 6 of chapter 4 (compare <4001?>Luke 1:17, 76).

The prophecy speaks to the conscience of those who lived at the time it was delivered (chap. <3001?>3:10); and passes onshewing that at the end of those times Israel would be put on trial by the mission of graceto the last days, in which God would display His unchangeable love for His people, and His righteous judgment against evil, by separating a remnant unto Himself for blessing, and by executing judgment on the rebellious.

The Gentiles are not mentioned, nor even the connection of His people with Christ, coming down as man to the earth.

We have thus in these three post-captivity prophets, three distinct subjects, but which make a whole of the three. In Haggai it is grace toward the returned remnant, God's Spirit still among them, and in connection with the house and worship of Jehovah, the temple. Its latter glory should be greater than its former. The kingdoms of the heathen should be cast down, and Zerubbabel (Christ) as a signet on Jehovah's hand. Peace would be given in Jerusalem.

Zechariah takes up two points: first the empires of the heathen and God's providential ways with Israelthe times of the GentilesJerusalem is owned, but judged of God and stamped as Babylonish in its true character; but at the end the Branch, the Lord Jesus, sets crowns instead of fasting for the faithful Babylon being already judged and strangers should come and build in the temple of the Lord.

From chapter 7 to the end, it is the relation of Israel with Christ, and His rejection and its consequences in the last judgment of Jerusalem; but for all that Jehovah, as we have often seen, would judge definitively all the nations assembled against her. The remnant would be brought to repentance, and Jerusalem be holiness to the Lord, nor should strangers defile it.

Finally we have Malachi showing us, the state the Jews soon got into, slighting all that was agreeable to God, and indifferent and insensible to their violating every righteous feeling; the practical separation of those that feared the Lord, and the coming of the Lord in judgment and deliverance:

meanwhile their recall to the authority of the law, and the coming of Elias before the great and terrible day of the Lord, to turn their hearts in grace into the way of peace.

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