John - Commentaries by William Kelly

Notes on John, John 9:26-41, Notes on (9:26-41)

The pertinacity of the Pharisees finds in the man a quiet courage, which stands out in contrast with the fears of his parents and even urges the claims of Him who had wrought so good and great a deed on His adversaries in a way they could not resist. They ply the man with the question, How? he answers with the question, Why?

“They said, therefore,1 to him [again],2 What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I told you already, and ye did not hear: why do ye wish to hear again? Do ye also wish to become his disciples? They railed 3 at him, and said, Thou art his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God hath spoken to Moses, but this man we know not whence he is.” (Vers. 26-29.)

He who was once blind, but now saw, discerned the true state of the case, as those did not who had never experienced His gracious power. He felt satisfied that their opposition was invincible. The apostle of grace none the less, but the more, warns the despisers of their self-willed unbelief and danger of perishing. The same spirit of faith expresses itself in him who just now was but a blind beggar, even as from those that had not should be taken away what they seemed to have. Christ is a rock of strength to the one, and of offense to the other. They thus expose themselves to the sharp rebuke of their folly by the man they affected to despise. Zealous for the servant whom they set up as master, they confessed their ignorance of Him who is Lord of all.

“The man answered and said to them, Why in this is4 the wonderful thing, that ye know not whence he is, and he hath opened mine eyes!5 We know that God heareth not sinners, but if any one be God-fearing, and do his will, him he heareth. Since time [began] was it not heard that any one opened a born blind man's eyes. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said to him, In sins thou west born wholly, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.” (Vers. 30-34.)

The man's answer was as solid as to the point. He discards the attack on himself personally, and treats it as a question between the religious leaders, who avowedly could not tell where He was who had wrought a work wholly unexampled as a display of God's power. It was hard, if not impossible, to believe that such a one could be evil, as they had imputed. “We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any one be God-fearing, and do his will, him he heareth.” For what can be surer, as a general principle, than that “them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” Indeed this was plain as between Jesus (to take the lowest ground) and the Pharisees, whose moral incapacity astonishes the man. What, then, remained for his adversaries? Nothing but contemptuous rage, and the extreme blow of the ecclesiastical arm. “They cast him out,” but not before they unwittingly testified to the force of his words: “In sins wast thou born wholly, and dost thou teach us?"

But they cast him out into the arms and bosom of the Lord. For, as we are next told, “Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and, having found him, he said, Believest thou on the Son of God [or man]? He answered6 and said, And7 who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him8? Jesus said to him, Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaketh with thee is he. And he said, I believe, Lord; and he did him homage.” (Vers. 35-37.) Such is the final step of God's grace in working with the blind man. He is thrust outside Judaism for the truth's sake, consequent on the work wrought on his person; he there is found by Christ, and led to know and believe in Him, far beyond any thought, however true, he had previously conceived. It was faith in his own testimony and person.

It is really the history of a soul that goes onward, under the guidance of God, who makes the grace, of the Lord and His glory shine the more fully after one is outside the world's religion, whether cast or going out. And such is the character of Christianity, as the believing had at length to learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and from its final chapter. So patient was the Spirit of grace with those of the ancient people of God, dull to learn the new thing which God has introduced through and in our Lord Jesus. But, late as it may be, the breach with earthly religion must come. Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; and this so much the more because we have boldness to enter into the holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which He has dedicated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh. But the work was not yet done which opened this way, nor the Spirit shed to give souls the consciousness of righteous title. We have one, therefore, not yet going forth thus, but cast out by hatred, far more against the name of Jesus than against the man—yea, we may say against the man solely for Jesus' sake, who had heard of, and felt for, and found the sheep thus worried of men.

But a perplexing difference of reading follows, which claims more than a bare critical notice. “Dost thou believe on the Son of man?” say the Sinaitic, the Vatican, and the Cambridge (of Beza) manuscripts, supported by the Sahidic, Roman edition of the Aethiopic, &c., more than a dozen uncials, all the cursives, and the rest of the ancient versions, &c., give us τοῦ; θεοῦ:, “of God.” But Tischendorf, in his eighth, or last, edition, adopts τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Nor can it be denied that, as the rule, the Lord habitually and graciously loved to present to Himself in relation to man; as, again, it is plain that this chapter in particular sets Him forth, not as the light, Word, and God, like the preceding one, but as the Incarnate One who was sent to manifest the works of God, the rejected Messiah about to suffer but to be exalted over all. On the other hand, that the Son of God is the great distinctive testimony of our gospel, none can overlook; and we can well understand how the light of this glorious truth (bursting on the soul gradually led on, spite of, and, in a certain sense, through the blind hostility of the Pharisees) draws him out in homage to the Lord. It was, at any rate, the Son of God in grace, a man on earth, who had been seen by, and was talking with, one who had experienced His light-giving power.

“And Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that they that see not may see, and they that see may become blind.9 And some of the Pharisees that were with him heard these things, and said to him, Are we blind also? Jesus said to them, If ye were blind, ye would not have sin; but now ye say, We sin,10 your sin remaineth.” (Vers. 39-41.)

The Lord thereon shows how His coming acted, and was meant to act, on souls. It had a higher purpose and more permanent result than any energy, however mighty and benign, that dealt with the body. He was the life to those, however dark, who received Him: those who rejected Him sealed their own ruin everlastingly, whatever their estimate of themselves, or in the mind of others. The Jew, especially the Pharisee, might be ever so confident that he himself was a guide of the blind, a light of those in darkness; but the coming of the only True Light brought to evident nothingness all such haughty pretensions as surely as it gave eyes to such as owned their blindness. No flesh, therefore, shall glory: he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord who was come, a man, but God on earth, for this reversal of fallen man's thoughts, and display of His own grace. Pharisaic pride refuses to bow to Jesus, imputing blindness as they thought; but if it speaks, it is obliged to hear its most withering sentence from the Judge of all mankind. For blindness there is all grace and power in Christ; but what can be the portion of those who, stone-blind, say they see? Their sin remains, as well as blindness, which of itself is no sin, though its consequence.

Notes on John, John 9:13-25, Notes on (9:13-25)

Whenever God acts, the men of religion set up to judge, and the neighbors fear their displeasure more than they pitied the blind man or rejoiced in his healing. Such men are accredited of the world, and count it their province to decide such questions, while others love to have it so. What then will the Pharisees say? They had caviled before.

"They bring unto the Pharisees him that was once blind." (Ver. 13.) Nor are the Pharisees slow to detect a flaw, as they supposed. Not that the man had not been blind, nor that Jesus had failed to give him sight; but had they not both, Jesus especially, broken the law? "Now it was sabbath [on the day]1 when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes." (Ver. 14.) How little men, particularly those whom public opinion regard as pillars, are apt to suspect that their will exposes them to Satan But so it is, and above all, where the Son of God is concerned, who was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and give us an understanding that we should know Him that is true. But those who, confident in their traditions, dare to arraign the Savior, commit themselves the more to the enemy, because they flatter themselves that they are upholding the cause of God. Thus are they ensnared to the destruction of themselves and of all who heed them.

"Again therefore the Pharisees also asked him how be received sight. And he said to them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed and do see. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath. 2Others said, How can a sinful man do such signs? And there was a division among them." (Vers. 15, 16.) They are uneasy, whatever may be their affectation of superior sanctity and zeal for God's honor. The power which gave sight where blindness had ever rested hitherto startled them, and excited their curiosity, with the desire of discovering an evil source if not of alarming the man. But grace wrought in him, and gave him quiet courage to confess the good deed wrought, albeit on a sabbath and without a word about it. "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed and do see." God calls us, when blessed through Christ, all to be confessors, though not all martyrs; and surely it is the least we owe Him in praise and our fellow-men in love.

But all true confession is odious to the religious world and its leaders. "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath." This malicious plea had been already refuted; but Pharisaism has no heart for, no subjection to, the truth. It had never entered their consciences, or they had forgotten it in their zeal for forms and traditions. But how sad the self-deceit of men destitute of true holiness, or of real obedience, daring to arraign the Holy One of God!

Yet others there were among them not so blinded by party passion or personal envy, who ventured to say a word, if they took no further step. "Others said, How can a sinful man do such signs?" All they meant was, that He who wrought thus could be no such deceiver or impostor as the rest conceived. They had no right view of Himself, of His person, or His relation to God. They had not the faintest idea that He was God manifest in flesh; but they questioned whether He must not be "of God," since He did such signs. "And there was a division among them." Thus, as they were not yet of one mind, there was a delay for Satan's design.

But in their restlessness they examine once more the man, and are used unwittingly by the God of grace to help him on in the apprehension and acknowledgment of the truth which is according to piety. "They say, therefore,3 to the blind [man] again, Thou,4 what sayest thou of him, because he opened thine eyes? And he said, He is a prophet." (Ver. 17.) The first examination was as to the fact and the manner. Now they want to force out of the man his thoughts of his benefactor, in their malice wishing to find a plea for condemning both. On the other hand, the grace of God is as manifest as it is sweet in using the painful trial and exercise of soul to His own glory, through the man led on and blessed only the more. He knew their hatred of Jesus, yet he answers their challenge boldly, "He is a prophet" —a decided advance on his previous confession, though far from the truth he is soon to learn. He owns that Jesus has the mind of God as well as His power.

Baffled by his quiet firmness, the religious inquisitors turned to another and accustomed means of assault. As the neighbors in their perplexity appeal to the Pharisees, so these work on and by natural relationships. They would try whether some disproof could not be suede out of the parents. Clearly unbelief lies at the bottom of all. Man, being fallen and evil, is unwilling to believe in the goodness of God, above all in His grace to himself. Had the neighbors bowed to the clear evidence Of God's intervention, they would not have brought the man to the Pharisees; had the Pharisees, they would not have persisted in sifting again and again beyond the ascertainment of the fact, still less would they have awakened the fears of the family. "The Jews therefore did not believe concerning him that he was blind, and received sight, until they called the parents of him that received sight, and asked him, saying, Is this your son who, ye say, was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents therefore5 answered and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now seeth we know not, or who opened his eyes we know not; ask himself, he is of age, he will speak for himself. These things said his parents because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that, if any one should confess him [to be] Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. On this account his parents said, He is of age; ask him." (Vers. 18-23.)

The matter of fact is thus again the cardinal question as it really was; and as to this the parents answered conclusively. That the man saw now was undeniable, and this through Jesus, as he declared; that he was their son and born blind, the parents maintained unhesitatingly. The conclusion was irresistible, if unbelief did not resist everything where God is concerned. The parents answer only where they are concerned. It was not that they, or any reasonable person, doubted that Jesus had wrought the miracle; but they dreaded the consequence, from Pharisaic enmity, of going beyond their own circle of natural knowledge, and pleaded ignorance of how it was done, or of who it was that did

it. Overborne by fear of the Pharisees, they forget even the affection that would otherwise have sheltered their offspring from the impending blow, and they throw all the burden on their own son. “Ask him; he is of age, he will speak concerning himself.” Thus their very fears, on which the Pharisees reckoned for a denial of the facts, God used to make it solely a controversy between the Pharisees and the man himself, when they were compelled by the evidence of the parents to accept as a certain fact that he who now saw had been ever blind, and blind till just now.

Another thing also comes out very plainly, that the enmity of the Jews to the Lord Jesus was known to have gone ere this, so far as to threaten with excommunication every one that confessed Him to be the Christ.

Hence the man is once more appealed to, and all question of the miracle is dropped. “Therefore they called a second time the man who was blind, and said to him, Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner. He therefore answered,6 If he is a sinner I know not. One thing I know, that, blind as I was, now I see.” (Vers. 24, 25.) They now assume the highest ground; they at least bold to the divine side, if others are carried away by the apparent good done to man. Accordingly they call on him to give glory to God, whilst they assert their unqualified assurance that Jesus was a sinner. Nor has it been an uncommon thing, from that day to this, for men to profess to honor God at the expense of His Son; as the Lord warned His disciples to expect to the uttermost, where the Father and the Son are unknown. But the man in his simplicity puts forward the fact which he deeply felt, and they would fain hide. “If he is a sinner I know not. One thing I know, that, blind as I was, I now see.” No argument can stand against the logic of reality, above all of such a reality as this. He certainly did not know Jesus to be a sinner; but that it could not be he alleges the most distinct and irrefragable proof, and this on their own ground of what was before all. If reasoning is unseasonable and powerless, what is religious antipathy in presence of an undeniable fact which proves the mighty power and goodness of God? Their efforts showed their ill-will to Him who had thus wrought: the blessed reality remained, whatever the insinuations or the assaults of unbelief.

It is well also to remark that with faith goes a mighty operation of God, with its own characteristic effects, and more important in every soul that believes the gospel than even that of which the man, once blind but now seeing, was so sensible. Those who believe are quickened from death in trespasses and sins, and they henceforth live to God. Crucified with Christ, they nevertheless live, yet not they themselves properly, but Christ lives in them. They are thereby partakers of divine nature, being born of God. It is no improvement of their old nature as men. They are born of water and of the Spirit, begotten by the word of truth. With faith goes this new life, which shows itself in wholly different thoughts and affections, as well as ways or walk. Of its gradual progress in the midst of opposition and persecution the story of this blind man, who now saw, is no unapt illustration.

Notes on John, John 9:1-12, Notes on (9:1-12)

The light of God had shone in Jesus (light, not of Jews only, but of the world); yet was He rejected, increasingly and utterly, and with deadly hatred. There was no miracle wrought; it was emphatically His words that we hear, but asserting at length the divine glory of His person. This roused, as it always does, the rancor of unbelief. They believe not on Him, because they bow neither to their own ruin nor to the grace of God, which thus comes down to meet it, revealing the God who is unknown. But Jesus pursues His way of love, and unfolds it in a new and suited form, only to meet with similar rejection afresh, as our chapter and the next will show.

"And passing along he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, which sinned, this [man] or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus1 answered, Neither this [man] sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him. I2 [or we] must work the works of him that sent me3 while it is day: night cometh, when no one can work. When I am in the world I am the world's light.” (Vers. 1-4.)

It was an act of pure grace which the Lord was about to do. Nobody, had appealed to Him, not even the blind man or his parents. The disciples only raised a question, one of those curious speculations in which the later Jews delighted: was it the man's sin, or his parents', which had involved him in congenital blindness? Certainly no such Pythagorean fancy prevailed then in Judea, as that a than might have sinned in a previous existence on earth, and be punished for it in an after-state also on earth. Nor is there any sufficient reason to endorse a pious and learned author's view, that the disciples might have entertained—what rabbis afterward drew front Gen. 25:22—the notion of sin before birth. It seems easy to understand that they conceived, however strangely, of punishment inflicted anticipatively on one whose eventual sin was foreseen by God. Doubtless it was unsound; but this need be no difficulty in the way; for what question or assertion of the disciples did not betray error enough to draw out the unerring correction, so precious to them and us, of our Lord? He now puts the, case on its real purpose in the divine mind—that the works of God might be manifested in him. It is the day of grace now; therefore was Jesus come; and this was just an opportunity for the display of the gracious power. Yet man understands not grace but by faith, and even believers only so far as faith is in exercise. Government is the natural thought when one sees God's cognizance of everything and every one here below. But it was not then, nor is it now, the time for His government of the world. Here lay the mistake of the disciples then, as of Job's friends of old—a mistake which leads souls, not only to censoriousness and misjudgment, but to forget their own sins and need of repentance in occupying themselves with what they count God's vengeance on others.

Here, however, it is not the side of uncharitable self-righteousness which the Lord exposes. He speaks of the activity and purpose of grace as the key. It was no question of sin, either in the blind man or in his parents, but of God's manifesting His works in his grievous need and sorrow.

Further, the pressure of His rejection was felt by our Lord, whatever the holy calm which could so quickly turn from man's murderous hatred to a work of divine love. “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: night cometh, when no one can work.” He was the “light” of the “day” which was then shining for Him to do the will and manifest the love of the One who sent Him, yea, to declare God (see chap. 1:18), whom man otherwise was incapable of seeing. Truly the need was great, for man, like the one in question, was utterly blind. But Jesus was the Creator, though man amongst men. Let Him be in the world, He is its light. It attaches alike to His mission, and to His person, and to His divine nature.

"Having said these things, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay over his eyes, and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent. He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing." (Vers. 6, 7.) This was no unmeaning act on Christ's part, no mere test of obedience on the man's. It was a sign of the truth which the chapter reveals, or at least in harmony with it. For He who was there manifesting the works of God was Himself a man, and had deigned to take the body prepared for Him; most holy, beyond all doubt, as became the Son of God, who knew no sin, about to be made sin for us on the cross, but none the less really of the woman, of flesh and blood, as the children's were. But incarnation, precious as is the grace of the Lord in it, of itself is quite insufficient for man's need; yea, it seems rather to add at first to the difficulty, as did the clay on the man's eyes. The Spirit must work by the word, as well as the Son come into the world, Jesus Christ come in flesh. Without the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in man he cannot see. Compare John 3 So it is here; the man must go to the pool of Siloam, and wash there. Attention is the more fixed on this by the appended interpretation or meaning of the word. It signifies the soul's recognition that Jesus was the sent One of God, sent to do His will and finish His work, the Son, yet servant withal, to accomplish the great salvation of God. The heart is thus purified by faith. Now the man has eyes and can see, not when the clay was laid on, but when he washed in the pool of Siloam. Christ must be here, and a man too, in contact with men in all their darkness; but only when the Holy Ghost applies the word to the conscience do they, owning Him to be the Sent of God, receive sight. Not incarnation only but the efficacious work of the Spirit is needed that man may see according to God. According to His own mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we might Become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

"The neighbors therefore, and those who used to see him before that he was a beggar,4 said, Is not this he that sitteth and beggeth? Some said, It is he; others5 said, No, but he is like him; but6 he said, It is I. They said therefore to him, How then7 were thine eyes opened? He answered, The man8 that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said to me, Go unto9 Siloam, and wash. Having gone away then10 and washed I received sight.11 And they said to him, Where is he? He saith,12 I do not know." (Vers. 8-12.)

Those accustomed to the blind beggar could not conceal their surprise and perplexity; for as the sightless eyes are a prime disfigurement of the human face, so their presence thus unexpectedly changed the man's entire expression. No wonder that they wondered; yet was the fact certain, and the evidence incontestable. God took care that there should be many witnesses, and would make the testimony felt the more it was discussed and weighed. Had they known who Jesus was, and for what He was sent, they would have understood the fitness of the work done that day. But he on whom the work was wrought gave out no uncertain sound. He was the man whom they were used to see sitting and begging. His witness to Jesus is most explicit. He does not know much yet, but what he knows he declares with plain decision. How could he doubt whose eyes were opened? Did they ask how it was? His answer was ready and unreserved, "The man that is [or a man] called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash." And the mighty effect followed at once— "And having gone away and washed, I received sight." They are curious to know where Jesus is, but the man is as frank in acknowledging his ignorance of this, as before in confessing the reality of what He had done. It might not be to his own praise that he did not return to Jesus in thanksgiving for God's grace; but God would use it to show how wholly the worker and the object of the work were above collusion. How few have the honesty to say "I do not know" when they know as little as he, who here owns it. Yet is it no light condition of learning more.

On the other hand we see that the Lord not only would draw attention by men's debate, and the man's distinct testimony, but leaves the man for the present, that, by his own reflection on what was done and answering their questions, he might be prepared both for trial that was coming, and for still better blessing from and in Himself. The agitation among the neighbors was to be followed quickly by the more serious inquisition of the religious chiefs. These, as we shall see, readily find matter in the good deed for their usual malevolence toward that which brought honor to God independently of them. Worldly religion, whatever its profession, is really and always a systematic effort to make God the servant of man's pride and selfishness. It knows not love, and values not holiness; it is offended by the faith that, feeding on the word, serves by the Spirit of God, glories in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in, the flesh. It hates walking in the light as a constant thing, as it only wants religion at its fit times and seasons as a shield against the day of death and the hour of judgment. Hence, for the Son of God to be here on earth, a man presented to men's eyes, blind as they are, and sending them where they can wash and see, outside the regular established religion of the land and without the medium of the accredited guides, is intolerable. It comes out plainly in what follows, a most weighty and, I doubt not, intended lesson in this instructive narrative.

Notes on John, John 8:48-59, Notes on (8:48-59)

There is nothing a man so reluctantly allows as evil in himself; there is nothing he so much resents as another's saying evil of him, and leaving him no loophole of escape. So was it now with the Jews whom the Lord denied to be of God, as they heard not His words. Never had their self complacency been thus disturbed before. The scorn of the heathen was as nothing compared with such a libel, which was severe in proportion to its self-evident truth. For the ground taken was indisputable. Who could doubt that he who is of God heareth the words of God? How solemn, then, to face the fact that One who spoke as none ever did declared with holy calmness that therefore they did not hear, because they were not of God! Conscience might wince, but refused to bow. Will, ill-will, alone declared itself, save indeed that it was animated from beneath.

"The Jews1 answered and said to him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon? Jesus answered, I have not a demon, but honor my Father, and ye dishonor me. But seek not my glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say to you, If any one keep my word, death he shall never see." (Vers. 48-51.) Thenceforth the Jews, unable to refute, and unwilling to confess, the truth, betake themselves to insolent retort and railing. They justify and openly repeat their application of "Samaritan" to Him; for what could more prove enmity in their eyes than to refuse their claim to be preeminently God's people? If He declared them to be of their father, the devil, they did not scruple to rejoin that He had a demon. He was outside the Israel of God and the God of Israel.

No Christian then has ever suffered worse in this way of dishonor than Christ. The disciple is not above his Lord, and can expect no exemption. And none are so prone to reproach others falsely as those who are themselves really slaves of the enemy. But let us learn of Him who was meek and lowly of heart, and now calmly repudiates their taxing Him with a demon. Not so, but He was honoring His Father, they

dishonoring Him. Yet was there no personal resentment as on his part, who courts his own honor now, or punishes afterward^ such as insult him. “But I seek not my glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.” He leaves all with His Father, Himself content to serve, able and ready to save. “Verily, verily, I say to you, if any one” —let him be the vilest of His foes— “keep my word, death he shall never see.” Such an utterance was worthy of all solemnity on His part, of all acceptation on theirs.

“The Jews therefore2 said to him, Now we know that thou hast a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If any one keep thy word, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham which died, and the prophets died? whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom ye say, He is our 3 God, and ye have not known him, but I know him; and if I should say I know him not, I shall be like you, a liar; but I know him, and keep his word. Abraham your father exulted to see my day, and he saw it, and rejoiced. The Jews therefore said to him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. They took up therefore stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple,4 going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” (Vers. 52-59.)

Unbelief reasons from its own thoughts, and is never so confident as when completely wrong. So the Jews, misinterpreting the faithful savings of the Lord Jesus, avail themselves of it triumphantly as the proof that Abraham and the prophets could not be of His school, for they, beyond controversy, were already dead. He must be possessed, therefore, to speak thus. Did He set up to be greater than they? Whom did He make Himself? Alas! it is here that man, Jew or Gentile, is blind. Jesus made Himself nothing, emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, becoming a man, though being God over all blessed forever, and as the humbled man exalted by God the Father. If the eye be single, the whole body is fall of light. So it was with Him who came here, and became man, to do the will of God, in whom He could, and did, confide to glorify Him. His path was one of unbroken fellowship as of obedience. He never sought His own glory, He always kept His Father's word; He could say, from first to last, I know Him; in all leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. We may learn of Him that, if it be the grossest presumption for men of the world to affect the knowledge of God the Father, it is the greatest wrong in a child of His to deny it. “If I should say I know him not, I shall be like you, a liar.” But He that claims to know Him keeps His word, and herein gives the testimony of reality along with that claim. The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit, and where He communicates the truth He also effectually works in holiness according to God's will.

But the Lord did not hesitate to meet the challenge of Abraham, and lets the Jew know that the father of the faithful exulted to see His day (as ever, I presume, His appearing in glory), and saw, and rejoiced. It was, of course, by faith, like the not seeing or tasting death in the context; but the Jews took all in a mere physical way, and on their arguing from His comparative youth to the denial of Abraham's seeing Him, the still deeper utterance comes forth, “Verily, verily, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” It was said, the good confession before the Jews, the truth of truths, the infinite mystery of His Person, which to know is to know the true God and eternal life, as He is both. Such He was, such He is, from everlasting to everlasting. Incarnation in no way impeached it, but rather gave occasion for its revelation in man to men. He who was God is become man, and as He cannot cease to be God, so will not cease to be man. He is the Eternal, though also a man, and has taken manhood into union with Himself, the Son, the Word, not with God only, but God. “Before Abraham was (γενέσθαι), I am” (εἰμί). Abraham came into being. Jesus is God, and God is. “I am” is the expression of eternal subsistence, of Godhead. He could as truly have said, Before Adam was, I am; but the question was about Abraham, and with that calm dignity which never goes beyond the needed truth, He asserts it, and no more; but what He asserts could not be true were He not the ever-present and unchanging One, the I am before Adam, angels, and all things; as, indeed, He it was who created them. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that has been made.

Not to know Him is the fatal ignorance of the world; to deny Him, the unbelieving lie of the Jew, as of all who assume to know God independently, and to the exclusion of His divine glory. And it is death while they live, eternal death, soon to be the second death, not extinction, but punishment in: the lake of fire. Meanwhile unbelief can with impunity show its spite. “Then took they up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.” The remaining clauses are probably taken from Luke 4:30, with the first verse of our next chapter.

Notes on John, John 8:30-46, Notes on (8:30-46)

It is an encouraging fact that a time of unbelieving detraction may be used of God to work extensively in souls. “While he was speaking these things, many believed on him.” (Ver. 30.) But faith, where divinely given, is inseparable from life, exercises itself in liberty, and is subject to the Son of God; where it is human, it soon wearies of His presence, and abandons Him, whom it never truly appreciated, for license either of mind or of ways in rebellion against Him. Hence the urgency of the Lord's solemn appeal. Continuance in and with Him is of God.

“Jesus therefore said to the Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, ye are truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to any one: how sayest thou, Ye shall become free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say to you, every one that practiseth sin is a bondman of sin. Now the bondman abideth not in the house forever; the Son abideth forever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed, but ye seek to kill me because my word maketh no way in you. I speak what I have seen with my Father, and ye therefore practice what ye have seen1 with your father, 2They answered and said to him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith to them, If ye are3 Abraham's children, ye would practice the works of Abraham; but now ye seek to kill me, a man who hath spoken to you the truth which I heard from God: this Abraham did not practice. Ye practice the works of your father. They said [therefore]4 to him, We were not born of fornication; we have one father, God. Jesus said5 to them, If God were your father ye would have loved me, for I came forth from God and am come; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not know my speech? Because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are6 of your father, the devil, and ye desire to practice the lusts of your father. He was a murderer from [the] beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him: whenever he speaketh, he speaketh the lie of his own things, because he is a liar, and the father of it; but because I speak the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? If7 I speak truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God.” (Vers. 31-47.)

To abide in His word then is the condition of being in truth Christ's disciple. Others may be interested greatly, but they soon grow weary, or turn ere long to other objects. Christ's disciple cleaves to His word, and finds fresh springs in what first attracted. His word proves itself thus divine, as it is faith which abides in it, and the truth is thus not only learned, but known. Vagueness and uncertainty disappear, while the truth, instead of gendering bondage, like the law, makes the soul free, whatever its previous slavery. “There is growth in the truth and liberty by it. Law deals with the corrupt and proud will of man to condemn it on God's part as is right; the truth communicates the knowledge of Himself as revealed in His word, and thus gives life and liberty, privileges unintelligible to the natural man, who hates the sovereign grace of God as much as he exalts and loves himself, while he despises and distrusts others. Man's only thought therefore of obtaining righteousness is through the law; he knows not the virtue of the truth, and dreads liberty as though it must end in license, while at the same time they are proud of their own position, as if it were inalienable, and God were their servant, not they bound to be His. Hence the Jews answered Jesus, “We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to any one: how sayest thou, Ye shall become free?"

Far from this was the truth. Even outwardly, not to speak of the soul, the Jews were, and had long been, in servitude to the Gentiles. So Ezra (chap, 9) confessed at the evening sacrifice: “Since the days of our fathers have we been in great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hands of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is thin day. And now for a little space grace hath been showed from Jehovah our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia,” &c. So, again, Nehemiah (chap, 9): “Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets; yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hands of the people of the lands..... Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers, to eat the fruit thereof, and the good thereof; behold, we are servants in it, and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins; and they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.” Thus had men of conscience felt when they lay under conquerors milder far than the Romans who now ruled. It was not that the Jews today were lightened, but that they had grown so used to the yoke as to forget and deny it altogether. And if it were in face of God's righteous government externally, much less did they estimate aright their true state before God, as the Lord Jesus was bringing it out now. Their haughty spirit was nettled at His word, which laid bare their thralldom to the enemy. “We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to any one: how sayest thou, Ye shall become free?” Jesus in His answer brought in the light of God, for eternity indeed, but also for the present. “Verily, verily, I say to you, every one that practiseth sin is a bondman of sin.” How true, solemn, and humiliating! No bondage so real, none so degrading, as that of sin: could they seriously deny it to be theirs?

But the Lord intimates more. None under sin is entitled to speak of permanence. Such an one exists only on sufferance till judgment. Bondage there was none when God created and made according to His mind; nor will there be when He shall make all things new. The bondman, in every sense, belongs only to the transitory reign of sin and sorrow. So says the Lord: “Now the bondman abideth not in the house forever.” Another and contrasted relationship suits God's will; “the son abideth forever.” But there is infinitely more in Christ. He is not merely son, but “the Son.” He is the Son in His own right and title, as God and as man, in time and in eternity. He is therefore not “free” only, as all sons are, but such in His glory that He can and does make free in virtue of the grace which pertains to Him alone. Thus it is not only the truth which sets free, where law could only condemn, but the Son also gives and confirms the same character of liberty according to His own fullness. It is a question of what suits, not them merely, but Him. He could make free those who hear Him, and abide in His word, and nothing else but free. It is worthy of Him to deliver from sin and Satan; and “if the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” He frees after a divine sort. He brings into His own character of relationship out of the bondage to sin, which the first man made our sad inheritance. The last Adam is a quickening Spirit and a Deliverer. Let us stand fast in His liberty, and be not entangled again with any yoke of bondage, as the apostle exhorts the Galatians against that misuse of the law, whatever its shape.

To be Abraham's seed, as the Lord lets the Jews know, is a sorry safeguard. One might be of Abraham, and be the worst enemies of God. Such were the Jews then, who were seeking to kill Christ because His word had no hold in them. Every one acts according to his source; character follows it. So our Lord deigns to say, “I speak what I have seen with my Father; and ye therefore practice what ye have seen with your father.” To be of Abraham does not save from Satan. To hear the Son, to believe in Him, is to have eternal life and derive one's nature from God. They boasted most of Abraham who were still in the darkness of unbelief and the enemy's power. Hence “they answered and said to him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith to them, If ye are Abraham's children, ye would practice the works of Abraham; but now ye seek to kill me, a man who hath spoken to you the truth which I heard from God: this Abraham did not practice. Ye practice the works of your father.” (Vers. 39-41.) It was allowed already that they were descended from the father of the faithful; but did they bear the family likeness? Was it not an aggravation of their evil that they stood in contrast with him from whom they vaunted themselves sprung? Abraham believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness. They believed not, but sought to kill the man, albeit the Son of God, who spoke to them the truth which He heard from God. Whose works were these? Certainly not Abraham's, but a very different father's.

The Jews felt what was implied, and at once take the highest ground. “They said [therefore] to him, We were, not born of fornication; we have one father, God. Jesus said to them, If God were your father, ye would have loved me, for I came forth from God and am come; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not know my speech? Because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father, the devil, and ye desire to practice the lusts of your father. He was a murderer from [the] beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him: whenever he speaketh, he speaketh the lie out of his own things, because he is a liar, and the father of it; but because I speak the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? If I speak truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God.” (Vers. 41-47.)

The case is thus closed as regards the Jews. They were of the devil beyond all doubt, as this solemn controversy proved. It is really the conviction of man as against Christ, in every land, tongue, age. He turns out no other when tested by the truth, by the Son; however circumstances differ, this is the issue, and it comes out worst where things look fairest. If there was a family on earth, which might have seemed removed the farthest from impurity, it was the Jews; if any could claim to have God as their father, they most of all. But Jesus is the touchstone; and they are thereby proved to be God's enemies, not His children; else they would have loved Him who came out from God, and was then present in their midst, who had not even come of His own motion but at God's sending. He came and was sent in love; they rose against Him in hatred, seeking to kill Him.

The Jews did not even know His speech, such utter strangers were they to Him, or the God who spoke by Him. The reason is most grave—they could not hear His word. It is through understanding the thought, the scope, the mind of the person speaking that one knows the phraseology, and not the inverse. If the inner purpose is not received, the outer form is unknown. So it was with Jesus speaking to the Jews—so it is preeminently with the testimony in John's writings now. Men complain of mysticism in the expression, because they have no notion of the truth intended. The hindrance is in the blinding power of the devil, who is the source of their thoughts and feelings, as surely as he is the adversary of Christ. Men's judgments flow from their will and affections, and these are under the sway of His enemy. And as he pushes on men, especially those who are specially responsible to bow to Christ, as the Jews then were, to practice the lusts of their father, so violence follows as naturally as falsehood. For Satan was a murderer from the beginning, and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Jesus alone of men is the truth; He is not only God, but the One who reveals God to man. In Him is no sin, nor did He sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. He was the manifest opposite, in all respects, of the devil, who, whenever he speaks, speaks falsehood out of his own store, because he is a liar and the father of it. Jesus is the truth, and makes it known to those who otherwise cannot know it. “But because I speak the truth, ye believe me not.” How awful, yet how just, God's judgment of such! For we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth; and what can be the end of these things but death and judgment?

Finally, the Lord proceeds to challenge them, in order to lay bare their groundless malice: “Which of you convinceth me of sin? If I speak truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God.” He was the Holy One, no less than the Truth, and surely both go together. And thus were they convicted of being, in word and deed, in thought and feeling, wholly alienated from, and rebellions against, God. They were not of God, save in haughty pretension, which only made their distance from Him, and opposition to Him, more glaring. Instead of convincing Christ of sin, they were themselves slaves of sin; instead of speaking truth, they rejected Him who is the Truth; instead of hearing the words of God, they hated Him who spoke them, because they were not of God, but of the devil. Terrible picture, which the unerring light failed not to draw and leave, never to be effaced, of His adversaries! To be not of God is to be wholly without good, and left in evil, exposed to its consequences, according to the judgment of Him who cannot, will not, change in His abhorrence of it. Such were and are the rejecters of Jesus.

Notes on John, John 8:21-29, Notes on (8:21-29)

The next discourse turns on our Lord's announcement of His departure—a truth of the most solemn import, especially for Israel responsible to receive Him as their Messiah.

“He1 said therefore again to them, I go away, and ye shall seek me and shall die in your sin2where I go away, ye cannot come. The Jews therefore said, “Will he kill himself because he saith, Where I go away, ye cannot come? And he said to them, Ye are of the things beneath, I am of those above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world. I said therefore to you that ye shall die in your sins; for, unless ye believe that I am [he], ye shall die in your sins.” (Ver. 21-24.)

The departure of Jesus after His coming is the overthrow of Judaism and the necessary condition of Christianity. We must not be surprised then, if our Lord again and again recurs to it, to its moral associations and consequences, and above all to its bearing on Himself personally, ever the uppermost thought of our evangelist. He was going, and they should seek Him and die in their sin. They sought amiss and found Him not. They sought a Messiah that they might gratify their ambition and worldly lusts; and such is not the Messiah of God, who is now found of those that sought Him not, after having spread out His hands all the day to a rebellious people that walked in a way anything but good after their own thoughts. But God is not mocked, and he who sows to the flesh reaps corruption: if it be not public judgment, it is none the less the recompense of evil into the guilty bosom. “Ye shall die in your sin.” They were rejecting Christ and cleaving to their own will and way. There was no fellowship between them and Him. “My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.” The issue would make it still more apparent: “Where I go away, ye cannot come.” They could not follow Him.

The Lord was going to heaven, to His Father. Their treasure was not there, nor therefore their heart, as both were on His part. So too as grace attracts the heart of the believer to Christ, faith follows Him where He is; and He will come and bring us there in due time that, where He is, there we may be also. Unbelief clings to self, to the earth, to present things; and so it was and is with the Jews: “Where I go away, ye cannot come.” They were rejecting the only One who could wean from earth or fit for heaven, meeting them in their sin that they might not die in it but live through Him. But Him they would not have and are lost, and proved it by their utterly false estimate of Him and of themselves, present or future, as we see in what follows. “The Jews therefore said, Will he kill himself because he saith, Where I go away, ye cannot come?"

But he tells them out more. “And he said to them, Ye are of the things beneath, I am of those above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world. I said therefore to you, that ye shall die in your sins.” Here the Lord solemnly unveils the sources of things. To be of this world now is to be not merely of earth but from beneath. Such is the Jew that rejects Jesus who is of the things above. Therefore should they die in their sins: their nature and their works evil, and they refusing the only light of life, how else could they end? “For, unless ye believe that I am [he], ye shall die in your sins.” The truth shines out fully from a rejected Christ—not only His personal glory, but their subjection to Satan who employs them to dishonor Him. But His rejection is their everlasting ruin. They die in their sins and have to judge them Him whom they refused to believe in for life eternal.

“They kept saying therefore to him, Who art thou? Jesus said to them, Absolutely3 that which I also am speaking to you.” (Ver. 25.) Jesus is not merely the way and the life but the truth. He is, in the principle of His being, what He speaks. A less expected answer could not be, nor one more withering to their thoughts of themselves and of Him. He alone of all men could say as much; yet was He the lowliest of men. His ways and words were in perfect accord; and all expressed the mind of God. It is not merely that He does what He says, but He is thoroughly and essentially what also He sets out in word. The truth is the reality of things spoken. We cannot know God but by Him; nor can we know man but by Him. Good and evil are displayed or detected only by Him. Such was the One the Jews were then rejecting. They have then lost the truth. Impossible to have the truth apart from Jesus, who adds “I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you; but he that sent me is true, and I, what I heard from him, speak these things unto the world.” He was a servant though Son, and uttered what the Father

pleased as needed truth, not according to the affluence of what He had to say and judge respecting the Jews. “They knew not that He was speaking to them of the Father. Then said Jesus [to them],4 When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am [he] and from myself am doing nothing, but, even as the Father taught me, thus I speak. And he that sent me is with me: he5 left me not alone, because the things pleasing to him I do always.” (Vers. 26-29.) It is the actual truth presented by God which tests the soul. A former testimony, however true, does not provoke opposition in the same way. Often indeed unbelief avails itself of the past to strengthen its present antagonism to what God is doing. Thus the Jews avail themselves of the unity of God to deny the Son and the Father, and they knew not of whom Jesus was speaking. His cross might not convince them divinely or win their heart to God; but it would convict them of deliberate and willful rejection of the Messiah, and prove that what He spoke He spoke from the highest authority. As He was sent, so was He taught. The Father was with Him too, for Christ was doing always the things that pleased Him. If we know this in our measure, how much more fully and unwaveringly was it true of Him who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth!

Notes on John, John 8:12-20, Notes on (8:12-20)

The Lord continues His teaching of the people, but not without allusion to the incident which had just occurred, or rather to the character in which He had dealt with it. Nothing can be more evident than the True Light which was then shining and lightening every man. It is the more striking because the word “light” does not occur in that transaction; but the fact is thoroughly in harmony with what immediately follows.

“Again then Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall in no wise walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (Ver. 12.) His rejection by the Jews always brings Him out in a still larger character of blessing and glory to others. In our Gospel however the Spirit speaks of what He is personally or independently of all circumstances. He is “the light of the world.” His glory, His grace, could not be confined to Israel. He is come to deliver from Satan's power and give the enjoyment of God. Hence, whatever be the darkness of men, and it was now profound among the Jews, “He that followeth me shall in no wise walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The Christian is not only called out of darkness into God's wonderful light, but he becomes light in the Lord, a child of light, and he walks in the light, being brought to God who is light; and in the light, as John says, we have fellowship one with another, for in Him is life as well as light; or, as He says here, His follower has “the light of life.” He has Christ who is both.

So energetic a testimony rouses the pride and enmity of those who listened. They could not but feel that He spoke of a privilege and blessing which they did not enjoy. “The Pharisees therefore said to him, Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true.” (Ver. 13.) They turn His own words in chapter v. 31 against Himself, but most unfairly; for there He was speaking of testimony alone and human, such as vanity gives itself; here, as He proceeds to show, He has the very highest support in God Himself. “Jesus answered and said to them, Even though I bear witness of myself, my witness is true; for I know whence I came, and where I go, [but]1 ye know not whence I come or2 where I go.” (Ver. 14.) They were wholly ignorant of the Father as of the Son. They never thought of heaven. The Lord had the constant consciousness of the truth of His person and mission; and His witness was inseparable from the Father's. As He says elsewhere,” I and my Father are one” He never lost the sense for a moment whence He came and whither He was going away, whereas they never had a thought of it. They were in utter darkness, though the light was there shining in Him. How truly then He could say, “Ye judge according to the flesh, I judge no one. And if also I judge, my judgment is true,3 because I am not alone, but I and the Father4 that sent me.” (Ver. 15, 16.)

Self is the source and object of all the activity of the flesh, according to which the Jews were judging. Christ brought love as well as light into the world. He was judging none; He was serving all. This made Him intolerable to the self-complacent. Yet is He to be the judge of all. In His resurrection God has given the pledge that He is to judge the world, even as in His own person He is the fitting one to do so, being Son of man as well as Son of God. “And if also I judge, my judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.” (Ver. 16.) It was an admitted principle that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established. To this the Lord here appeals: “And in your law too it is written that the witness of two men is true.” (Ver. 17.) How much more then the testimony of the Father and the Son. “I am he that testifieth concerning myself, and the Father that sent me testifieth concerning me.” (Ver. 18.) Of this too the Lord had spoken before (in chap, 5) but they had not heard to receive it, but only to despise Him.

“They said to him then, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye know neither me nor my Father. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” (Ver. 19.) Such ignorance of the only true God and of Jesus whom He sent is death, eternal death; and the more solemn, because it was said not to the heathen but to Jews who had the oracles of God. And these things they were saying because they knew not the Father nor the Son; as the hour would come when they would think to render God service by killing Christ's disciples. Their sayings and doings betrayed their state of utter alienation from and ignorance of the Father. All that followed of persecution and hatred, whether for Christ or for the church, was but the consequence. “These words he spoke in the treasury, teaching in the temple; and no one seized him, because his hour was not yet come.” (Ver. 20.) Their malice was as manifest as it was deadly; and it was against the Father as much as the Son.

But, spite of will, they were powerless till the time was come. Then was He given up to their murderous iniquity; then too still deeper counsels were in accomplishment through the sacrifice of Himself. If on the one hand He was cut off and had nothing of His Messianic rights in the midst of the Jews in the land, He was on the other suffering for sins, just for unjust, to bring all who believe to God, to be glorified on high and to have a bride given Him associated with Himself in His supremacy over all things. But this would carry us into the apostle Paul's teaching. Let us pursue the line given to John, where we behold the Word made flesh, and His divine glory shining through the veil of humiliation, and in this chapter particularly, first as light convicting, then as the light of life possessed by His followers; but if His word were rejected, no less was He the Son who alone can make free, yea the I AM, let men avail themselves of His manhood to scorn and stone and crucify Him as they may.

Notes on John, John 7:53 and 8:1-11, Notes on (7:53)

We are now arrived at a section of our Gospel, the external condition of which is to the reflecting mind a solemn evidence of human unbelief, here as daring as usually it appears to hesitate. No evangelist has suffered as much in this way, not even Mark, whose close disappears from two of the most ancient manuscripts. But as, we saw, the angel's visit to trouble the waters of Bethesda was unwelcome to not a few copyists of John 5, so here again incredulity indisposed some to reproduce the story of the adulteress. This is plain from some copies (as L A), which leave a blank—a fact wholly inexplicable, if the scribe had not been aware of a paragraph which he knew to exist, but, for reasons of his own, thought fit to omit. Others, again, transposed it to another place, as the cursives, 1, 19, 20, 129, 135, 207, 301, 347, &c, to the end of the Gospel (and 225 after chap. 7:36), and even to another evangelist, as 13, 69, 124, and 461, though alien in tone from all but John, and suiting no place in John but here, where the mass of authority gives it. à A (probably) B C (probably) T X with many cursives and ancient versions simply omit the passage; D F (defective) G H K U T (defective), not far short of 300 cursives, and many versions have it. It is marked by an asterisk, or obelisk, in E M S Λ, &c. The variations of the copies which do give it are considerable. This brief view of the evidence may suffice for the general reader, as it is more than enough to prove the peculiarity of the case externally.

As regards the internal evidence, some have alleged against the passage its entire diversity from the style of the Gospel elsewhere; and this, not merely in words and idiom which John never uses, but in its whole cast and character, which is said to savor more of the synoptic Gospels.

All this, however, fails to meet the positive weight of truth in the passage, and its fitness at this very point of the Gospel utterly unaccountable in a forgery or a tradition. The Lord is displaying the true light in His person, as contrasted with others who boasted in the law. We have seen their conscienceless discussion in the preceding chapter. “And they went each to his home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.” Afar from man's uncertainty and contempt, the Son of God retired to enjoy the fellowship of the Father. Thence He returns for service. “And early in the morning he came again to the temple, and all the people were coming unto him; and he sat down, and was teaching them.” (Ver. 2.) The Lord's habit in this respect, recorded by Luke (21:37, 38; 22:36), is a strange reason for discrediting John's mention of this particular instance. Nor do I see any reason to question that it was not merely “the crowd” (ὄχλος), but “the people” in a large sense (λαός) which here flocked to the Lord's teaching in the temple.

“And the scribes and the Pharisees bring to him a woman taken in adultery, and having set her in [the] midst, they say to him, Teacher, this woman was taken in the very act of adultery. Now in the law Moses charged us that such should be stoned: thou, therefore, what sayest thou? But this they said proving him, that they might have [whereof] to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger was writing on the ground.” (Vers. 8-6.)

Such is man at his best estate when he sees and hears Jesus, but refuses the grace and truth which came by Him. They were not ignorant men, but learned in the scriptures; they were not the crowd that knew not the law, but possessed of the highest reputation for religion. Nor could there be a question as to the guilt and degradation of the woman. Why they brought her, and not her paramour, does not appear. But her they brought in the hope, not only of perplexing, but of finding ground of accusation against, the Lord. It seemed to them a dilemma which allowed of no escape. Moses, said they, bade the Jews stone such as she. What did Jesus say? If He only confirmed the decree of the law, where was the grace so much boasted of? If He let her off, did He not evidently set Himself in opposition, not only to Moses, but to Jehovah? What profound iniquity! No horror at sin, even of the darkest dye, but an unfeeling perversion of the exposed adulteress, to entrap the Holy One of God.

But if the Lord wrote on the ground, it was in no way as if He heard them not. Rather was it to give them time to weigh their guilty question, and guiltier motive, while their hope of entrapping Him betrayed them more and more to commit themselves as He stooped to the ground.

“And when they continued asking him, he lifted himself up, and said to them, Let him that is without sin among you first cast the stone at her; and, again stooping down, he was writing on the ground. But they, having heard [it] and being convicted by their consciences, kept going out one by one, beginning from the elder ones until the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in [the] midst.” (Ver. 79.) Thus did the Lord show Himself the true light which lightens every man. Occupied with the law in its condemnation of the adulteress, and indeed far more essaying to condemn the Lord Himself, their darkness is laid bare by these few solemn words. God judges sin, not gross sins, but all sin, be it what it may be; and the Judge of quick and dead was He who thus searched them through and through. It was no question of the law for either now: they shrank abashed from the light, even though Jesus stooped down again, and was writing on the ground. Assuredly He heard their question, and discerned their iniquitous aim, veiled as it was; and now they heard Him, and cowered before His all scathing words of light. Convicted by their consciences, but in no way repentant, they sought to flee, ashamed to see His face, who stooped once more, and thus gave them time to retire, if they refused to bow with broken spirit and heartfelt confession. This, however, it is not the object of the passage to illustrate, but the supremacy of divine light in Jesus, let Him be ever so lowly, and in presence of the proudest. And they were going off, one by one, beginning at the elder until the last, beginning at those who dreaded most their own exposure—an exposure which the youngest could not bear, only less ashamed of their fellows than of Jesus, who had awakened the feeling. How awful the contrast with their own sweet singer, who, spite of his sins, could say by grace, “Thou art my hiding place!” —hiding in God, not from Him, and having before him One who could, and would, cover all his iniquities, and impute nothing. Vain indeed is our effort to cover our sins, or to escape from His presence. But unbelief trusts itself, not Him, and shows the will to get away from His light, as it may for a little season, till judgment come. How will it be then? It will be theirs to stoop in shame and everlasting contempt, when evasion cannot be even for a moment, and all is fixed forever.

Jesus, then, was left alone, as far as the tempting scribes and Pharisees were concerned, and the woman in the midst; for “all the people” appear to have been around, and He addresses them in a subsequent discourse, which seems to be founded on this very incident, as giving occasion to it. (See vers. 12 and seqq.) “And Jesus lifting himself up, and seeing no one but the woman, said to her, Woman, where are they, thine accusers? Did no one condemn thee? And she said, No one, Sir. And Jesus said to her, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.” (Vers. 10, 11) It is the mistake of Augustine, as of others in modern no less than ancient times, that we have here “misera” in the presence of “misericordia,” which is much more true of the scene at the end of Luke 7. Here the Lord acts as light, not only in the detection of His self-righteous and sinful adversaries, but throughout. There was no need, however, for His exposure of the woman caught in the very act of sin. Hence the ignorance of the scribes who left out the tale was as glaring as their impiety was without excuse. There is not the last semblance of levity in dealing with her evil. The Lord simply brings out the fact that her accusers retreat from the light which convicted their conscience, when the law had utterly failed to reach it; and as they could not condemn her, because they were sinners no less truly than

herself, so He would not. It was not His work to deal with causes criminal any more than civil. But if grace and truth came by Him, He is none the less the true light; and so He abides here. As we do not hear of repentance in the woman, so we have no such words from Him as," Thy sins are forgiven thee," "Thy faith hath saved thee," "Go in peace." He is the light still, and goes not beyond "go and sin no more." By-and-by He will act as a king, and judge righteously; on their own showing He speaks as a "teacher," not a magistrate. And it was a question of sin, but most unexpectedly of theirs as well as hers, if they face the light of God.

The words of our Lord are utterly lowered by each as infer that, either to the accusers or to the accused, He restrains sin to that offense against purity of which the woman was guilty. He means any and all sin as intolerable to God, who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all.

Notes on John, John 7:40-52, Notes on (7:40-52)

We have had, then, the Lord's anticipative declaration of the power of the Spirit which the believer was about to receive, which he did receive at Pentecost and thenceforward: not the quickening of the unbeliever, nor yet power rising up in worship, but flowing forth abundantly from the inner man in testimony, both eminently characteristic of Christianity. How painful that Christendom should now, and for ages, show itself incredulous and hostile! But thus it is that God's warnings must be verified in every tittle. In man's hands each dispensation makes manifest nothing so much as faithlessness to its own special privileges and responsibility. Thus Israel not only rebelled against the law but renounced Jehovah for heathen vanities, the remnant even rejecting their own Messiah. Is the Spirit now sent down and present since Jesus was glorified? Christendom, since the apostolic days, ran greedily after law and forms, reinstating thus the first man, to the denial of the cross on earth and of the Second man in heaven about to come again. It opposes itself to no truth so expressly as to that which it is called above all to testify in word and deed.

The words of our Lord made a certain impression; but all is in vain unless conscience be reached before God. "[Some]1 of the crowd, therefore, when they heard these sayings2, said, This is truly the prophet; others said, This is the Christ; others3 said, Doth the Christ, then, come out of Galilee? Did not the scripture say that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was? A division therefore took place in the crowd on account of him; and some of them wished to seize him, but none laid his hands on him." (Vers. 40-44)

Men do not only join what God separates, but separate what God joins. Some called Him the prophet, others the Christ, as we have seen from the beginning of this Gospel, a distinction then prevalent but unfounded. The objections which lack of knowledge makes expose an ignorance which the least conscientious inquiry must have dispelled. With faith too there may be, and often is, want of light; but, spite of obstacles, it holds on to what it discerns to be of God, instead of being stumbled by a difficulty which further knowledge would have shown to be unreal. Bartimaeus, when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was at hand, did not fail to cry," Son of David, have mercy on me;" and his faith reaped the blessing immediately. None the less was He the Messiah from Bethlehem, and of David's line, because He was the despised prophet of Galilee. But unbelief is blind to His glory, and finds only an occasion of division in the only center of union. Yet, whatever the hostility of men, they could not take Him till the hour was come, little as they thought it, for God to accomplish the reconciliation in His cross.

There were darker traits, however, in the religious leaders than in the crowd; and this the Spirit next brings before us. "The officers therefore came unto the high priests and Pharisees, and to them they said, Why did ye not bring Him? The officers answered, Never man so spake as this man.4 The Pharisees therefore 5 answered them, Are ye also deceived? Did any one of the rulers believe on him, or of the Pharisees? But this crowd, that knoweth not the law, are accursed." (Vers. 45-49.) Here conscience answered to the words of the Lord in such a manner at least as to draw out before their masters an involuntary confession of the power with which He spoke. It was not as the scribes. But the Pharisees, with invincible hardness, retort on their weakness, challenge them to produce one of the rulers of the Pharisees that believed, and betray their contempt for the mass of their countrymen. Boasting in law, they, by transgression of the law, and far worse, were then dishonoring God. But God brings forward an unexpected, even if feeble, witness from among themselves, not only a Pharisee but a ruler.

"Nicodemus6 saith unto them, being one of them, Doth our law judge the man, unless it have first heard from him, and known what he doeth? They answered and said to him, Art thou also out of Galilee? Search and see that no prophet ariseth7 out of Galilee." (Vers. 50-52.) Unable to resist the righteous requirement of their own law, they proved that their insubjection had a deeper root by their haughty contempt, not now of the ignorant rabble, but of not the least of their own chiefs; and, as usual, they manifest that men are never so sure to err as when most confident in an arm of flesh. Indeed, it is the fatality of tradition mongers to be always astray, whether in Judaism or in Christendom. Scripture alone is reliable; and those who profess to be ruled by scripture as interpreted by tradition, will be found, like all who serve two masters, to hold to tradition and its uncertainty, and to despise scripture spite of its divine authority, with a blindness to their own state which is truly pitiable though not less censurable also. Thus Eusebins, though by no means the least able or the most superstitious of the Fathers, makes the grossest mistakes in reporting ecclesiastical facts from the Acts of the Apostles, or elsewhere. So here the Pharisees assume that no prophet arises out of Galilee. They were wrong in every possible way. Were they prophets to speak for God at that time? Had they never heard of Jonah or Nahum? The greatest of the prophets who wrote not—the mysterious Tishbite—who had arisen, and will yet again arise, was of Gilead, and so even more remote than Galilee from the seat of religious pride, being on the east of the Jordan. But the truth is, that the One their soul abhorred, on whom the poor of the flock waited, had come forth out of Bethlehem Ephratah, whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity. Of Him they were profoundly ignorant, though law and prophets everywhere testified to Him; but the pillar of the clouds which encompassed Him gave no light to the proud men of Jerusalem. Their darkness comprehended not the true light.

Notes on John, John 7:32-39, Notes on (7:32-39)

The religious leaders are disturbed at any impression made on the multitude and show their fear as well as their enmity. They dislike the truth they did not themselves possess and would gladly get rid of Him who told it out. "The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these

things about him, and the high priests and the Pharisees1 sent officers to seize him. Then said Jesus,2 Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and not find3; and where I am, ye cannot come." (Vers. 32- 34.) The Lord speaks with a solemn calmness. All efforts to apprehend Him would be vain till the appointed moment; nor need they hurry. It was but a little while for Him to be with them: then He is going to His Father. So it is ever in this Gospel. It is no question of the rejection of men nor of the Jews despising Him, though both were true and fully set out by the synoptic evangelists; but here the Spirit shows us One fully conscious of where He was going, and so speaking to all, if any by grace might believe and see God's glory in Him. Soon unbelief would seek and not find Him. What does the world know of the Father? Heaven is to it more dreary than the earth. "Where I am, ye cannot come;" nor would they if they could. Nothing is so repulsive to a sinner as the light, presence, and glory of God.

"The Jews therefore said unto each other, Where is this [man] about to go that we shall not find him? Is he about to go unto the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What is this word which he said, Ye shall seek me and not find; and where I am, ye cannot come?" (Vers. 35, 36.) It was blindness indeed; nor is any darkness so dense as that of unbelief. But it is striking that what the unbelieving pride of the Jew deemed incredible is what God has made true of Christ exalted to His right hand. It is not more certain that He went on high than that He came and preached peace to the Gentiles that were far off and peace to them that were nigh (Jews), giving both access by one Spirit to the Father. The dispersed among the Greeks,4 are those that Peter shows to have found in Him the object of their faith, believing on Jesus in the Father's house as they believed on God; and Paul no less clearly shows that He is teaching the Greeks. To those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom—Christ crucified, let others count it an offense or foolishness. But He is none the less the Lord of glory, which none of the princes of this age knew: had they known, they would not have crucified Him. And so it was that scripture was verified, man humbled, and God glorified; even as those that dwelt in Jerusalem and their rulers, not knowing Him nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by their judgment of Him. And now is God pleased to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, "which is Christ among you the hope of glory." He is lost meanwhile to the Jew, who seeking Him not in faith cannot find Him nor come where He is, for He is in heaven and they given up more and more to an earthly mind, groveling after filthy lucre.

But the Faithful Witness speaks. "Now in the last, the great, day of the feast Jesus stood and cried, If any one thirst, let him come unto me5 and drink. He that believeth on me, even as the scripture said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this said he of the Spirit, which they that believed6 on him were about to receive, for [the] Spirit7 was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (Vers. 37-39.)

It is not the new birth, but the Holy Ghost in power of testimony, rather than of worship. Thus is it distinguished not merely from John 3 but also from chapter 4, even though He be given at the same time to be a fountain of living water springing up to eternal life within the believer and rivers of living water flowing out, which suppose the soul already born afresh. It is not here however communion with the Father and the Son in the energy of the Spirit which goes upward in adoration, but the same Spirit going outward to refresh largely the weary and parched in the wilderness from the inmost affections of the believer. Both figures are strikingly true, but they are different though enjoyed by the same individual. They are the characteristic power and privilege of the Christian, not only the divine life but this in the power of the Spirit going up to its source in praise or flowing out actually in testimony to Christ in a dry and thirsty land. Here it is the glorified man who is the object, as in chapter 4 the Son of God is the giver.

Even so there is the most careful guard against coming to the Lord merely for teaching as a scholar or for material as a teacher: both in divine things attitudes of peril to the soul. "If any one thirsty let him come unto me and drink" It is the heart met in its own need, not men invited to draw for others, but to drink for themselves; and thus it is they safely and best learn so as to teach others also. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Such is the general testimony of Old Testament scriptures; and so the Lord urges even more distinctly. But this follows not only the coming but the glorification of Jesus founded on His work. Only then could the streams flow thus abundantly from "the inward parts," truth being there already and God on His part perfectly glorified in the cross. The Holy Spirit could act freely and in power, on the owned ruin of the first, to the glory of Him who is at God's hand and in those who are His for a little while in a dry and thirsty land where otherwise no water is. But now to His praise whom the Spirit is here to glorify water is given, not alone the fountain to refresh within, but rivers to flow out. The Israelites never rose to this, even in figure. They drank of water from the rock, and afterward, when the rod of priestly power had budded, the rock was but to be spoken to in order to yield abundantly. But no Israelite, not even a Moses and Aaron, could be the channel of living water, as every believer now; and this, let it be repeated, no premium on the Christian, but solely in witness of God's delight in Christ and appreciation of His work, wherein as He is, so are we in this world.

The feast, and the day of it so noted, are not without deep significance. It was not Pentecost as might be thought natural in view of the gift of the Spirit, but Tabernacles. Indeed if the feast of weeks was ever the epoch of any acts or discourses of our Lord in the fourth Gospel, it is carefully kept out of sight, and this because it falls within the province of Paul rather than of John whose characteristic truth is the revelation of God and of the Father in the man Christ Jesus on earth, not the Head of the body on high. It is not therefore the Spirit baptizing into one body which is here treated but power of testimony, and this from the most intimate enjoyment of the soul, through that Spirit who comes from Jesus glorified. We are not in heaven yet but passing through the wilderness. The day of glory is not come, but He who died in atonement is in glory, and thence sends down the Spirit on us who are here that we may have a divine association with Him there. What could give such force to testimony? There is more than the brightest hope; for the Spirit is a present link with Him who is on high; yet is there all the power of hope bearing us onward and above surrounding circumstances, for the glory itself does not yet appear, though He who will introduce it is already in it, its center and in its highest sphere. His hour will come to show Himself to the world; meanwhile we are in the secret of His exaltation and waiting for His display, while we have the Holy Ghost sent down by Him from that glory which He gives us to know and so much the more to fee] the dreary desert through which we pass. This is not our rest; it is polluted; and here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. But we are awaiting, not righteousness nor the Spirit of glory, but through the Spirit by faith the hope of righteousness (that is, the glory of God). And He who is not only in the glory, the Head and Heir of all things, but will shortly come to bring us like Himself there, gives us the Spirit as rivers of living water to fill us inwardly and to flow abroad, let the wilderness be ever so parched.

I do not know a stronger expression of the intimacy of the Spirit's indwelling in us as contrasted with His working of old even though by saints. But here there is supposed such a deep intermingling with the inner man's affections and thoughts as is eminently characteristic of the Christian's possession of the Spirit, and the more remarkably because it is in view of a rich outflow of testimony to Christ on high. Hence

there could be no such privilege till Jesus was glorified consequent on His glorifying of God morally by the death of the cross.

The phraseology of verse 39, though at first it may sound strange, is strictly accurate and suitable. The Spirit is beyond doubt a person, but He is viewed here as the characterizing fact of a state not yet in being. Hence it is πνεῦμα without the article. Again it is ἦν not ἐγένετο. He never began to exist, for His being was divine and eternal. But it was not yet a fact for man on earth. At Pentecost He was sent down from heaven. Compare Acts 19, where the question was, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? and the answer is, We did not even hear if the Holy Spirit was. The meaning is not at all as to His existence but His baptism, of which John the Baptist had testified to his disciples.

Notes on John, John 7:14-31, Notes on (7:14-31)

That the Lord had a deeper purpose in view was soon apparent. He had refused to go with His brethren; He had affirmed that the fit moment for displaying Himself to the world was not come. But God had a present mission for His Son, and He goes to Jerusalem to fulfill it.

"But now in the midst of the feast Jesus went up unto the temple and taught. The Jews therefore1 wondered, saying, How knoweth this [man] letters, having not learned? Jesus therefore2 answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If one desire to do his will, he shall know about the doctrine whether it is of God or I speak from myself. He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, he is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." (Vers. 14-18.)

There was no secrecy now: Jesus was teaching in the temple. It was His actual work. Soon He would suffer in atonement. Now it was the time for giving out the truth, to the astonishment of those who lived in the region of law and ordinance, who could only ask how He could know since He had not learned. They knew Him not, they rose not above human sources. Jesus was quick and careful to vindicate His Father. What is learned from man man is proud of. His doctrine He would not allow to be His own in the sense of independence, any more than of derivation from human teaching which they owned to be out of the question. It was not of man but of Him that sent Him. Was this a high claim and easily made? Any one of single eye would soon see its reality. Faith alone gives a single eye. Others speculate and err. God guides and teaches him who desires to practice His will, as Christ gives the positive assurance that he shall know concerning the doctrine whether it is of God or whether He speaks from Himself. How comforting as well as surely verified! The Son was making known the Father; and God is faithful in this as in every other way. He who counts every hair of our heads and apart from whom not a sparrow falls to the ground cares for His children. Every one that is of the truth hears the voice of Christ. Whatever their pretensions, all others are not of the truth: else they would know that His teaching is of God. Where we do not know, we must suspect ourselves, not blame God; if we really desired to do, we should soon learn, God's will. Certainly He did not speak from Himself. Yet of all men He was most entitled. But if He is the true God, He is true man and came to exalt His Father, not Himself. He had no private ends to serve. Lord of all He became the servant of all, above all of God. Self is what blinds the race, even the faithful, so far as it is allowed to act. He that speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but Jesus never did so—always served to the glory of Him that sent Him. There is, there can be, no solid guarantee of the truth where God's glory is not sought and secured. Christ in this was perfect; and so He here declares that He is true and no unrighteousness is in Him. As self is what hinders the truth, so it is just to neither God nor man. Jesus is both true and righteous.

Further, when men boast, they are sure to be wrong not only in other things but most where they are haughtiest. Did the Jews pique themselves on the law of Moses? How vain to boast of that law which none of them practiced! Yet so it was, as the Lord pressed on their consciences here. They reasoned, but what was their walk? "Hath not Moses given you the law? and none of you doeth the law. Why do ye seek to kill me?" (Ver. 19.) Jesus is ever the touchstone. One might never have learned their murderous malice but for Him who brought God close and convicted them of sin. This they could not bear and so sought to get rid of Him, in their zeal for the law violating it utterly, and in their dark rebelliousness rejecting Him who gave it by Moses. But is it now uncommon to glory in the law and hate the truth?

Yet the people in general were not aware how far hatred was impelling the leaders, and had no suspicion that they were bent on the death of Jesus. "The crowd answered, Thou hast a demon: who seeketh to kill thee? Jesus answered and said to them, One work I did, and ye all wonder because of this. Moses hath given you circumcision (not that it is of Moses but of the fathers), and on a sabbath ye circumcise a man. If a man receiveth circumcision on a sabbath, that the law of Moses may not be broken, are ye angry at me because I made a man entirely sound on a sabbath?" (Ver. 20-23.) In their ignorance the crowd spoke with rash irreverence and violence against the Lord, who stops not to notice it but draws attention to the absurdity of their quarreling as well as wondering at one work of His, the cure of the infirm at Bethesda on the sabbath, when it was a common matter of course to circumcise a male child on the eighth day spite of its being a sabbath, and this in honor of the law of Moses, though in fact circumcision was rather of the fathers. The Lord closes His reproof with an exhortation which touches the root of their cavils: "Judge not according to sight, but judge the righteous judgment." (Ver. 24.) They had brought in God, and were consequently wrong not on the surface merely but altogether. If the readings (as in Tischendorf's text) be κπίνετε.... κρίνατε, the first warns against the evil habit in general, the second urges the righteous judgment they should follow on this occasion. It is clear that one wants divine guidance if we are not to judge according to appearance, but that is what God is so willing to vouchsafe His children, not teaching only but direction and judgment. Knowing all, He knows also how to communicate what is needed by His own.

The Lord's plain speaking surprised, if the multitude, not such as knew the enmity of the rulers. "Some therefore of them of Jerusalem said, Is not this he whom they seek to kill? And, behold, he speaketh openly, and they say nothing to him. Have the rulers indeed decided that this is the Christ? Howbeit we know whence he is; but when the Christ cometh, no one knoweth whence he is. Jesus therefore cried in the temple teaching and saying, Ye both know me and ye know whence I am; and I have not come from myself, but he that sent me is true whom ye know not, I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me." (Ver. 25-29.) The men of Jerusalem, knowing too much of the rulers to accept their decisions absolutely, indulge in irony, but they too prove their ignorance like the rest. They did not know whence Jesus was, whilst they ought to have known where and when the Messiah was to be born.

Jesus in replying contrasts their assumed knowledge of Him and His origin with their positive ignorance of the Father who sent Him. He assuredly knew the Father as He was from Him and sent by Him. And the Father was not only truthful but true, as the Son could attest in all its force, not the Jews who knew not the Father. This drew on Him the very desire to lay hold of Him with which He had charged them. How

little man knows himself any more than God, as Jesus shows! “They sought therefore to take him, and none laid hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. But many of the crowd believed on him, and said, When the Christ cometh, will he do more signs than these which this [man] did?"3 (Vers. 30,31.) Those who rejected the Lord for their tradition and will were only the more exasperated by the truth; but they were powerless till His hour came. God abides God, spite of man and Satan. His purpose stands though the enemies betray and commit themselves; but even when they do their worst, they but fulfill the scriptures they deny and the will of God they detest. Another effect also appears: “many of the crowd believed on him.” The truth might not enter conscience, and so the result be human; but at least it was felt and owned that from the Messiah none need expect more signs. Still all is vain Godward but Christ and the faith that receives Himself.

Notes on John, John 7:1-13, Notes on (7:1-13)

The Lord had thus propounded His humiliation and His death, with His ascension to heaven, completely setting aside the carnal expectations then prevalent as to His kingdom. He had done more than this; He had taught the absolute necessity of appropriating Himself, both incarnate and dying, for eternal life. He had pointed forward all hope to resurrection at the last day, however unintelligible to the Jews, and repulsive even to many of His disciples. They looked for present honor and glory through the Messiah; they could not bear death with Him, opening into resurrection life and glory.

“[And]1 after these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for he was unwilling to walk in Judaea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the feast of the Jews, the tabernacles, was near. His brethren therefore said unto him, Remove hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples too may behold thy works which thou doest; for no one doeth anything in secret, and seeketh himself to be in public. If thou doest these things show thyself to the world. For not even did his brethren believe in him.” (Ver 8:1-5.)

Thus we see the Lord in the despised place, the True Light, not in the city of solemnities, where darkness reigned the more, because it was least suspected; and in Galilee He walks about on His errand of love. He does not wait for souls to seek Him; He seeks them, that, believing, they might have life in Him. Judaea He avoids, knowing that the people of that part of the country, identifying themselves with the murderous hatred of their rulers, were seeking to kill Him. He was unwilling, not (one need not say) afraid, to walk about there. He was subject to His Father's will in this. He must complete the work given Him to do. As He said to certain Pharisees who sought to move Him by naming Herod's desire to kill Him, I cast out demons and accomplish healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I am perfected (that is, reach the end of my course); but I must proceed today, and tomorrow, and the next (day), because it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. He knew perfectly the end from the beginning. He feared not man. He goes up at the appointed moment to do and suffer all the will of God, as well as all from man and Satan.

The festival then at hand, the feast of tabernacles, tests man afresh, or rather our Lord tests by means of it. Those attached to Him by natural kin, His brethren, were impatient at His Galilean sojourn, at His separateness from the center of religious life and honor. As the Passover closely connected itself with the truth of the last chapter, so the Tabernacles furnished the occasion for what the Lord brings out here. There the blood of the lamb, itself eaten by the Israelites, points to His death, let them hear or forbear. Here the gathering of the people to rejoice was after the harvest and the vintage, types of the various forms of divine judgment at the end of the age when Israel, at rest in the land, will remember their former days of pilgrimage. It was preeminently the season of triumph, which proclaimed all the promises, fulfilled.

But was it really so now? Because Jesus, the Messiah, was there, and working each works as He did, was the time come for the accomplishment of Israel's hopes? So His brethren thought, because they wished it for themselves, though they put forward His disciples, and their need of seeing His works, and this in Judaea. No thought had they of God, not the faintest conception that in the obscurity of Galilee Jesus was glorifying the Father, and manifesting the Father's name to those the Father gave Him. They betrayed their own condition, their ignorance of God, their lack of self judgment, their unconsciousness, not only of their own ruin, but of the world, their unbelief of Him who deigned to be born of their family—who He was, and what He had come to do, was in none of their thoughts. They reasoned from self, not from God, and were thus so much the more hopelessly wrong as it concerned the Lord. “No one,” said they, “doeth anything in secret, and seeketh to be in public. If thou doest these things, show thyself to the world.” It was what they would have done. They sought, and conceived that every wise man must seek, present glory. Had they never heard One who taught even His disciples to do their alms, and pray and fast, in secret to their Father, who will render accordingly? If they had, the truth and will of God certainly had left no impression. The real ground of the wish and words was in this, that, as the evangelist solemnly adds, even His brethren did not believe in Him.

“Jesus therefore saith to them, My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify concerning it that its works are evil. Go ye up to the2 feast. I go not3 up to this feast, for my time is not yet fulfilled.” (Vers. 6-9.)

In no sense does flesh profit, and the friendship with the world is enmity with God, Satan taking advantage of both against man as well as God. Jesus abides in perfect dependence (to speak of this only). His movements were invariably in obedience. In everything it was a question to Him of the Father. His single eye saw that His time to show Himself to the world was, and could be, not yet. Death, as He had implied even before His Galilean ministry began (John 2:19- 22), and still more emphatically opened out in John 6, was before not displayed to the world. This will be in its due time; but here, as ever, the order is the sufferings that pertain to Christ, and the glories after these. First must He suffer many things and be rejected of this generation. Man's time, contrariwise, was always ready. They spoke as of the world, and the world heard them. They loved the world, and the things of the world; and the love of the Father was not in them, but, what they valued more, they were loved by the world as its own. Terrible position for His brethren, but not more terrible than true! How could the world hate those who so prized its honors? Jesus it did hate with a deadly hatred, because He bore witness about it that its works are evil; a testimony most of all galling to the religious world, to the men of Judaea and Jerusalem. Hence the Lord bids them go up to this feast, while He tells them that He goes not up, His time not yet being fulfilled.

The significance of this is the more marked by His action in contradistinction from theirs, and, as read above all, in the light of His subsequent testimony on the great day of the feast. “4Having said these things to them, he5 abode in Galilee. But when his brethren had gone up, then he himself also went up not manifestly, but as in secret. The Jews therefore sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was

much murmuring about him among the crowds. Some said, He [is] good; others said, No; but he deceiveth the crowd. No one, however, spoke openly about him because of fear of the Jews." (Vers. 10-18.) The seventh chapter of John, for the truth taught is based on the sixth, has this point of view; it supposes the Lord not only in death but in ascension. There is a manifest break with the world, and flesh is treated as no longer capable of association or communion. It really never was capable; but now it takes its own way, and the Lord withdraws. His brethren go up to the feast of tabernacles without Him; He does not go up, but abides in Galilee. Only after they had gone does He go, and then not manifestly, as they desired, but as in secret—more so than ever before. He is content to be, as it were, hidden, type of that which He really is now, and we with Him, as far as our life is concerned—hid in God.

This gives rise to questions and whispers about Him among the crowds, some speaking patronizingly, others with the utmost ill will and contempt; but even so there was no discourse in public, or plainly. The leaders of Judaea kept men in fear.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Eating Christ's Flesh and Drinking His Blood (6:53-58)

John 6:53-58

There is a marked change in our Lord's discourse. He turns from His incarnation to His death. In both cases He speaks of eating. It is the well-known figure of scripture for appropriation or communion. He was not only the Living Bread that came down out of heaven, that one might eat and live forever. He would give H is flesh for the life not of Jews only but of mankind, or as He says " for the life of the world."

But not a trace of ordinances is in either. It is a question of Himself, first living, then dead. He only was entitled to speak of giving life to the world. He through Whom the world came into being, He could quicken the dead; and such was and is the moral condition of all through sin (John 5:24, 25). He, the new Man, is the object of faith giving life. And it is for any, for the Gentile as well as the Jew. Baptism and the Lord's supper have their place by the Lord's institution till He come; but scripture attributes quickening to Him, not to them. In Him, not in them, was life. It is a falsehood of Christendom to claim an attribute which is His for a rite in the hands of men who thereby arrogate a dignity not only unreal but profane. All through this discourse, as in all other scripture, notably in John's Gospel at large and in his great Epistle, life is in the Son; so that he who believes has the Son and has life, as he that has not the Son of God has not life.

Only now He insists on faith in Him dead. This was yet more repulsive to unbelief than faith in Him living. But the Lord did not soften the truth to make it more palatable. He presents it in pointedly strong terms, peremptorily demanding its reception. Did the Jews contend with one another, saying, How can a man give us his flesh to eat? " Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood bath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is truly food, and my blood is truly drink. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, he also that eateth me, he too shall live because of me. This is the bread that came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died: he that eateth this bread shall live forever " (vers. 53-58).

Till His death there was no atonement. Sin was not yet judged in an adequate sacrifice, nor was God vindicated, still less glorified. In the cross He was; and remission of sins could be proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ. Whosoever called on the name of the Lord should be saved. Hence faith in the Incarnate Word, wherever real, received the wondrous tidings of His death, as alone reconciling a sinful soul to God. Fallen man had no title to life eternal; and He Who was eternal life died for sin and to bear the sins of all who believed, that they might have that life without the sins blotted out by His blood. Therefore did all, who received Him incarnate from God, welcome the more deeply Him that died for sins and to sin, that every inconsistency with the new and divine life might be canceled. How thankfully did they eat His flesh and drink His blood! Those who stumbled at Him thus dead, refusing to eat His flesh and drink His blood, proved thereby that they had no due sense of His grace nor of their own ruin by sin. Their professed faith in Him incarnate was unreal; had it been true, they would have hailed with deeper satisfaction His going down into death to do away with every effect of sin. From this they revolted, because they had no such conviction of their own evil, no such assurance of His love, even God's love.

But the Lord intimates more, and lets us know that if one has eaten His flesh and drunk His blood, he will not be content with once partaking of Him; he will continue to find in Him that best food. " He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day." For His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink (as some of the best MSS. here say). " He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." To have thus partaken of Him dead is life eternal, but more than this: to make Him dead our habitual spiritual food is to ensure the communion of His love to the uttermost. Thus does one abide in Him and He in him; and one lives, not only through Him but on account of Him, as He lived on account of the Father, the motive and reason of being.

We may observe too how carefully the Lord in verse 58 binds together the incarnation and His death. This is quite inconsistent with a rite; it is His person living and dead, the one source of life eternal to the believer. If a rite be fancied here, it would involve the twofold and fatal error: that none who failed to partake of the Lord's supper could have life; and that he who does partake of His supper has life eternal and must rise in the resurrection of the just.

O my reader, be not deceived. The Lord's supper indeed refers to Christ's death, to which this portion of John 6 refers. But He speaks only of faith in Him Who died for sin and sinners, that they believing on Him may have life. Therefore not to the communicant as such, but to the believer is the Lord's assurance of life eternal. Turn away therefore from every substitute for Himself, Who is the only Savior, the one substitute for your sins. Sacraments are admirable signs, but ruinous when they displace Christ and faith in Him.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Christ the Bread of Life (6:35-51)

John 6:35-51

From the sign of the miraculously multiplied bread the Lord turns those who sought Him to the true bread which the Father gives out of heaven. They had been of a mind by force to make him King; He would receive the kingdom only in due time from His Father. He therefore goes up on high meanwhile to pray. But now on the other side He explains that during Israel's unbelief it is no question of accomplishing their hope now, but of receiving life eternal for resurrection and the heaven to which He was going. It is Christianity in short, and not yet the kingdom restored to Israel.

" Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh unto me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that ye have both seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out; because I am come down from heaven, not to do my will but the will of him that sent me. And this is. the will of him that sent me that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father that everyone that beholdeth the Son and believeth on him should have life eternal; and I will raise him up at the last day" (35-40).

The Bread of life is not a rite or a sacrament, but the Incarnate Word. He is the object of faith presented, that needy, famishing, souls may have life eternal. The manna in the wilderness was a witness to Hire, little as they knew who ate of it and died there. The Lord Jesus is the Bread of God that comes down out of heaven and gives life not to Israel only but to the world. Him the Father God sealed. But so it was the right time to unfold a higher and larger work as the Son of man, rejected by the Jews. Faith receives in Him this rich gift, life eternal. The unbelief of man, yea of the chosen people, only brings out more grace from God the Father in the Son.

But the blessing is only to faith. " I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Nothing but coming to Himself by faith can avail. Those who saw Him without believing were no better for it but the worse. Those who resort to images of Him find only a blind. Those who lean for life eternal on any ordinance, even of Him, setup a rival to their shame. He is the object of faith for life eternal. " He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent Him." And the Father's will is that all honor the Son, even as they honor the Father: if they honor Him not by faith unto life eternal, they must in His judgment of them to everlasting perdition.

It is beautiful to see how perfectly the Son of the Highest becomes His Servant, now to save, as by-and-by to administer the glory. He chooses none for saving; He leaves all with Him Who sent Him. " All which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." On the one hand is the security of the children; on the other is the free grace of the gospel. For this has Christ come down out of heaven, Who alone could give either effect according to the Father's will, that none of that He had given should be lost, and that every one who believeth on the Son should have life eternal, Christ raising all up in the last day. For He brings to view not the present power of the kingdom on earth, but life for the soul now, and for the body resurrection.

When the Jews murmured incredulously, the Lord urges the more the need of the Father's drawing those He Himself should raise in the last day, and cites the prophets accordingly. Then He sums up with His solemn asseveration. " Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath life eternal. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and died. This is the bread that cometh down out of heaven that one may eat thereof and not die. I am the living

bread that came down out of heaven: if one eat of this bread, he shall live forever " (vers. 47-51).

The Incarnate Savior thus stands before us, the food of faith in the wilderness world. Have you, dear reader, gone to Him? For He is thus revealed in the written word that you might come to Him and believe on Him. Life is in Him for sinful man, in Him only for him that believes on earth, in Him life eternal for the most guilty, untoward, and proud. So He assures us without hesitation or condition, save that we believe on Him. And this is the one thing the sinner does most of all pleasing to the Father, jealous as He is for His glory Whom man despised for His grace. " Whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father either; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." All that is good follows faith through grace.

May this be your present and everlasting portion!

Notes on John, John 6:59-71, Notes on (6:59-71)

The Lord had now concluded in the synagogue at Capernaum His discourse, the main topics of which were His incarnation and atonement, as the indispensable food of faith, let men despise them as they might; and let them cry up the manna or aught else, which had neither such a divine and heavenly source nor such an everlasting effect but must leave men to the after all; for in Him, and none else, was life. “These things he said in [the] synagogue, teaching in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples on having heard said, This word is hard: who can hear it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmur concerning this, said to them, Doth this offend you? If then ye behold the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing. The words which I have spoken1 to you are spirit and are life; but there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from [the] beginning which were they that believed not, and which was he that should betray him. And he said, On this account have I said that no one can come unto me unless it hath been given him from the2 Father.” (Ver. 59-65.)

A most serious form of unbelief now betrayed itself, not among those of Judea or elsewhere only but the disciples, many of whom murmur, stumbling tit His words. If they found hard His descent from heaven or His dying, what if they beheld the Son of man going up where He was before? It was implied in Psa. 8; 80, 110, as well as Dan. 7. But Jewish will had long turned only to Israel's hopes in their land and liked not a higher aspect, any more than a lower. The cross and heaven were equally out of their field of vision. Hence the Lord here confronts them with His own ascension as a most unpalatable truth. Yet is it one which fitly follows His death, as it falls in with His coming down to be a man in incarnation. He is gone up a Savior in righteousness, having glorified God to the uttermost about sin, as surely as He came down to serve in

love. All hang together here, as in fact it is while He is thus ascended on high that faith feeds on Him in life and death here below. But disciples murmuring at His words of humiliation He told of His exaltation, sad to say to still deeper offense. Had they been true, had they known and loved the truth, it had been their joy; but they valued the first man rather than the Second, and were more and more offended.

Such is the flesh even in disciples. It profits nothing. It is the Spirit that quickens, and this by and in Christ, never apart from Him, still less to His dishonor. Hence His words have a power essentially divine and of divine efficacy; they are spirit and life, as He says Himself of what He had just spoken in His discourses, stumble as men might; and few words have been more disastrously perverted to this day, idolizing the sign to the shame of Him who was signified to have thus come and died in supreme love, who blesses faith accordingly. But alas! “there are some of you who do not believe.” Not to believe is fatal to any, most inconsistent withal in a disciple. Christ must be all or nothing. If all, His words are to the believer no reproach but a delight and have power all through, yea increasingly as He is thereby better known. Jesus knew their unbelief, not by observation or experience but from the first. He is God, and none the less because He became man; and this is our evangelist's constant thesis. Yet did He distinguish between such as did not believe and him who should betray Him; but who ever gathered it save now from His own words? Who had ever seen grace in Him falter in His ways with all? How solemn is the patience of divine love! On the other hand those who believed had no ground of boasting, for though they did cleave to Jesus, none could come unto Him, except it had been given to him from the Father. It was sovereign grace in God.

“From that [time] many of his3 disciples went away back and walked no more with him. Jesus therefore said to the twelve, Do ye also wish to go away? Simon Peter4 answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go away? Thou hast words of eternal life; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy One5 of God. [Jesus]6 answered them, Did I not choose you the twelve? One of you is a devil. Now he was speaking of Judas [son] of Simon Iscariot7; for he was about to betray him, being one of the twelve.” (Vers. 66-71.)

Thus the warnings of the Lord precipitate the departure of unbelievers, while they knit the faithful more closely to Himself and bring out their sense of what He is to their souls. The cause lay in their own will which gave Satan power. Yet the Lord does not hesitate to let the twelve know that, while one confessed for all that He was the Holy One of God, one of themselves should betray Him. What a contrast with all but Himself, unless it be with such as have learned of Him! How different those who seek to draw disciples after them! Still His words would confirm His own, even all that were real. The more free, the more are they bound. He only is worthy, He is the Holy One.

I am aware that a learned but self-confident German pronounces the “Holy One” not Johannean. But this was a rash and ignorant judgment. It is a title given to our Lord once in his first Epistle as here once in his Gospel. He is the only writer in the New Testament who ever uses it of the Lord in relation to the saints. It is therefore more characteristic of John than of any other apostle. Mark and Luke tell us of evil spirits tremblingly owning Him thus. Well might they quail before the Holy One who is destined to deal with them in judgment. How blessed to bear one saint confess for all their faith in Him in this very character, cleaving to Him and His words of eternal life with confidence! How gracious to hear another comforting the babes of God's family with the reflection that they had received unction from the Holy One and knew all things! Antichrists might go out from among those who bore Christ's name, but they were not of the family of God: if they had been, they would surely have remained as Peter did here, as Judas did not when the last crisis came. First or last they went out that they might be made manifest that none are “of us” —of the family. For God's children the Holy One is the spring of every joy and of all peace, of repulsion for unbelievers, of terror for demons. The babes rebuke the pride of mere unbelieving human intelligence which denies the Father and the Son, yea, that Jesus is the Christ, and perishes away from Him who alone has life and gives it to every believer. So it is in the Gospel as in the Epistle.

But we see here also the vast moment of walking with Him, of open identification with Him in this way before men as well as God, the danger and ruin of going away. Faith, however weighty, is not all: one has to walk with Him here below. Where else are words of eternal life? Without may be religion, philosophy, present ease, or honor and power. With Him are those who think of and act for eternity.

Yet even the apostolate, as the Lord here shows, gives no sure ground to build on—nothing but Himself. So, His most honored servant lets the Corinthians (too enamored of gifts) know, that he might preach to others, yet, if he kept not his body in subjection, himself must be a reprobate. The Son of man, in life and death appropriated by faith, alone sconces eternal life now and resurrection at the last day.

Notes on John, John 6:52-59, Notes on (6:52-59)

Such words from our Lord, His flesh given for the life of the world, were startling enough to those who heard them, but statements yet plainer follow. He insists on the necessity of drinking His blood. “The Jews therefore contended among themselves, saying, How can he give us his1 flesh to eat? Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, Unless ye have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and have drunk his blood, ye have2 no life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is truly3 food, and my blood is truly4 drink. He that eateth may flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live by reason of the Father, he also that eateth me, even he shall live by reason of me. This is the bread that came down out of heaven. Not as the father5 ate and died: he that eateth this bread shall live forever. These things said he in [the] synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.” (Vers. 52-59.)

Thus as the Lord set forth Himself incarnate under the bread that came down out of heaven to be eaten in faith, so here we have His death under the figure of the flesh6 to be eaten and the blood to be drunk. It is the life given up, the blood drunk as a separate thing, the most emphatic sign of death. Of this faith partakes and finds in it atonement and communion. Without it there is no life. It was the more important, as some professed to receive Him as the Christ who stumbled at His death. The Lord shows that such is not the faith of God's elect; for be who welcomed Him as come clown from heaven would glory in His cross; and though none could anticipate His death, all who truly believe would rejoice, once it is made known and its object and efficacy opened. Those who receive the incarnation in faith do also with like faith receive His death; and these only have eternal life. For such as accept the former after a human sort are apt to cavil at the latter. Both are objects and tests of faith; and the more decisive of the two is His death.

It may be observed that, as there are two figures in the central part of the chapter, so under the last there are two forms of expression which we distinguish: the act of having eaten His flesh and drunk His blood, as in verse 52; and the continuous eating and drinking as in verse 58. This is of moment as cutting off all occasion from such as either argue for or object against severing eternal life from its source. Scripture leaves no room for the thought. The believer has eternal life, but it is in the Son, not from Him. The believer eats His flesh and drinks His blood. He is not content that he ate so once: if thus content, can such an one be supposed to have life in him? Assuredly not. If his faith were real, he would be ever eating his flesh and drinking His blood; and he who so does has eternal life, and the Lord will raise him up at the last day. The love that came down from heaven is precious, and the heart receives Christ thus humbled thankfully, not doubting but desiring that it should be the truth. And if that love goes farther, even down to death itself, the death of the cross, the heart is enlarged and well nigh overwhelmed, but it counts nothing too great, nothing too good, for the Son of God and Son of man. It bows and blesses God for Christ's dying to accomplish redemption. For the same reason, if it has tasted that the Lord is thus gracious, it perseveres, it can never tire, it feeds on Him again and again. For it is felt that His flesh is truly meat, and His blood is truly drink. Hence it is added, “he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him.” This dwelling in Christ and Christ in him is one of the characteristic privileges of the Christian in John. It is not merely security for the Christian, but Christ the home of the soul as it is of Christ. How unspeakable the nearness! And as the life of fellowship is thus blessed, so is the effect in motive and object which accompanies it. “As the living Father sent me and I live by reason of the Father, he also that eateth me, even he shall live by reason of me.” As the Father's will and glory were ever before the Lord here below, so is He Himself before the believer. Otherwise one lives to self or the world.

It is well known that many have labored to prove that the eating theft ash and drinking the blood, on which last our Lord insists as distinct from eating the bread, means His supper. This is groundless, not merely because the Eucharist was not even instituted till long after, but far more because what is affirmed of eating the flesh and drinking the blood here is wholly irreconcilable with participation in the Lord's supper; and this both positively and negatively. For it would follow that the Lord lays down with His most impressive formula of truth, on the one hand the impossibility of life save for those who have so partaken, on the other the certainty of eternal life now and of blissful resurrection at the last day for him who habitually so partakes, yea the highest privilege of Christianity necessarily attached to the constant celebration of it: Doctrine so absolute as this must be repudiated by all Catholics or Protestants save by such as are utterly blinded by superstition. But it is not a whit too strong when applied to, as it really was spoken of, feeding by faith on Christ's death.

It is not correct to say that the same topic is continued before and after verse 51. There is eating both before and after; and it is conceded on all hands that eating the bread that came down from heaven is to be understood of faith. It is harsh in the extreme therefore to contend that eating the flesh and drinking the blood means something else than partaking by faith, that it is figurative in the one and literal in the other. It is at least consistent that, as the eating in the former part of the discourse unquestionably means communion by faith, so it should continue in the latter part. The doctrine in both parts clearly refers to what was literal—the eating of the bread miraculously provided for the multitude; but the doctrine, though vitally akin, is not the same in the two parts, for the Lord's incarnation is the topic and object of faith in the former, His death in the latter. It is the way of John to hang on outward facts or miracles some essential truth of Christ's person or operation; and to it is here. He begins with Himself as the incarnate bread, as more immediately answering to the divinely supplied loaves; He goes on, when unbelief caviled, to bring out the still more repulsive truth of Himself dying.

Thus all hangs simply yet profoundly together. Christ lets the Jews know (for the discourse is to them, not to the disciples) that He had not come to be a king after the flesh, but to be fed on in humiliation, yea also in death, tale only food of eternal life issuing in resurrection at the last day, not in temporal power and present glory as the people fondly hoped who wished to crown Him now. To bring in the Eucharist here is to import a foreign element which suits neither the scope of the chapter as a whole, nor a single section of the discourse; and it is the more absurd, when we see that another topic follows the main argument as its fitting conclusion, the ascension of the same Son of man whose incarnation and death had been previously presented as the food of faith, and this as a climax for faith when unbelief had stumbled first at His coming down from heaven and yet more at His death. As was said afterward, “We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” (John 12:34.) “Doth this offend you?” said the Lord to the disciples when they too murmured. “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” It is not an institution which the Lord hints at establishing. It is throughout Himself the object of faith as the Son of man incarnate, dead, and ascended.

I am aware that a celebrated controversialist strove to persuade people that the first part closes with verse 47. But this is to the last degree arbitrary. Verse 51 is the, true transition where the bread is declared to be Christ's flesh which He should give for the life of the world. This, in answer to their incredulous query in verse 52, the Lord expands in verses 53-58. For the bread as such is still continued in verses 48-50, which ought not to be the case if we had really passed into the second part. The eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood begins properly with verse 53. This is plain and positive in the chapter; and indeed it is bold to state differently; but, if so, eating the bread pertains as clearly and certainly to the first part, as eating the flesh and drinking the blood to the second. Indeed it is assumed from the beginning (vers. 32-85), but definitely affirmed before the end. (Vers. 48-50.) Undoubtedly the language is stronger when the necessity of faith in His, death is pressed in verse 53 and what follows. But this proves nothing more certainly than the exclusion of the Eucharist, except to such as can conceive our Lord's making His supper more momentous than faith in Himself. That He would speak more strongly of the giving up of His life than of His coming down from heaven to become man, no Christian could doubt, as well as of the graver danger to man of despising His death, and of the deeper blessing for the believer of communion with it.

Nor, let me add, is it absolutely true that in the first part the Father alone is said to give, in the second the Son of man; for in the beginning of the first part (ver. 83) the bread of God is said to be He that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world, not merely to be given. But so far as it is said, it entirely falls in with the real difference in these two parts. The Father gave the Son to be incarnate; the Bon gives Himself to die, and consequently His flesh to be eaten and His blood to be drunk. Further it is not trite that the consequences stand in contrast; for as in the first part eternal life results and resurrection at the last day, so this is carefully repeated in the Second part. (Ver. 64.) It is true that more is attached to one's eating His flesh and drinking His blood, namely, his dwelling in Christ and Christ in him (ver. 56); but this is as certainly a result of faith in Christ's death as it is nowhere in scripture attributed to the Eucharist. John 15, where Christ speaks of Himself, and 1 John 4:13-16, where the apostle speaks of God, approach nearest, neither of which alludes to the Lord's supper, but one sets forth Christ as the only source of fruit-bearing by continual dependence on Him, the other predicates God's dwelling in him and his in God of every soul that confesses Jesus to be the Son of God. These then so far confirm the conviction that the Lord is in John 6:56 describing the privilege enjoyed by him who feeds on His own death by faith. No doubt he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him; but all flows

from a new life which comes only through faith in Christ: for without faith it is impossible to please God. This therefore shows an advance, not a new and different theme, but the same Christ viewed not in His life but in His death with its deepening consequences to the believer.

Himself the eternal life which was with the Father before all worlds, He took flesh that He might not only show the Father and be the perfect pattern of obedience as man, but that He might die in grace for us and settle the question of sin forever, glorifying God absolutely and at all cost in the cross. Except the corn of wheat (as He Himself taught us) fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; dying it brings forth much fruit. His death is not here regarded as an offering to God as elsewhere often, but the appropriation of it by the believer into his own being. Hence what was comparatively vague in speaking of the bread given from above becomes most precise when He alludes to His death. For this was in the Father's purpose and the Son of man's heart, not reigning, over Israel now but giving His flesh for the, life of the world: for, Jew or Gentile, all are here seen as reprobate, lost, and dead. He only is life, yet this not in living but in dying for us, that we might have it in and with Him, the fruit of His redemption, eternal life as a present thing but only fully seen in resurrection power, already verified and seen in Him ascended up as man where He was before as God, by-and-by to be seen in us at the last day, manifested with Him in glory.

Hence the believer is here said to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and this not once only when we believed in Him and the efficacy of His death, but continuously taking in its depth and force, as death to the world and man's estate estranged as they are from God. Drinking His blood gives the more emphasis to the expression of the full reception of His dying by the believer. Had He simply left the world, as One ever a stranger to it, we had been left behind forever, objects of the judgment of God. But, dying to it and for us by the grace of God, He gave us who believe what separated us to God as well as cleansed us from our sins. Had it been simply our death, it had been our judgment and no honor to God but rather the triumph of the enemy. Blessed be God, it is of His death, and of our entrance by faith into His death in all its reality and value, that He here speaks. It is not His supper; but His supper points as the sign to Christ's death, and these verses speak of the same death. They however speak of the efficacious reality, not of its symbol, which, when confounded with the truth, becomes no better than an idolatrous vanity, and when most stript of truth even as a sign is then made openly an object of worship. So we see in Romanism, where the votaries are sentenced not to drink the blood. Christ is contained whole and entire, as they say, under the species of bread: so that all is there together, flesh and blood, soul and divinity; but if so, the blood is not shed, and the mass is to the Romanist who communicates a too true witness of the non-remission of his sins. Such is the showing of their own formal doctrine and most trusted theologians.

It may be added that, after the rich testimony to His death as the object of faith, which should follow with its consequences, the Lord seems to me in verse 57 to shut out all excuse for overlooking His intention. It was Himself, not a symbolic act which He here meant, as should be plain from the words “he that eateth me.” Further, He unites the two parts of the discourse by the following verse which closes the part about His flesh and His blood by again using the figure of “the bread that came down out of heaven,” and “he that eateth this bread shall live forever:” a declaration as true when applied to faith in Himself as it is false of the Eucharist taken in whatever sense men please.

Notes on John, John 6:41-51, Notes on (6:41-51)

THE Lord is thus contrasting His glory as Messiah on the earth with His raising up the believer at the last day. Unbelief was even then using the former to overlook the latter, but the Lord here brings what was unseen and eternal into prominence, and this, because He had to God's glory and in love taken the place of a servant to accomplish purposes yet deeper. Had He sought His own will or His own name, His reign as Messiah would have been still nearer to Him than to the Jews. But no! He sought the glory and the will of His Father, and, as He gave Himself up to suffer, so He should lose nothing but raise it up at the last day. To the individual all turns on seeing the Son and believing on Him: every one who does should have life eternal, and Christ should raise Him up at the last day. Those who look for nothing but the reign of the Messiah inevitably perish. They acknowledge not their sins, they feel not for the violated majesty and holiness of God, they believe not on the Savior, and, not believing, have not life. He that believes knows Him to be more than the Messiah, even the Son of the Father; he knows that only in Him has he life eternal, and that he will have his portion with Christ in resurrection at the last day. It is no question of man or the world as they are, but of Christ then.

This was peculiarly strange to the people of Judaea and Jerusalem, resting as they did in tradition, and so we see next, “The Jews therefore murmured about him, bemuse he laid, I am the bread that come down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then1 doth he say, I am come down out of heaven?” (Vers. 41, 42.) Thus they set the circumstances as they knew them (and they knew them ill) against the truth of Christ. It was judging according to appearances, and consequently unrighteous judgment. He was son of Mary—truly and properly man; else His work had not availed for man. He was not Son of Joseph save legally, but this He was, in order that He should be Messiah, according to the law, Had He been really son of Joseph, as of Mary, He had not been Son of God, or a divine person; but this was the foundation of all, and without it the incarnation were a falsehood, and the atonement a nullity. He was really Son, the only begotten Son of the Father, who deigned to become son of Mary, and by law consequently son of Joseph, who had espoused her. But as Son of God, the incarnate Word—a point of all moment for His Messianic title, for Messiah He could not properly have been unless He were heir of Joseph's rights—He was the bread which came down out of heaven: thus only could man feed on Him by faith and be blessed forever.

“Jesus2 therefore3: answered and said to them, Murmur not among yourselves. No one can come unto me except the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every one that heard from the Father and learned, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, except he who is of God, he hath seen the Father.” (Vers. 43, 44.) Unbelief can only destroy and trouble; it cannot give life or comfort. Man under Satan is the source of unbelief, which over leads from Christ, not to Him. But as the Father sent Christ, so He draws the believer to Christ, who raises him up in the last day. It is not man's worth or work or will therefore but the Father's grace, by which one comes to Christ. The whole work, in short, is of sovereign mercy, and so the prophets have written. All true teaching comes from God, and all are taught of God who never forgets what is due to Christ. “Every one that heard from the Father and learned,” comes to Christ. Not that the Father has been seen by man. He is known in the Son. “He who is of God, he hath seen the Father;” it is Christ only who has.

The Lord then solemnly reiterates, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth [on me§] hath life eternal. I am the bread of life.” (Vers. 47, 48.) In truth, as the promised one, He was always the object of faith, even as being the eternal Son He had ever quickened the believer. But now He was the Word made flesh; He was the Son of God, and this as man in the world, and, as rejected by Israel, He announces that He is the giver of eternal life. This is the grand point—not the kingdom merely by-and-by, but life eternal now in the Son and inseparable from Him, but in Him now a man,

Hence the Lord says, following this up, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died. This is the bread that cometh down out of heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If one shall have eaten of this4 bread, he shall live forever. Yea, and the bread that I will give is my flesh5 for the life of the world.” (Vers. 48-51.) Thus, if the Lord was typified by the manna, He went incomparably beyond its virtue. The fathers of the Jews ate the manna in the wilderness; but it could not ward off death, for they died like others. Christ is the bread that came down out of heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die. Eternal life is in the Son of God, and none the less because He was then the Son of man. Rather was the grace of God more manifest in Him thus, for, if He were a man, was it not for men to eat thereof and not die? He was the living bread that came down out of heaven. He who ate of this bread should live forever; but this, we shall see, involves another truth besides the incarnation, even His death in atonement; for the bread that He would give is His flesh for the life of the world. Here He hints at what He would open out somewhat farther—His atoning death. When His life is given, it is not for the life of Israel only but of the world. The grace of God which was about to descend so low could not be circumscribed to the Jews alone. “'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” On this however He enlarges more fully afterward. Did they strive against His words in unbelief? He puts forward the truth so as still more to offend man's pride and opposition to God, but to feed and strengthen faith in His elect.

Notes on John, John 6:28-40, Notes on (6:28-40)

The crowd was not so ignorant as not to know that the Lord claimed no insignificant place when He spoke of Himself as the Son of man. The Psalms and the prophets had spoken of such an One, and of His wide and exalted glory. Besides, apart and different from the Old Testament testimony, He had just told them that the Son of man is the giver of the food that abides unto eternal life, and that the Father, even God, sealed Him. “They said therefore to him, what should we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he sent.” (vers. 28, 29.) Thus they manifest afresh the inveterate assumption of men in every state, and age, and country, that man as he is is capable of working the works of God. They ignore their own sin, His holiness and majesty. It was the way of Cain; and professing Christendom is as infected with it as Judaism or heathenism. It is the universal lie of man, till the Holy Spirit brings him to repentance; then in the new life he feels and judges the old, and finds, as we see in Rom. 7, that it is a question not of works, but of what he is, and that there is no help for him but deliverance from all, and that in Christ by faith.

So the Lord here answers that the work of God is that they should believe on Him whom He sent. Similarly the apostle reasons in Rom. 4, that if Abraham were justified by works, he would have had matter for boast, but not before God, from whom it would detract. Scripture guards against any such misunderstanding, and says plainly that he believed God, which was reckoned to him as righteousness. The principle is thus evident: to him that works the reward is reckoned as not of grace, but of debt; while to him that does not work but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. Man may be fully and securely blest, but it is only of grace, and so by faith, which gives the glory to God, as itself His gift. Faith is thus the work of God, and excludes man's working, not as its effect (for it produces works, and good works abundantly), but as antecedent to it or co-ordinate with it, and justly so unless it would suit God to be a partner with man, and this the believer would he the first to eschew. The sent One of the Father is the object of faith.

It was at once felt that this was to claim more and more on God's part, although He refused to be made a king by man. “They said therefore to him, what sign doest thou that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, according as it is written, Bread out of heaven he gave them to eat. Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, not Moses hath given you the bread out of heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is he that descendeth out of heaven, and giveth life to the world.” (Vers. 30-33.) Such is unbelief, ever dissatisfied with the admirably suited and magnificent signs of God, refusing perhaps to ask a sign when God offers, despising those He does give. They did not on this occasion say outright what they meant, but it seems to have been some such thought as this “You ask us to believe; yet, after all, what was the miracle of the loaves to that of the manna? Give us food from heaven, as Moses did, for forty years; and then it will be time enough to speak of believing. Do a work to match his, if you cannot surpass it.” The Lord answers that it was not Moses that had given the bread out of heaven, but His Father was giving them the true bread out of heaven. The bread of God is Jesus Himself, and these two great characteristics are His alone of all men; He comes down out of heaven, and He gives life to the world. He is a divine person, yet a man here below, the bread of God for every one that needs Him. It is no mere question of Israel in the desert He gives life to the world.

“They said therefore to him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall in nowise hunger, and he that believeth on me shall in nowise ever thirst. But I said to you, that ye have both seen me, and do not believe.” (Ver. 34-36.) This is their last effort to get what they sought—bread for this world, bread evermore, if not through them in any way, at least from Him. But unbelief is every way wrong. It is life that God is giving, and nothing less meets the true need of man; and this life is in Christ, not from Him. Apart from Him, given out of Him, and thus, so as to be independent of Him, it exists not. In Him was life; in Him only is life found. He is the bread of life. He is not here viewed as the Son of God, quickening whom He will, even as the Father. Here He is the Son of man sealed, and the object of faith. “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall in nowise hunger, and he that believeth on me shall in nowise ever thirst.” Alas the crowd that saw Him had no faith in Him. Their privilege in seeing Him but added to their guilty unbelief; and, I must add, that now that the atoning work is done, and He is dead, risen, and glorified, and preached among Gentiles, it is a still greater sin where He is not believed on in the world. Yet men no more believe in Him than those who then followed Him, nor are their motives purer who profess and preach Him than theirs who would have crowned Him in Galilee.

The Lord proceeds to explain what was behind and above this in the words that follow. “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out. For I am descended from heaven not to do my will, but the will of him that sent me.” (Vers. 37, 88.) This then is the key, and it is twofold; and only in this largeness do we know the truth. If either side be seen to the exclusion of the other, the teaching is imperfect, and the consequences are apt to be error on this hand or on that. The reprobationist presses the first clause; the Arminian the second. Neither gives its due weight to the clause they respectively omit. The theologian who sees only the divine decrees pays little heed to the encouragement given by the Lord to the individual that comes unto Him. The advocate of what he calls free-will seeks to neutralize, if he does not absolutely ignore, the declaration that all the Father gives to Christ shall come unto Him; and no wonder, for it is an assertion of His sovereignty, which is inexplicable on his, own theory. But the hard lines of reprobationism can as little admit cordially the Lord's assurance of a welcome to him that comes unto Him. The purpose of the Father is as sure as the Son's reception of all that come to Him. The unbelief of Israel, favored as they were, did not enfeeble the counsels of the Father: and the Son would not refuse the vilest or most hostile that came to Him. The reason given is most touching. He was thoroughly the servant of God in this. Come to Him who might, He had come down from heaven to save, not to do His own will. It was for the Father to choose and give. He had descended to save, and would in nowise cast out even the man who had reviled Himself most. He was the Father's servant in salvation as in all else.

This is carried out still more fully in verses 39, 40, where the Lord says, “And this is the will of him who sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Thus, on the one hand, He who sent Christ, and gave Him in His sovereign grace, fails in nothing of His will, for Christ loses nothing of it; on the other hand, Christ abides the test for every soul of man who receives life eternal in Min by faith alone; while in both cases, whether for the whole, or for each individual, Christ raises up when man's day is ended forever. All hope of present deliverance for men in the flesh, or dead, as they were under the Messiah, as they fondly dreamed, was vain. The Father's will, whether for His people as a whole, or individually, shall stand: the whole that He has given to the Son shall be kept, and every believer in Him has life everlasting, as Christ's raising will prove for both when the last day comes.

Notes on John, John 6:16-29, Notes on (6:16-29)

BUT the Lord vouchsafes another sign to the very people who soon after ask for a sign that they might see and believe. (Ver. 30.) So blind is man even when grace is multiplying these helps for those who discern it! Submission to God was the true want, not more signs.

“But when evening was come, his disciples went down to the sea, and, having come on board ship,1 were crossing the sea to Capernaum. And darkness had already come on, and Jesus had not yet2 come to them, and the sea was rough as a strong wind was blowing. Having rowed then about twenty-five or thirty stadia they see Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the ship, and they were affrighted. But he saith to them, It is I: be not afraid. They were willing therefore to receive him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they were going.” (Ver. 16-21.)

How striking the contrast with another storm on the same lake where the waves beat into the ship so that it was now full, and He was on board but asleep, and the disciples awoke Him with the selfish and unbelieving cry, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, and both obeyed the Creator of all, whom man alone despised because His love made Him the Servant of all to God's glory.

Here it is the picture of the Lord's people while Himself is on high, exposed to the storms which the enemy knows how to excite, and after much toil making little progress. So it will be also for those who follow us at the end of the age. They will experience untold trials of the sharpest kind with scanty comfort or even intelligence, save as compared with “the wicked” who shall not understand, least of all (we may perhaps add) in that day. Darkness will have already set in; but in the midst of their increasing troubles Jesus will appear, though they will not even then be delivered from their fears, for the glorious light will rather augment them, till they hear His voice and know that He is indeed their Savior, long absent, now come back. Received into the ship He causes it to reach immediately the desired haven. So it will be with the righteous remnant by-and-by. Whether for them or for ourselves all turns on Christ; and this it is the peculiar office of our Gospel to illustrate.

Matthew, who alone specifically names the church as taking the place now of the disowned people after the rejection of the Messiah, alone shows us Peter quitting the ship to walk over the water towards Jesus, to walk where nothing but faith could sustain, and where therefore we see him soon sinking through unbelief, as the church has done still more deplorably: but the Lord, faithful in His care, keeps spite of all. It is only when the ship is entered (the Jewish position properly) that the wind ceases, and He is welcomed with all His beneficent power in the land whence once they had besought Him to depart out of their borders. (Matt. 14)

Our evangelist however does not trace these earthly blessings which await “that day,” but turns to the circumstances and questions which the Lord makes the occasion of the wonderful discourse that follows. He adheres to his task of unfolding the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

“On the morrow the crowd that was standing on the other side of the sea having seen that there was no other boat but one,3 and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the ship,4 but that his disciples went off alone (yet5 other boats6 came from Tiberias near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks); when the crowd then saw that Jesus was not there nor his disciples, they went themselves on board the ships and came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus; and having found him on the other side of the sea they said to him, Rabbi, when cannot thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say to you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled. Work not for the food that perisheth but for the food7 that abideth unto life eternal which the Son of man shall give8 you; for him the Father sealed—God. They said therefore to him, What must we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he sent.” (Ver. 22-29.)

The particulars related serve to show how the crowd was struck by the mysterious disappearance of the Lord. They knew that He had not accompanied the disciples in their ship, and that there was no other in which He could have crossed the lake when He must have left the

mountain. They put forward their curiosity as to His, mode of passage as a cover for their desire to profit, as they had done already by His miraculous supply of their wants. The Lord in reply strips them of their disguise and confronts them with their selfishness. It was this which prompted their search after Him, not their interest in the signs which He had just wrought. He prefaces their exposure with the formula of unusual solemnity which He reserved for the enunciation of great truths. “Rabbi,” (said they), “Whence earnest thou hither?” They had sought after Jesus; they had taken trouble to find Him; when found, they address Him with honor; but they manifest by their inquiry that it was not Himself nor yet the signs which He had wrought which attracted them. God was not in their thoughts, but curiosity about the time and mode of His coming, and at the bottom a desire after present ease, through Him. Was the Son of God here to gratify all this?

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me not because ye saw the signs but because; ye ate and were filled.” Here the Lord searches those who had been in quest of Him and searches them throughly, for a single act that looks fair may prove a character hollow and base. And He looked on and listened and did not trust Himself to them because He knew all men, and needed none to testify of man, for Himself knew what was in man. To make Him a king in order to enjoy His promised earthly favors was nothing in His eyes, nay, called for His most grave detection of them to themselves. It was no question of the Messiah for Israel now, but of a Savior for sinners. He was rejected as the Christ by those who ought most to have hailed Him with joy, but did not because His coming as He did made nothing of them and their religiousness, that is, of all they valued: and if this poor hungry crowd seemed to feel quite differently and wished to give Him the honor that was due, it was needful to demonstrate that they were not a whit better and sought their own things, not. God's glory in Him. He was really come, into a world of death over which judgment hung, that the poorest of sinners might feed on Him and live forever: what did they think of or care for this? They thought only of themselves in their way, just as their rulers and teachers in theirs. God was in none of their thoughts. High or low, they had no sense of their sins or ruin, no knowledge of God or His grace. A Messiah for temporal good was what they wanted, not a Jesus to save His people from their sins. But the Messiah as a divine person could not but lay bare their alienation and distance from God and thus became increasingly odious till their hatred ended in His cross, which made plain the deep purpose of grace in sending Him into the world, not for Israel only, but now rejected by them that we might live by Him and He be a propitiation for our sins,

Hence He adds, “Work not for the food that perisheth, but for the food that abideth unto life eternal, which the Son of man shall give you; for him the Father sealed—God.” (Ver. 27.) It is no question of Messianic honor or blessing but of what the Son of man has to give; and as He gives the food that abides to life eternal, so man needs no less than this. It is as such that God the Father sealed Him. Toil will not suffice, nor any seeming sincerity. The humbled Messiah, the Son of man, is no less God's object in sealing with the Holy Ghost than He is the giver of the only food that abides to life everlasting; and nothing less can supply the need of lost man, be he Jew or Gentile.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Hence they misapply the Lord's exhortation “Work not for the food that perisheth but for the food that abideth unto life eternal” and infer their own capacity to do something acceptable to God; “They said therefore to him, What must we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he sent.” (Vers. 28, 29.) Jesus is the object of faith. To believe on Him is the only work for a sinful man, if it is to be called a work. It is the work of God, for man trusts it not and refuses to confide in Him for eternal life. He would rather trust to his own wretched performance, or his own miserable experience—anything rather than to Jesus only. But God will not allow men to mix up self with Jesus, whether it be a fancied good self or a confessedly evil self. It is the Son of man whom the Father sealed, and Him only can He accept as the ground of the sinner's approach to God, Him only does He commend as the food that abides to life eternal. For this He sent Him, not for man to make Him a king over a people with their sins unremoved, but to be the true passover, and the only food that He warrants. Faith however is the only way in which one can feed on Him; not of works, else the must be by the law and thus be for Jews only. On the contrary; it is by faith that it might be according to grace, and thus be open to Gentile as freely as to Jew. Truly it is not the way of man but the work of God that we believe on Him whom He sent.

Notes on John, John 6:1-15, Notes on (6:1-15)

Our Gospel now gives us the great miracle, or sign rather, common to all the four; and this, as ever here, introductorily to the discourse that follows—Christ, incarnate and in death, the food of eternal life for those who believe on His name. Here it is the Son of man humbled and ascended, as in chapter v. the Son of God quickening those that hear, and by-and-by as Son of man about to judge those that believe not.

“After these things Jesus went away beyond the sea of Galilee, of Tiberias; and a great crowd followed him because they saw the1 signs which he wrought on the sick. But Jesus went up into the mountain, and there sat with his disciples; and the passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. Jesus then lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great crowd cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy loaves that these may eat? But this he said, trying him, for he knew what he was about to do. Philip answered him, Loaves for two hundred pence are not sufficient for them, that each of them2 may have some little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith to him, There is a little buy here that hath five barley-loaves and two fishes; but these, what are they for so many?” (Ver. 1-9.)

The scene is wholly changed from Jerusalem. We see the Lord in Galilee, and in that part of the lake called from the city of Tiberias, as well as from the province bordering on its western side. A great crowd follows Him because of the signs He wrought on the sick. The Lord withdraws to the high land, where He sits with His disciples, the passover being then at hand. None of the motives mentioned in the synoptic accounts do we find here: neither the beheading of John Baptist, nor the apostles' return from their mission, nor the need of rest after toils in teaching or other work. Jesus fills the picture: all is in His hand. It is He who takes the initiative; not that the disciples may not have previously been perplexed, nor as if John did not know this as well as Matthew and the rest, but because it pleased the Holy Spirit to give us Christ Himself alone master of the situation, as always in his Gospel. The nearness of the passover is noted, as repeatedly in this Gospel. Here too there was the reason first that the discourse that follows, as well as the sign wrought, is grounded on eating and drinking as the token of communion.

“Jesus then lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great crowd cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy loaves that these may eat?” The evangelist however is careful of His glory and loses no time in letting us know that it was out of no uncertainty in His own mind, but in order to test Philip: He knew what He was going to do. Nevertheless He awaits the despairing words of Philip's fellow-townsman, Andrew, and would teach all now what His gracious power loves to do with the little and despised, were it for the greatest need. Simon Peter's brother,

who was even before his brother in seeing the Messiah, could think of a little boy with five barley-loaves and two fishes, not of Jesus. And where was Peter? where John, the disciple that He loved? Nowhere in faith. Truly flesh cannot glory in His presence.

Let us turn to the One we may and ought to glory in, honoring the Father in honoring Him. “Jesus said, Make the [ἀνθρώπους] people sit [or, lie] down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men [ἄνδρες] then sat down in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves and, having given thanks,3 distributed4 to those that were sat down, and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. But when they were filled, he saith to his disciples, Gather the fragments that are over, that nothing be lost. They gathered [them] then, and filled twelve baskets with fragments of the five barley-loaves which were over to those that had eaten. The people [ἀνθρώπους] then, having seen the sign which Jesus5 did, said, This is truly the prophet that is coming into the world. Jesus then, knowing that they would come and seize him that they might make [him] king, withdrew to the mountain himself alone.” (Ver. 10-16.)

I am afraid that, poor as was the intelligence of the Galilean crowd, they understood. the import of this great sign better than the Christendom of the last seventeen hundred years. They were no doubt dull enough as to their deepest need, and they had no appreciation of the Savior's grace in humiliation and redemption, afterward fully set forth by Him in the discourse that ensues; but they had some thoughts not wholly untrue, though human and short enough, of the kingdom God is going to set up here below. Now and for many centuries theology indulges in a sort of mystic dream that the gospel or church is the kingdom of Christ, His kingdom of grace to be at the end His kingdom of glory. But they have no thought of His coming in the kingdom He will have received, that not Israel only but all people, nations, and languages should serve Him, and this too an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. A two-fold error, which lets slip the oneness of the body of Christ, the church, with its glorified Head on high, and denies the mercy and faithfulness of God to Israel who are the destined center of Jehovah's earthly plans for the kingdom, when we, changed into the likeness of His glory, shall reign together with Christ.

The crowd were struck with the fulfillment of this fresh and crowning sign. They had not abandoned as yet their hopes. They knew that Jehovah has chosen Zion; that He has desired it for His habitation; that He will abundantly bless her provision and satisfy her poor with bread. (Psa. 132) Was not He who now displayed this power of Jehovah the promised son of David whom Jehovah will set on His throne? Such was their conclusion. “This is truly the prophet that is coming into the world.” They thus bound up the law, Psalms, and prophets in their testimony to the Messiah; and so far they were quite right. But not so in their desire, which the Lord knew, to force Him to be king. For this would be in no way the kingdom of God but of man, nor of heaven but of earth. Not so: as He Himself taught afterward, He was to go into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return. Not till then shall the kingdom of God appear.

Till then it is a question for us of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the kingdom is not in word but in power, and it is known to faith, not displayed yet. But it will not be always hidden as now nor the domain of purely spiritual power. Christ will come in His kingdom and reign till He has put all enemies under His feet, after asking from Jehovah, who will give Him, the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. It will be no question then as now of patiently working by the gospel, but of breaking the nations with a rod of iron and of dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Unbelief either antedates the kingdom, striving to set it up now by man's will, or abandons it for the delusion of human progress without a thought of God's purpose to establish it by Christ the second Man when the first is judged. Faith patiently waits for it meanwhile. So the Lord declined then and went up on high—this time Himself alone. It was the figure of what is actually true. Owned as Prophet, He refuses to be man's king, and goes above to exercise His intercession, as He is now doing, the great Priest in the presence of God.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Lord at Bethesda (5:1-16)

John 5

Throughout this Gospel, and especially these early chapters the Lord is shown eclipsing and superseding all the old objects of honor and trust. The Pool of Bethesda bore witness even then to Jehovah as healing Israel (Ex. 15). Not merely was it occasional only, but incomplete and conditional; like the law, it required strength enough to avail oneself of it. He that was quite powerless lay there in vain. Another stepped in before he could be put into the water when troubled by the angel. To will was present with him, but not to do. " O wretched man that I am! " was all he could feel. He needed the only One Who could speak the effectual word, " Arise, take up thy couch, and walk "; then he did so immediately, sabbath as it was. What was an angel's act in comparison?

Such a sight aroused Jewish enmity; for with seared conscience they exaggerated and idolized every form. They disliked the healing power of the True God on a sabbath. The man did not profit by the warning given him of worse than sickness, but learning who it was that healed him, went and told it to the Jews, who persecuted Jesus. His answer was, " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." How overwhelming for their evil and pride! how glorifying to God l how full of blessing to every man who truly owns his sin and misery!

It is the revelation of the Father and the Son, Who works as man in the midst of men. This is the truth, yea grace and truth come through Jesus Christ. Let the Jews vainly boast of the law given by Moses, which they kept not, it could not but be a ministration of death and condemnation. But the veil of unbelief was lying on their heart; and they neither judged themselves nor believed on Him Who did indeed say that God was His own Father, making Himself equal with God. And therefore those blindly religious yet wicked men sought the more to kill Him.

O my reader, flatter not yourself. You were not so tried. You are no less guilty and lost. You may pay homage with the lip; but are you in heart and life slighting Him Who came and died for you? Are you not neglecting so great salvation? Do you not annul the gospel, as if God's proclamation were but a fair and kindly form, and not a message of life and peace to the believer? Does not God pronounce His wrath to abide on him who is not subject to the Son? If you are believing on Him, God's word is that you have life eternal in His Son.

So the Lord then declared that the Son loyally takes as man the place of entire subjection, and does nothing of Himself, save what He saw the Father doing. He emptied Himself of glory, taking the form of a bondman; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death of a cross. From what a height, and to what a depth, that God might be perfectly and at all cost glorified even about sin and ruin I And so He is. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him.

Here the Lord opens the great truth, starting from the sign on the sick man, and going on to His giving life eternal to those who believe, and His executing judgment on those who, not believing, do evil. Thus it is that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. The Son quickens whom He will, in communion with the Father who raises the dead and quickens. But He alone of Godhead became man, and suffered man's contempt and hatred even to the Cross. He therefore has all judgment given to Him, for in that full and final sense He alone judges. Bodily healing was but a sign. The real question is between life eternal and future judgment.

Hence we have the solemnly blessed message: " Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath life eternal and cometh not into judgment, but hath (or, is) passed out of death into life " (ver. 24). All turns on hearing Christ's word and believing Him that sent the Savior Son of God. If one hear and believe, he has life eternal, and does not come into judgment which is no less everlasting, but has passed out of death as it was into life as now given in Him. Life eternal is in contrast with judgment which awaits those who here below only dishonored the Son, but must honor Him to their own perdition in that judgment.

Next is shown on one side man's real state, not infirm only but " dead " before God; and even now the voice of His Son for men that have heard to live. " Verily, verily, I say to you, An hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard shall live " (ver. 25). For the Son was come, and as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself. Being man, He receives all from the Father, jealous to honor Him alone, as man's only right place. Thus He quickens now, as at the end He will execute judgment, according to the authority given Him, because He is Son of man.

None should wonder at this. An hour cometh which will demonstrate both His giving life as Son of God, and His executing judgment as Son of man. It is an hour, " when all that are in the tombs [distinguishing these from the spiritually dead of ver. 25] shall hear his voice, and shall go forth: they that wrought the good things unto a resurrection of life; and they that committed the worthless unto a resurrection of judgment " (vers. 28, 29). There are thus two resurrections of opposed character (not a general one as the unbelief of Christendom feigns). They answer to life and good fruit now had by faith in God's Son, and to the unbelief with its unremoved death and corrupt ways. The Revelation which the Lord gave John adds the fresh light of the kingdom over the earth and all things, in which the changed saints reign with Him for a thousand years, and a little more, before the judgment of the wicked dead and their consignment to the lake of fire. It is a book of times and seasons, which the Gospel of John is not: but both thoroughly agree as to a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of judgment.

O my reader, can any words of man add to the Lord's solemn call? Hear the voice of God's Son now, that you may have life in Him and may not come into that judgment which is woe forever.

Notes on John, John 5:39-47, Notes on (5:39-47)

THE fourth and crowning witness is that of the scriptures. “Search” [or “ye search"], “the scriptures, for ye think that ye have in them eternal life, and it is they that testify of me. And ye are not willing to come unto me that ye may have life.” (Vers. 39, 40.) The practical difference between the indicative and the imperative is not great, because the context decides that it is an appeal, as it has been well remarked, rather than a command. They were not so infatuated as to suppose that they had eternal life in themselves; they looked for it in the scriptures, and so were in the habit of searching them, as they do, more or less, to this day. But though the scriptures testify about the Lord Jesus, they have no willingness to come unto Him that they may have the life He alone can give. For the scriptures cannot give life apart from Him, nor will the Father; yet are the scriptures the standing witness of Christ, continually holding Him forth as the revealed resource for man, and triumph for God, and this in goodness, not merely in judgment, to the utter confusion of the enemy and of all who take their part with him against God. The presence of Christ put to the test, not merely man in his misery and universal departure from God, but those who were intrusted with those, oracles of God; and the Savior Son despised by the Jews has but to pronounce the sentence on them thus willfully slighting their own best witnesses to Him “Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.”

Was it, then, that the Lord Jesus sought present honor? His whole life, from His birth to His death, declared the contrary with a plainness which none could mistake. How was it with His adversaries? “Glory from men I do not receive; but I know you that ye have not the love of God in yourselves. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not if another come in his name, him ye will receive.” (Vers. 41-43.) “Glory from men” is the moving spring of the world: Jesus not only sought it not, but did not receive it. He always did the things that pleased the Father, who gave Him commandment what He should say, and what He should speak. He kept His Father's commandments, and abode in His love. In no sense had the Jews the love of God in them: ambitious of human glory, and self-complacent, their soul abhorred Jesus, as His soul was straitened for them. His coming had put them to a fresh and far fuller test. He had brought God too close to them, yea, the Father; but they knew neither Christ nor the Father: if they had known the one, they should have known the other.

But there should be another test yet: not His coming in the Father's name with the simple aim of doing His will and glorifying Him, but another to come in his own name. This would suit the Jew-man. Self- exaltation is his bane, and Satan's bait, and therein utter irremediable ruin under divine judgment. It is the man of sin in contrast with the Son of God, the man of obedience and righteousness, and, according as we have heard that Antichrist comes, even now there have come many antichrists. But the presence of the Antichrist will be according to the working of Satan, in all power, and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in every deceit of unrighteousness, to those that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. They would not have the true God and eternal life in the Son become man and suffering in love for man; they will receive Satan's man when he sets up to be God. This is the great lie of the end, and they will be lost in it who rejected the truth in Christ.

Nor is there anything strange in such a close for those who know the ways of man from the beginning. “How can ye believe who receive glory one of another, and seek not the glory which [is] from the only God?” (Ver. 44.) Such is the world, the scene where man walks in a vain show, blessing his soul while he lives, and praised by his fellows when he did well to himself; but such shall never see light. This their way is their folly, let posterity ever so much delight in their mouth. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. If the “children” are told to keep themselves from idols, one cannot wonder that the idolatry of man—of self—should be the death of faith. Any object is welcome rather than the true and only God, who shall render to each according to his works; to those who in patience of good work seek for glory, honor, and incorruption, life eternal; but to those that are contentious, and are disobedient to the truth, and obey unrighteousness, [there shall be] wrath and indignation, tribulation and distress.

Does the Lord, then, take the place of accusing the Jews? Not so: they boasted of Moses, but will find in him testimony fatal to themselves. “Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, Moses, on whom ye trust; for if ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for be wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (Vers. 45-47.) Never was such honor put on the written word. Jesus had, if any one, God's word abiding in Him. Nobody ever had the Father's words and His word as He; no one gave them out invariably, and at all times, as He; yet does He set the writings of the Bible above His own sayings, as a testimony to Jewish conscience. It was no question of superior claim in themselves, or in the character of truth conveyed, for none of old could compare with the words of Christ. The Father on the holy mount had Himself answered the foolish words of Peter, who would have put Moses, Elias, and the Lord in three tabernacles, and co-ordinate glory! Not so. “This is my beloved Son: hear ye Him.” The lawgiver, the prophet, must bow to Jesus. They had their place as servants: He is Son and Lord of all. They retire, leaving Him the one object of the Father's good pleasure, and of our communion with the Father through hearing the Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Nevertheless it is Himself who here gives to the writings of Moses a place in testimony beyond His own words, not because the servant approached the Master, or the decalogue the sermon on the mount, but because the scripture, as such, has a character of permanence in testimony which can attach only to the written word. And Moses wrote of Christ, necessarily therefore by divine power, as a prophet of “the prophet which should come into the world,” of the Prophet incomparably, more than prophet, the Son of God, who quickens every believer, and shall judge every despiser, raising from the grave these for a resurrection of judgment, as those for one of life. Had the Jews then believed Moses, they would have believed Christ: words which teach us that faith is no such otiose exercise as some would make it; for the Jews in no way questioned but received his writings as divine. But not to doubt is far from believing; and they saw not in any of his books the great object of testimony in all, Jesus the Messiah, a man, yet far more than man, a divine Savior of and sacrifice for sinners, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. If they believed Moses, they would have believed Him, for he wrote of Him. But if they believed not his writings, the Savior did not expect them to believe His own words. What an estimate of the authority of those very scriptures which self-sufficient men have assailed as untrustworthy! They dare to tell us that they are neither Mosaic in origin, nor Messianic in testimony, but a mass of legends which do not even cohere in their poor and human reports of early days. On the other hand the Judge of quick and dead declares that the scriptures testify of Him, and that Moses wrote of Him, setting the written word, in point of authority, above even His own. As the Savior and rationalism are thus in direct antagonism, the Christian has no hesitation which to receive and which to reject, for one cannot serve both masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. So it is, and must be, and ought to be; for Christ and rationalism are irreconcilable. Those who pretend to serve both have no principle as to either, and are the most corrupting dogmatically of all men. They not only do not possess the truth, but they make the love of it impossible, enemies alike of God and man.

Notes on John, John 5:30-38, Notes on (5:30-38)

Nothing can be more definite than the Son's claim of the power most characteristic of God the Father quickening, and raising the dead; nothing more decided than the Father's resolve to maintain the honor of His incarnate Son, for every title and form of judging is committed to the Son of man, and with the express purpose, which shall surely stand, that all are to honor the Son as they honor the Father.

The Lord still speaks as Son, but as man on earth, and in verse 30 binds together what lie had already unfolded with the various witnesses to His glory in what follows. He was equal to the task of judging, though the lowliest of men; and this just because He was in none of His ways or thoughts independent of the Father. It is the perfection of man: He alone was it, who counted it no object of robbery to be on equality with God. But being God He had become man, for God's glory; and so He says, “I cannot do anything of myself; as I hear I judge, and my judgment is righteous, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him1 that sent me.” (Ver. 30.) He saw, He heard, as the perfectly dependent and obedient man, though none could have taken in such a range unless a divine person. He had a will, but it was used in entire subjection to the Father. He saw whatever the Father does to do the same likewise; He heard with an ear opened and wakened morning by morning to hear as the learned, and so He judged; and His judgment was just. There was nothing to distract or mislead, though there was one who sought it with all subtlety. But he was foiled and failed utterly, for here he was assailing not the first man but the Second who had come to do the will of God. Such a purpose of heart maintains in singleness of eye and unswerving fidelity. Thus did the sent One ever walk. Who so competent and suited to judge, and this as man, mankind?

Next we are introduced to the witnesses who testify to Him. “If I bear witness about myself, my witness is not true. It is another that beareth witness about me, and I know2 that the witness which he beareth about me is true. Ye have sent unto John, and he hath borne witness to the truth. But I do not receive witness from man, but these things I say that ye may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light.” (Ver. 31-35.)

John the Baptist then is the first witness, whom the Lord summons in the ready and everlasting love which made nothing of His own testimony, if by any means they might be convinced and believe the truth. For this had He been born, and for this come into the world. He lived on account of the Father, who testified about Him. Never was His an interested or an isolated testimony, but He would waive it and points to His fore-runner. For this purpose had John been raised up beyond denial, and no testimony from among men could be conceived more unimpeachable. His birth, his life, his preaching, his death, all bore the stamp of truthfulness; and never had one pointed to another as he to the Lord Jesus. The Jews too had sought solemnly, and lie had not flinched. Who else had ever so testified before and after the coming of the object of testimony? He was not the Christ, as he confessed and denied not, when men were ready to give him the glory due to the

Master. Nor on the other did Christ seek testimony from man; yet to what did He not stoop that souls might be saved? If a man however was to be used at all, none greater than John had arisen among those born of women, as the Lord says. The burning and shining lamp had been a source of joy for a while, but men are inconstant, and the testimony of him who was truly “a voice in the wilderness,” was refused.

The second and greater witness we see in the works of Christ. “But I have the witness greater than of John; for the works which the Father hath given me that I should complete them, the works themselves which I do bear witness about me that the Father hath sent me.” (Ver. 30.) In every way Christ's works testify not merely of so much the power displayed, as their character. What grace and truth shine through them as in Him!

The third witness is the Father's voice. “And the Father who sent me, himself3 hath borne witness about me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape: and his word ye have not abiding in you, because him whom he sent ye do not believe.” (Vers. 87, 88.) This attestation to the relation and glory of the Son rises still higher—we might have thought to the highest, had not our Lord added another and crowning testimony in that which degenerate Christendom is now learning to abandon with contempt to its own ruin and speedy judgment.

Notes on John, John 5:25-29, Notes on (5:25-29)

The Lord has thus answered the question which His solemn words would raise in every soul that fears God. He had shown it to be no question of law or of ordinance, but of hearing His word and believing the Father that sent Him. Such only have eternal life; but he who so believes has it now. How blessed and secure his portion in Christ!

Next He turns to the more general state of things. “Verily, verily, I say to you, An hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that have heard shall live.” (Ver. 25.) It is indeed the sad truth: men in all the activities of the world are the dead. Nor is it a question of a stricter morality or of a holier religion: Either one or other or both they may acquire and yet want life. Dogma cannot give it any more than practice. It flows from the Son of God who quickens whom He will, yet is it by faith, and so through the word which the Spirit applies livingly.

Here it is that Evangelicalism is feeble and Sacramentalism is false. If the latter superstitiously gives to a creature ordinance the honor which belongs to a divine person alone, the former ignores and lowers the truth by talking of a converted character and of devoting to God what was once abandoned to self and sin; but neither has any adequate estimate of the total ruin of man, nor consequently of the absolute need and real power of divine grace. “The dead” are men universally now till born of God. It is no picture of the future resurrection, whether of just or unjust, which follows in verses 28, 29, but of the present hour, as the Lord Himself intimates; for it now is, “when the dead shall bear the voice of the Son of God.” His voice goes forth “to every creature” in the gospel; “and those that have heard shall live.” Such are the means and condition of life. It is of faith that it might be by grace. Man's utter powerlessness is as manifest and certain as His glorious energy. Those that have heard shall live. Alas! the mass of mankind have ears but they hear not, even as to the Jews, when they saw Him, there was no beauty that they should desire Him. Whether it be superstitious or skeptical man, he submits not to the sentence of God on his own estate, nor consequently feels the need of sovereign mercy in Christ, who alone can give the life he wants for God now or through eternity. But whatever the mercy of God, He will have His Son honored, and this now by hearing His word and believing the testimony of Him who sent Him. This tests man thoroughly, which the law only did partially. For never does the sinner trust God for eternal life till grace makes him see his sins and distrust himself utterly. Then how glad is he to learn that the goodness of God gives eternal life in Christ and has sent Him that he might know it How willingly he owns himself one of “the dead,” which no man does really till he lives in the new life which is in Christ! How heartily he bows to the Son of God and blesses the God who sent Him in love and compassion, willing not the death of sinner, but rather that be might have life through His name!

But the same unbelief, which of old in the Jew violated the law and lusted after idols, now in the Gentile trusts an ordinance for it, to the exaltation of those what arrogate to themselves its valid and exclusive administration, or openly distrust God and alight His Son, confiding in themselves without Him. They are the religiously or the profanely infidel. They are “the dead” and have never heard the voice of the Son of God, but only of their priests or of their philosophers. Whatever their boastings, they shall not live, for they have not Christ, but only ideas, imaginative or rational, not the truth which is inseparable from Christ received by faith to the glory of God, and the total annihilation of all human pretensions.

It is all-important to see that all truth centers in the person of Christ, who, being God from everlasting to everlasting, deigned to become man, without the least forfeiture of divine glory, yet loyally accepting the position proper to humanity. Hence the language of the Lord in what follows, the misapprehension of which has led not a few theologians of eminence to the brink, if not into the pit, of fundamental heterodoxy. “For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment [also], because he is Son of man.” (Ver. 26, 27.) The Lord evidently speaks here as come below, a man, the sent of God, and servant of the divine purposes, not as the One who is over all, God blessed forever, though both be true of Him in His person. As the eternal Son, He quickens whom He will; as come in humiliation, it is given Him of the Father to have life in Himself. Born of a woman, He is still Son of God. (Luke 1:35.) But men despise the man Christ Jesus. Some trust in themselves that they are righteous, all disliking Him who did not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. He who lived on account of the Father is irksome to all that live to themselves, and odious to such as seek honor one of another. They misuse His humanity to deny His deity. They have no life, for they have no faith. But they cannot escape judgment, and a judgment executed in that very nature of man for which they rejected the Son of God. It is as Son of man that the Lord Jesus will sit on the throne. Doubtless He will show His divine knowledge in judging; but, as lie says expressly, authority is given Him of the Father to execute judgment, because He is Son of man. As Son of God He quickens; as Son of man He will judge. How solemn! Had He been only Son of God, who would have dared to despise Him? The light of His glory had consumed instantly every proud adversary from before Him. It was His grace then in becoming man to save men which exposed Him to contempt in His path of lowly obedience and suffering in love. The archangel is a servant; He stooped to become one. (Phil. 2:6.) But the God of this world blinded them, so that they counted as only man Him who never more proved Himself God to such as by grace had eyes to see. If they insulted Him in His work of grace, how will it be when He executes judgment, and this as Son of man? Such is the award of God.

“Wonder not at this; for an hour is coming, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall go forth, those that practiced good unto a resurrection of life, and those that did evil unto a resurrection of judgment.” (Ver. 28, 29.)

Thus another hour is announced distinct from what “now is,” and only “coming,” an hour not of quickening such of the dead as hear the voice of Christ, but of “all that are in the tombs” rising. It is the hour of proper resurrection; and the Lord carefully negatives the popular thought of one general resurrection. Not so; here, as elsewhere, we learn of two resurrections wholly and distinctly contrasted in character, as we find in Rev. 20 they are in time.

It did not enter into the scope of the Lord's discourse, any more than of the Spirit's design in the Gospel, to reveal in detail the order of events chronologically. This has its suited place in the great prophecy of the New Testament. But the far deeper difference of their relation to Christ Himself, viewed as Son of God and Son of man, is laid before us in a few words of the profoundest interest—a difference which would be true if no more than ten minutes intervened, but which is rendered far more distinct and impressive, inasmuch as the Revelation lets us see an interval of more than a thousand years. How great the confusion in the theology of the schools and pulpits, which supposes a single promiscuous rising of just and unjust, and this mainly on an exegesis so absurd as that which applies Matt. 25:31-46 to the resurrection! For it is certainly a judgment of the quick, of all the nations, before the Son of man when He comes again in glory, not the judgment of the wicked dead and their works before the great white throne after heaven and earth are fled away and all question of coming again is closed. There is the further mischief resulting from this interpretation, that it tends to insinuate that just and unjust come into judgment, or that unjust come into it no more than the just, to the destruction of the capital truth of the gospel; which contrasts life and judgment, as we have seen in our Savior's words.

There is this essential difference in the two hours, that, while in the first some only by grace heard His voice and had life, in the second all that are in the tombs shall hear it and shall go forth. But there is no confusion of just and unjust longer. In the world they had been more or less mixed together. In the field where the good seed was sown the enemy sowed tares, and, spite of the servants, the Lord ruled that both were to grow together until the harvest. But in the coming hour there is no mingling more: the solemn severing of all takes place, “those that practiced good unto a resurrection of life, and those that did evil unto a resurrection of judgment.” For life eternal in Christ is never inoperative, and the Holy Ghost, who is given to the believer consequent on the accomplishment of redemption and the ascension of Christ, works in that life, that there may be the fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ to God’s glory and praise. Hence such as believed are here characterized as those that practiced good, and as this had its root in life, so its issue is a resurrection of life; while those who had no life, being rejectors of Him who is its source, are described as “those that did evil,” and their end a resurrection of judgment. In the hour that now is they would not have the Son of God in all His grace; they must be judged by the Son of man in the hour that is coming. The two resurrections are as distinct as the characters of those who rise in each. But Jesus is Lord of all and raises all; though on a different principle, of a different class, and to a different end.

Notes on John, John 5:19-24, Notes on (5:19-24)

The Lord takes up the unbelieving rejection of His person and rings out the truth which puts all in its place. “Jesus then answered and said to them, Verily, verily I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself unless he see the Father doing something; for whatever things he doeth, these also the Son doeth in like manner.” (Ver. 19.) It is the expression of the entire exclusion of a will separate from God the Father. He speaks of Himself as man on earth, yet God withal: the especial topic of our Gospel. He was here displaying God, whom otherwise no man had seen or could see; and He displayed Him as Father, however dull even disciples might be to discern it till redemption removed the veil from the eyes and sense of guilt from the conscience, and the love that gave Him to effect it was apprehended by the heart. Hut He had deigned to take the place of man, without forfeiting for a moment His divine nature and rights: and as such He disclaims the least shade of self-exaltation, or independence of His Father. This flesh cannot understand now more than then; and as then it led the Jews to repudiate the Son, so now in Christendom largely to the open denial of His divine glory or to the practical humanizing of Him. Hence the effort of so many to get rid of such a symbol as the Athanasian creed, and the otiose acquiescence of far more who believe in Him no more than they. The truth is that scripture goes beyond any creed that ever was framed in the maintenance of His honor, and this not only in the doctrine of His inspired servants, but in their report of His own words as here. Besides however being the Eternal, God over all, blessed forever, He speaks of Himself as in this world a man, yet the Son, and as such only doing what He sees the Father do: anything else would not be to declare Him. And for this He was here. Yet so truly is He divine that whatever things the Father does, these also does the Son likewise. He is the image of the invisible God, and alone competent to show the Father. How perfect the conjoint working of the Father and the Son! So we learn here, as in John 10 their unity. It is not only that the Son does whatever the Father may, but in like manner. How blessed their communion!

But the ground the Lord lays is also to be considered. “For the Father loveth the Son and showeth him all things which he himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these that ye may wonder.” (Ver. 20.) Truly the persons in the Godhead are real, if anything is; and as the divine nature is morally perfect, the affections that reign are not less. The joint working of the Father and the Son our blessed Lord explains by the Father loving the Son and showing Him all that He Himself does; nay, He lets them know as He knew Himself that greater works would be shown Him by the Father, as the latter part of this Gospel testifies, “that ye may wonder” He does not say believe, for He speaks, not of grace, but of power displayed in testimony to the Jews, the effect of which would be not the faith which honors God, but the amazement which is the frequent and stupid companion of incredulity.

The Lord next singles out the immense miracle of resurrection. “For even as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth, so the Son also quickeneth whom he will; for not even the Father judgeth any one, but hath given all the judgment to the Son; that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent him.” (Ver. 21-23.) There can be no doubt that giving life to the dead befits and characterizes God; but if the Father does so, no less does the Son, and this not as an instrument but sovereignly: the Son also quickeneth whom He will. He is a divine person as truly as the Father, in full right and power. But more: He alone judges. Judgment as a whole and in all its forms is committed to the Son by the Father who judges none, with the express aim that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. And so it really is; for they honor not the Father but do Him despite who honor not His sent

One, the Son. It is the Son on whom by the Father's pleasure it devolves to judge; but we shall find that there is a moral reason for this which appears afterward. As it is, we learn that the Son quickens in communion with the Father, and that He only judges. Thus is His honor secured from all men, who are either quickened or judged.

But how can a soul know that he is quickened and shall not be judged? He who reveals the portion that belongs to some and awaits the rest has not left in obscurity or doubt that which is so all-important; He has told out what so deeply concerns every child of man. Only unbelief need or can be uncertain, though it indeed should not be, for its sorrowful end is too plain to others if not to itself. Defying God, it must be judged by Him whom it can no longer dishonor. What on the other hand can be more graciously distinct than the portion our Lord warrants to faith? “Verily, verily, I say to you, that he that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath life eternal and cometh not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life.”

(Ver. 24.) It was no question of the law, but of hearing Christ's word, of believing (not in God in any sense, as the Authorized Version conveys, but) Him that sent Christ, believing His testimony. For this had He sent His Son that He might give eternal life. He therefore that believed Him “hath life eternal.” It is a present gift of God and possession of the believer, to be enjoyed perfectly in heaven doubtless, but none the less truly given now and exercised here where Christ then was.

But there is more than the actual communication of a new life by faith, a life of Which Christ, not Adam, is the source and character; he who has it does not come into judgment (κρίσιν). The English Testament has “condemnation;” but the Lord says more than this: the believer “cometh not into judgment.” He will be manifested before Christ's tribunal; he will give account of all done in the body; but he does not, if Christ is to be believed, come into judgment. He will never be put on his trial to see whether he is to be lost or not. Strange notion! after it may be in the separate state, departing “to be with Christ, which is far better,” certainly after being changed into the likeness of His glory, to be judged. No! such an idea is theology, the universal doctrine of Christendom, Protestant or Popish Arminian or Calvinist; but it is directly in collision with the plain and sure words of Christ.

All the great English translations are wrong here, Wiclif, Tyndal, Cramer, and Geneva, with the Authorized Version. Singular to say, the Rhemish version alone is right, in this following the Vulgate: a mere accident, I presume, for none are so distant from the truth conveyed by their own translation, from the apprehension of exemption from judgment, as Romish doctors. And none are so unfaithful in the next clause, for they actually make the Lord seem to say “shall pass from death into life.1“ He really said ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τ. θ. εἰς τ. ζ. “but is passed (the present result of a past act) out of death unto life.” Here the Protestant versions are right, Wiclif feeble, the Rhemish false. And there is not even the excuse of the Vulgate, which reads “transiit.” Possibly they read “transiet:” but if so, it was an error which some copies of the Latin would have corrected, if they ignored the inspired original.

However this be, the truth set forth by our Savior is of all moment: would that every believer knew it and rejoiced in it with simplicity and in its fullness, as this one verse presents it. It is Christ's word that is heard in divinely given faith, and this quickens the soul: no thought here or any where else of any such virtue in an administered ordinance. But faith does not slight His judgment; on the contrary the believer bows to it morally in His word now, receives God's testimony to His Son, and is phased from death unto life.

Notes on John, John 5:10-18, Notes on (5:10-18)

Undoubtedly to see a man carrying his couch on the sabbath was a strange thing in Judea, and especially in Jerusalem. But it was, of course, by a deliberate injunction on the Lord's part. He was raising a question with the Jews which He knew would bring about a breach with their incredulity. It was a blow purposely struck at their self-complacent observance of the sabbath, when they were blinded not merely by self-will to violate the law but by unbelief against their own Messiah, spite of the fullest proofs of His mission and person. Could God accept the sabbath-keeping of the people in such a state? Here then the Lord commanded an act expressly public on the sabbath-day in Jerusalem.

“The Jews therefore said to him that was cured, It is sabbath, and1 it is not allowed thee to take up thy2 couch. He answered them, He that made me well, the same said to me, Take up thy couch and walk” (vers. 10, 11). The healed man was simple, and his answer bears the stamp of right and truth. The divine power that had wrought beyond even an angel's compass or commission, and without it, was his warrant to act upon the word. “They asked him [therefore],3 Who is the man that said to thee, Take up [thy couch] and walk. But he that was healed4 knew not who he was, for Jesus withdrew, a crowd being in the place” (12, 18). The Jews spoke with malice and contempt. “Who is the man?” They can scarcely be conceived ignorant that there was more in their midst, and who He was. They knew His works, if they knew not Himself; and His works, as well as ways, proclaimed a mission more than human. The very work before them, and they could not deny it, was beyond an angel; yet they asked the healed person, “Who is the man that said to thee, Take up thy couch and walk?” The Lord had ordered things so that the healed man should know no more; He had passed away unnoticed, a crowd being there.

“After these things Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said to him, Behold, thou art made well. Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee. The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well” (vers. 14, 15). It was a gracious, but withal a solemn, word. To live now, to enjoy the life that is now, is not the great matter. No cure, however bespeaking the power and goodness of God, could meet man's underlying need, for sin still remained. A cure was only provisional. The man that was cured, though it was Jesus who cured him, had to be warned “Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee.” He does not appear to have then adequately judged the malice of the Jews. They probably concealed their real feelings. It is often so with men towards Jesus, especially men who have a reputation for religion. They do not believe in Him, neither do they love Him. So the healed man in his simplicity fathomed not their object, but seems rather to have assumed that they were anxious to know his wondrous benefactor. Hence he went off, and brought them word that it was Jesus who had made him well. There is no ground, I think, to suppose that he shared the feelings of the Jews, or wished to betray Jesus to those who hated Him.

But now they knew as a fact what they had, no doubt, suspected from the first—that the sick man had to do with Jesus. I do not say that their informant should not have known better, for they had asked, “Who is the man that said to thee, Take up thy couch and walk?” He told them

now that it was, Jesus who had made him well. His heart dwelt on the good and mighty deed that was done; theirs on the word which touched their sabbath-keeping. “And for this the Jews persecuted Jesus,5 because he did these things on a sabbath (ver. 16). It was the blindness of men, who, lost in forms, knew not the reality of God and consequently knew not themselves in His presence. Sooner or later such men find themselves in collision with Jesus: what will they feel by-and-by?

“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (ver. 17). It was an overwhelming answer. They knew nothing of fellowship with the Father. He (Jesus), not they, could call God “my Father,” and loved to say that He “worketh hitherto.” For the Father could not rest in sin, He would not rest in misery. It is not yet God judging. Therefore was He working as Father, even until now, though only now declaring Himself Father in and by the Son. Even before this however He had not left Himself without witness in Jerusalem itself, as the crowd of expectant sick round the pool of Bethesda attested. But this was only partial and transient. The Son was here to make Him fully known, and known as One who could not keep His sabbath yet, whatever the Jews ignorant of, Him might Wish to say or do. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Jesus, the Son, had fellowship, unbroken and perfect, with His Father.

Yet the words were still more offensive than the work they had just seen, and the way in which Jesus had openly caused it to be done and seen clashed with all their prejudices and stirred the depths of their unbelief. For in so speaking His personal glory could not but shine forth.

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” “For this therefore6 the Jews sought the more to kill him, because be not only broke the sabbath, but also said that God was his own Father, making himself equal with God” (ver. 18). Nor were they mistaken in this inference at least. For as He did expressly charge the healed man to do what He knew would bring things to a rupture, So He did not deny, but confess, that God was His own Father in a sense that Was true of none but Himself. This is the truth; and the truth of all truths most due to God, and the turning-point of all blessing to man. By it the believer knows God, and has life everlasting; without it one is an enemy of God, as the Jews showed themselves that day, and ever since. Blinded, perversely, fatally, blinded men, who, in presumed zeal for His honor, sought the more to kill Jesus, His own. Son, come in infinite love to make the Father known, and to reconcile man to God. But God is wise and infinitely good in His work; for in letting them prove their malice to the uttermost, when the due time was come, in killing Jesus, He proved His own love to the full in atonement, making Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

Notes on John, John 5:1-9, Notes on (5:1-9)

IT is one of the peculiarities of our Gospel that in it we see the Lord frequently in Jerusalem while the synoptic Gospels are occupied with His Galilean ministry. The miracle at the pool of Bethesda is an instance—only John records it. Both the fact and the discourse which follows eminently bring out His person. This alone abides, and it is all to the believer, with the infinite work which owes its infiniteness to it. In the other Gospels the process of probation is viewed as still going on; in John all is seen from the first to be closed before God. Hence His moral judgment of Jerusalem is shown us at the beginning in John, as its rejection of Him also. This, to my mind, accounts for the record of the Lord's work there as well as in Galilee in the Gospel of John. If all be regarded as a scene of wreck and ruin morally, it was of no consequence where He wrought. As to trial, all was over grace could and would work equally anywhere: Galilee and Jerusalem were thus alike. Sin levels all: life from God in the Son was needed by one as much as another. This our Gospel developer.

“After these things was the feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” (Verse 1.) Mere authority is pretty equally divided for and against the insertion of the article. Ten uncials (à C E F H I L M Δ Π) insert it, ten (A B D G K S U r Λ) omit it. About fifty cursives and the Sahidic and Coptic versions are with the former, still more with the latter. If the article be received, it can scarcely be any other feast than the passover, the first and foundation feast of the Jewish holy year. Some have thought that it might be the feast of Purim, but this, would not account for Jesus going up to Jerusalem. It had no divine claim.

“Now there is in Jerusalem at the sheep-gate1 a pool that is called, in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a2 multitude of the sick, blind, lame, withered [awaiting the moving of the water. For an angel descended from time to time in the pool and troubled the water. He therefore that first wont in after the troubling of the water, became well, whatever disease he was affected by] But a certain man was there, for thirty and3 eight years suffering under his infirmity. Jesus seeing him lying down, and knowing that he was [so] now a long time, saith to him, Desirest thou to become well? The infirm [man] answered, Sir,4 I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me. Jesus Rah to him, Arise, take up thy couch, and walk. And immediately5 the man became well and took up his couch and walked. And on that day was sabbath.” (Ver. 2-9.)

A striking picture that scene was of man—the Jews under law. There they lay without strength, and though the grace of God might interfere at intervals, the greater the need, the less could souls take advantage of His mercy. It was what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. The impotent man was himself the witness of it till Jesus came, and, unsought, sought him. No angel's moving of the water could avail a man unable to step down and without help to plunge him into the pool. He that was stronger could always anticipate the helpless. But now grace in Jesus the Son of God looks at him who had been suffering so long; grace speaks to him; grace works for him in a word without further delay; for the word was with power. “And immediately the man became well, and took up his couch and walked. And on that day was sabbath.”

But how could sabbath be kept or enjoined on that day of man's misery? Jesus had come to work, not to rest; whatever Pharisees might urge, He would not seal up man in a rest broken before God by sin and ruin.

Thus the sign wrought on that sabbath carries out further what the Lord is seen doing throughout these chapters of the Gospel—substituting Himself for every object of trust or means of blessing, of old or in that day, without Israel and within. Even angels bow to the Son; yet was He incarnate, working in humiliation, going on straight to the cross. The law could not deliver from the guilt or power or effects of sin; no extraordinary intervention of God by the highest of creatures could adequately meet the need: nothing and no one but Jesus the Son of God. Yet hate we also the clearest proof that the Jews were so self-satisfied in their misery by a misuse of the law which blinded them to their sin as well as to the Son, that they were content to go on with such a sabbath, incensed with Him who wrought a sign that proclaimed not more

surely His grace than their ruin. Hopeless too it was because of their rejection of the remedy and their self-complacency in their own righteousness.

Observe however that the Lord made the infirm feel his powerlessness more than over before He spoke the word that raised him up. He did awaken the desire to be made whole, as He looked with infinite compassion and knew the case in all its fullness; but the desire he felt expressed itself in the conviction of his own wretchedness. It was like the soul's saying in Rom. 7, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me,” &c. How little he knew Who had deigned to be his “neighbor,” and do the part of the good Samaritan, yea, incomparably more here where need is sounded more deeply. The Quickener of the dead is here. “He spake and it was done,” sabbath as it might be; but what sabbath acceptable to God can sin and misery keep? Thank God! Jesus wrought; but they felt that if He was right, it was all over with them. Hence they judged Him, not themselves, as we shall see, to God's dishonor and their own perdition.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Healing of the Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)

The story of our Lord, in His dealings with the Samaritan woman and the town's people that followed, is all the more admirable, because there was no miracle. It was His power in bringing the conscience face to face with its sins before God and in revealing the Father in the Son, the Savior of the world by His Holy Spirit.

Here we are in presence of our Lord not only giving a blessed sign of gracious power when all else was hopeless, but correcting unbelief in a Jewish courtier, who came to Him in Cana and appealed for his child sick in Capernaum. “When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him and besought him that he would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.” It was not surprising that those who only looked on Jesus as the Messiah should connect His power with His actual presence. But one of the great designs of our Gospel is to make known in Him God, the Son eternal, superior to all times and circumstances. When the nobleman then entreated him to go down and heal his son, the Lord laid bare the error that demanded a visible wonder; his condition was as yet little different from the Galileans of whom. we read in ver. 45, of whom it is written that they received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast. “Unless ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” This only increased the father's importunity, who says, “Sir, (or Lord,) come down ere my child die.” Then comes the word of power, “Go thy way: thy son liveth.” The man believed the word that Jesus said to him and went his way. If the Lord did not go with him and lay His hand on the sick child, it was but for better and in a better way. His word was given and believed.

Thus was the blessing wrought, a two-fold one; to the father's soul, and to the son's body. The father believed the word of the Lord Jesus, the son had his fever cured, and the Lord was honored in both ways. And we readily see how different the case is from the Gentile centurion and his bondman about to die of the palsy. For there the Lord went with the Jewish elders, and was only stopped when not far from the house by friends whom the centurion sent to say, “Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof. Wherefore neither did I count myself worthy to come to thee. But say with a word, and my servant shall be healed.” Yes, his was faith of the simplest and strongest character, formed by the sense given him of the Lord's glory. The word of Jesus was ample: He had but to speak, and it was done. Yet some famous men in early days have confounded these two distinct cases.

But to a similar point of simple faith was the nobleman now brought as the centurion took himself. “Go: thy son liveth” was received in his heart from the lips of the Lord Jesus. And as he was going down, his bondmen met him, saying, Thy child liveth. He inquired therefore from them the hour when he got better; and their answer was, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. It was clear as light, the immediate unmistakable action of divine power, not beginning but complete. At that very hour, as the father knew, Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. Here at least it was no form, but a reality without danger of accrediting what might be untrue, and a fact which helps us to understand other statements of like kind.

But how is it with you, my reader? For this is written, like the rest of the Gospel, “that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His name.” It was blessed when sickness drove men to Jesus for healing; it is more blessed still when sinners feel their sins before God and look to the Savior for that deepest need. He is the Life as well as the Resurrection; and He gives life eternal now to every one that believes, as He will raise their bodies at the last day. Undoubtedly the Savior is now in heaven; but this assuredly detracts nothing from His power or His love. The same Jesus is now exalted on high and shall so come in like manner, as He was seen to go up into heaven. The more urgent is it that you should neither slight God's call to believe, nor forget the consequence of neglecting so great salvation, for either is to brave the judgment.

If you are looking for a sign or wonder in order to believe, profit by the Lord's gracious correction of one far more to be excused than you who have all the word of God, and the N. T. in particular which leaves no room for such an error. Is it not plain to you that all depends on the Lord Jesus, and that His grace is as great as His glory? When He does not answer a word, it is to draw out self-judgment in faith. When He does not comply with a request, it is to lead by His word into faith of the unseen.

Sometimes souls are discouraged by a harsh rebuke of their feebleness at first. Never does the Lord so deal with any. He corrects in order the more to bless and prove and strengthen. Here we perceive faith growing exceedingly, when the mixture of sight, so natural to a Jew and indeed to flesh and blood, was removed by His word. And next we are told that the whole house was brought under the blessing of living faith: a result by no means unexampled in the ways of the God of all grace, but rare enough at any time, yet, where or when ever it is, full of interest and encouragement to those who would learn of Him, and seek the honor that comes from the only God. With Him you must have to do. If you hear Christ's word and believe Him that sent Him, you receive life eternal and do not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life. If you refuse now, you cannot escape the voice of the Lord, when He summons men to stand before the great white throne, and be judged for works of which you may boast now—but oh! the shame and horror when the truth is out. May the goodness of God lead you without delay to repentance at the feet of Jesus.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, Saviour of the World, The (4:41-42)

The Samaritans besought the Son of God to abide with them, and there He did abide two days (ver. 40). What confidence on their part! what grace on His! Others more favored, who despised them, besought Him with one consent to depart from them (Luke 8:37). Who else are recorded as ever preferring such a request for His presence? But those who asked received a blessing both now and evermore, as faith in Him ever does. “And many more believed because of His own word, and said to the woman, No longer because of thy speaking do we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Truly a noble and most suited confession! No Jew did or could then have uttered it. It was God choosing the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame the wise; it was God choosing the weak things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the ignoble things of the world and the despised God chose, the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are; so that no flesh should boast before God.

It was an anticipation worthy of His personal dignity, which faith saw and testified, as grace created and sanctioned it. The Son of God is recognized in the fullest sphere of divine mercy. It is the more striking because He had maintained the place God had given the Jews as compared with Samaritan pretension. As surely as He was the Messiah, so salvation is of the Jews. But the Jews, blinder than their blind whose eyes He so often opened, were rejecting Him through trusting their own thoughts and indulging their own will. And the rejected Messiah, about to taste its bitterness to the uttermost, was displaying grace and truth open to any needy soul, and pressing home the reality of that need, that He might bless according to the love of the Father. His own word deepened the conviction which the woman's testimony had awakened; and the faith of the many that believed expressed itself in the confession, “This is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Was it not all worthy of God and His Son? The sin of His ancient people, in despising the grace of the Messiah because He did not come in power and glory to exalt their nation and confound their foes, only gave occasion to more grace. But the Samaritans believed without a miracle, and entered into the blessing all the more deeply. They take their own place. not a word of rivalry with the Jew. They were sinners: Jesus is the Savior. They were of the world. And “this is indeed the Savior of the world.” God saves not because we deserve, but because He, Jesus, does; and we believe on Him.

As long as the Jew was under probation, this could not be manifested. But one of the peculiarities of the Gospel of John (and each has its special design, not merely from the writer's style, but from the particular purpose of the inspiring Holy Spirit) is that the Jews received not Christ, as we learn, from the very first. Hence a larger and deeper scope of blessing begins to shine through the clouds, even before the Lord's public testimony and right through it. This chapter is an unmistakable witness.

And is it all nothing to you, dear readers? Is not this, and more than this, expressly written that “ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through (in) His name”? John 20:31. Is it in vain that the Holy Spirit has perpetuated for you the grace that reached the many Samaritans? Or are you disposed to follow the proud and stiff-necked Jews in nullifying as to yourselves the counsel of God? If so, beware of perishing, as they did.

Beyond doubt, as all scripture declares, whatever be the grace of God, you forfeit it by unbelief. It is of faith that it might be according to grace. It is here you have sinned, and now you must be saved; and there is no means other than believing on Jesus. You in Christendom have heard more than either the Jews who refused, or the Samaritans who believed. And whoever you are, whatever you may have been, their testimony is for you, for anyone: “This is indeed the Savior of the world.” Such is the spirit of the gospel that went forth in due thee to all the creation, as the Lord came expressly to call not righteous men, but sinners. “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4, 5). Were it otherwise, no sinful roan could be justified. Whereas, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” It is the distinctive blessedness that God loves with no motive in the object loved, but because He is love. Hence says the apostle, “God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

And as the Samaritans at the beginning were divinely led to own the Savior of the world, so the apostle John in his First Epistle, avowedly written for the dangers and evils of the last time, repeats the testimony when unfolding the love of God superior to all changes. “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). Yes, but how am I to receive certainty for my own soul? “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (ver. 15). It is the Spirit of God anticipating conscientious difficulty and satisfying the just desire of assurance from above in one who might otherwise be overwhelmed with the sense of sin. One cannot too much judge one's self, provided that along with it there is no distrust of grace. The person and the work of Christ account for salvation and the highest privileges to him that believes, were he chief of sinners. God puts all honor on the name of His Son, whether in blessing the believer or in punishing the unbeliever by-and-by.

To believe God's testimony is the first of duties, and Christ is the object of that testimony. So, when the trembling jailer at Philippi fell down before Paul and Silas, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The answer was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The way is simple, the warrant sure, the salvation rich and full. The call of God is to believe on His Son, the Lord Jesus; the result is salvation for all that believe, the house no less than its head. Hence it is His commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ: loving one another follows, as He gave us commandment. But it is in vain to urge love, holiness, or aught else, till we believe on Him.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, We Have Heard Him Ourselves (4:42)

There is no salvation without the revelation of God to the soul, and this is in Christ His Son. The warrant is the word of God, and now the written word (or scripture) on which rests all the authority of what is preached or spoken. This the Holy Spirit in quickening power carries

home to the soul, not only convicting the conscience but winning the heart to God through faith in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

God graciously employs, not an angel, but a sinner born anew to convey the truth to others, as we see here in Samaria. “And out of that city many of the Samaritans believed on Him because of the word of the woman testifying, He told me all things that I did.” It was a true work of God, and in the ordinary way of grace through the word dealing with the conscience. There was no miracle, any more than persuasive words of human wisdom, but demonstration of the Spirit, that their faith might stand in God's power.

And the Lord Jesus acted in that grace which the apostles only learned in their measure years afterward when propitiation was made and the Spirit was sent down. For when the Samaritans came to Him, they besought Him to abide with them, and He abode there two days. “And many more believed because of His word, and said to the woman. No longer because of thy speaking do we believe; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

It was the simple and blessed fact for these Samaritans, the beautiful foreshadowing of the true and unchangeable ground of faith for all that should hear and believe the gospel when the Lord would not be personally on earth. Any one and anything may arrest souls by revealed truth; a man, a woman, a child; a sermon, a conversation, a book or a tract. But whatever the means, the soul believes God; and without believing God there is no true faith, no divine authority and grace over heart and conscience.

Hence the Samaritans, struck by the converted woman's testimony, justly bore witness to the word of the Lord Himself. Hearing Him, they knew and believed the love that God has to us. Having received His testimony, they set to their seal that God is true. And as they thus believed God in the full revelation of Himself in Christ, we may surely say of them what scripture attests of Abraham when he believed God in a far less measure of light, that it was counted to them for righteousness. For living faith ever brings the soul before God, where it has His light whereby to judge itself. But God revealed in Man, and that Man His only-begotten Son, brings His love near to the heart in a reality beyond all thought, and rises above all sinfulness, proved (as we can add) in His death, that we might possess known remission of sins through His blood, and thus the conscience purged from dead works to serve a living God.

It is a universal truth, in short, that the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice, and that they follow Him, for they know His voice. What these Samaritans enjoyed as a literal fact is no less true of all who believe the gospel. And Christ came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly; or, as His servant wrote, died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live to themselves but to Him that for them died and was raised. Thus all things are of God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and gave us the service of reconciliation, the spirit of which is plain for the Samaritan woman; as the contrary of it appears in such as place themselves or other men between God and the soul, denying His grace and intercepting His right.

The Lord Jesus was just the One to do the work of God; for as on one side He was God, so on the other He was Man, in one person, come here below to declare God and reveal the Father, to bear the sins in His own body on the tree and thus enable the believer to draw near to God without fear and assured of His perfect love. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” said the psalmist prophetically (Psa. 40) of Jesus. More than a thousand years after inspired David, wrote one equally inspired to expound him, “by the which will we have been (and are) sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10).

Christ alone reveals God as light and love. By Him alone mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. All other systems, all adversaries of Him, are but thieves and robbers whom the sheep hear not. But His word is as divine as His work. As one of them said, Thou hast words of eternal life; as He said Himself, The words I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. When He went away on high, the Holy Ghost was sent down to abide forever with those that believe, to glorify the Son that glorified God the Father, and to guide into all the truth. So that no excuse for unbelief is valid on the score that Jesus is gone. It is expedient for you, said the Lord, that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (Advocate) will not come unto you, but if I go, I will send Him unto you. Thus the Spirit ever fully takes of the things of Jesus and declares them to us, teaches all things, besides bringing to remembrance all that He had said, bears witness of Christ far beyond what the apostles saw or heard though with Thin from the beginning. For the Spirit was sent forth from heaven where Christ is now exalted, as He had indeed many things to say to them, which they could not hear till He was glorified.

How blessed then that, when we hear the apostles' words, it is still Christ speaking in them! If any believe not, it is because they are not of His sheep, the test of whom is that they hear His voice. But He adds “I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one” (John 10:27-30).

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, Woman Then Left Her Waterpot, The (4:28)

Blessed effects follow faith when it is the work of God's Spirit as here. “He that believeth hath everlasting life;” and life from God does not fail to show itself in ways pleasing to Him if not to man. A faith of mere tradition, or founded on evidences, is powerless. The conscience being untouched, in no case is it before God; nor is He trusted for everlasting life.

Little acts as well as matters of great moment disclose the work of God in a believer. The Holy Spirit notices both in the Samaritan woman. In the opening of the interview her pre-occupation with present things was evident. When the Lord seized the figure of living water in contrast with that before her, we see her total insensibility. She was unable to rise above earthly wants and desires. Only when her conscience was reached, did God and His word deal with her soul, however amazed and attracted she might be by the grace of Christ. Even when her life was suddenly laid bare by the wondrous stranger, so as to convince her that everything was known to Him divinely, she has no wish to escape into the darkness in which she had heretofore lived; she desires light in what most nearly touches the right state of the soul with God. She is assured that He could and would guide her aright in the worship of God, where men differ most and so keenly. She had to learn of a new worship superseding Jerusalem no less than her vain traditional mountain—the worship of the Father. This He, the Son, was alone competent to announce; as also the Holy Spirit is the needed power to enable the worshipper, even the true worshipper, to render it suitably to God's

nature as well as His relationship as Father. But the work in her soul was not complete till He stood revealed in her spirit as Messiah come, the Declarer of all things to us: so she expected and confessed, and yet how much more the reality and fullness!

At this point, the most solemn and blessed for every soul that knows it, when God reveals Himself in Christ to the needy and guilty but now the sinner repentant, came His disciples marveling that He was speaking with a woman. For even they still shared the Jewish pride which despised the sex. How much greater their astonishment, had they known what she was, and what were His communications of infinite grace! “The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”

It was the simple effect of divine truth acting on her heart, now that her conscience was before God. To everything there is a seasons and a time to every purpose, or matter, under heaven, a time to seek, and a time to lose. So she rightly felt the all-importance of the moment, not for herself only but for others. Her ordinary duty could well wait. It was nothing to her now to avoid the concourse of women at the well, for she clearly had been alone there. What were censorious tongues now? She had heard the Shepherd's voice. Had He not called her, knowing all she was and had done? She left her waterpot therefore. To know Him was the great business. Another time was equally good for the waterpot. But here was the Messiah, the Christ; and if He deigned in His compassionate love to make Himself known to her, convicted as she was, surely no sinner need despair. Without a command, as the fruit of His grace, she leaves aside what was earthly and perishing, she seeks to spread the blessed news, which filled her soul and made her forget herself and every consideration but of Christ and His goodness to such as she had been. “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation,” just expressed her new-born feelings, the activity of that life she had in Christ.

And so it is with souls born of God, who learn from Christ that the Father seeketh such to worship Him. As yet she was ignorant of dogma, but by grace she had received Christ, the despised Messiah, and the more despised because He was and is infinitely more, the Son of God, the Only begotten, full of grace and truth. Little she knew of Him; but she believed in Him as the Promised One, the destroyer of Satan, the Redeemer, not merely to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel, but given for a light to the Gentiles, that He might be God's salvation unto the end of the earth.

The Samaritan woman had already proved that His divine knowledge of her sins did not in the least hinder the out-flow of divine grace to her soul. Grace had used truth to search her and put her in her true place, that she might be fully blessed of God and able to draw near in adoration as a true worshipper. Nor is there anything so humbling as the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. When the prodigal came to himself, he made up his mind to say, “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” Had he adequately judged himself, he could not have asked even this; he must have felt his unworthiness (so far as he was concerned) of any place whatever. But when his father ran and fell on his neck and kissed him in his rags, he owned his sin and unworthiness; but not a word of being made an hireling. It was, he now learned, no question of himself, but of the Father's love. So is it with our God and Father. He acts in His own love and for His own glory. And Christ alone has made it possible righteously by His propitiation; as He alone is the truth, the way, and the life, revealing Him as Father and God, that we may know the true God Whom we adore.

The woman in the energy of faith, not only leaves her waterpot for a more fitting season, but in her own way shows the effect of the truth that the Father is seeking true worshippers, as she also knew that grace can and does make poor sinners such. So it was with her. Now the positive power of the truth discloses itself. She seeks others, any, in the faith of His grace. “She saith to the men (that is, of the city), Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” And she was right, truly guided, where human learning and genius have utterly failed and prove their possessors to be but blind guides who only lead and fall into the ditch. She was right and testified of, and in, the grace that blessed her. For Christ is man, yet as truly God, the only Man Who ever thus told all to the sinner, the only bearer of his sins on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness. It is a suspicious faith that does not subordinate earthly claims to Christ, and that burns not to make Him known to the lost.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, I That Speak Unto Thee Am He (4:26)

John 4:26

Now that the conscience of the Samaritan was reached and in exercise before God, the grace of the Savior was not in vain for her heart. She had listened to words that brought home to her unmistakably the love of God, whereof His Son was at once the witness and the fullness. One thing more she needed, which He was waiting to grant, the knowledge of Himself come, the Father's sent One, without which there is no Christianity. He is “all,” as He is “in all” that are His; but He is also for any, as the gospel announces, and the woman here discovers. She felt that the flood of light which the Lord shed on the worship that was at hand, was too much for her apprehension, and accordingly says to Him, “I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ): when He is come, He will tell [declare] us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.”

The Lord had declared the Father's name, little as she took it in; He had also confessed and denied not but confessed, that He Himself was the Christ. And we have His word for it, whatever the difficulty and the darkness unbelief pours over all, that this is life eternal, that they may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He sent. For such knowledge is of the Holy Spirit, and, unlike all other knowledge, is inseparable from life. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God.” Grace had opened her heart, the truth had searched her soul; and the Lord laid hold of the confession she made (however feebly) of a coming Messiah, to declare Himself the satisfying object of trust. It was far from being His highest title; it was not the everlasting glory of His person; it was what He became as man on earth the promised One, and what He, rejected of men, is now also made on high. For His death that seemed to disappoint all hopes was essential if only to efface our guilt, and His resurrection restored (and more) what death took away. Thus He graciously met her, in that recognition of what He truly was, to her unspeakable comfort and rest.

Faith always meets Christ. He is the great divine discovery to the soul. All must meet Him, on the throne one day; but this will be everlasting ruin to such as do not meet Him now. For them it will be judgment. Now it is the grace of God which gives and forgives. The unbeliever refuses Him now and comes into judgment then. To meet Him now by faith is life and salvation, as the Samaritan proved. Thousands saw and heard Him while on earth; but where no faith was, there was no life. It was when the woman believed that she received the blessing. And this blessing is no less offered to all that believe on Him without seeing or hearing. Indeed there is emphatic blessing, as He told Thomas, for those who have not seen and have believed.

The Holy Spirit has recorded the tale for your soul, dear reader, that you too may believe, and be saved if you are not already. To you the word of salvation is sent; for Jesus is still a Savior, not yet a Judge. By and by He will be Judge and not Savior. Never are the two functions mixed. Nor does the believer, as He assures us, come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. His work fails no more than His person; and he that believes has eternal life. The unbeliever will hear Him pronounce all, but too late. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6).” “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb. 12). He is the truth: rely on Him.

The unworthiness of the Samaritan up to that very day did not hinder His grace nor her blessing. Why should you doubt His willingness to receive and help you just as you are? For the blessing depends entirely on Him and His sacrifice. To receive it through Him, confessing your guilt and need, is to submit to the righteousness of God; to prefer your own efforts and sacrifices is going about to establish your own righteousness, as the unbelieving Jews did. Those who are indifferent to their sins, God's warning, and Christ's salvation, defy judgment and despise mercy. Alas! they assuredly must meet the due reward of their deeds and unbelief. For God is not mocked; and those that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

Hear then His words in faith. He pleads with your soul. “I that speak unto thee am He.” And He is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever. Doubt yourself; for indeed you have the gravest reason. Believe foulest sinner and His worst enemy, if they repent and believe the gospel. His was all the worth, His all the suffering, His all the grace. Give Him then all the glory, as He willingly gives you all the blessing. This is God's truth, God's love, and God's way. It is His gospel, His glad tidings, sent that you, may believe. He does not begrudge you life and salvation in Christ; He delights in blessing; and this too, most rich and needed blessing.

But He warns too. “If the word spoken by angels (i.e. the law) was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Thus judgment at the close vindicates the God Whose saving love in His Son is set at naught. The sanction is as solemn, as the blessing is full and plain, immediate and everlasting.

The message meanwhile bespeaks God for its author; He is the God of all grace. But it is grace reigning through righteousness, for Christ suffered for sins, Just for unjust. Not otherwise could the defiled and guilty be brought to God. Our ransom is not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with Christ's precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. And faith honors both Christ and the God Who gave Him, as unbelief adds rebellion and contempt of God to our other sins which are many and deep. No doubt you deserve nothing from God but judgment, which, without faith in Christ, is perdition. But Christ deserves, and has secured by His work, that every believer should be saved. If this does not gratify man's pride, it suits God's love and glory, in which the believer finds his everlasting blessedness.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, Worship in Spirit and Truth (4:24)

John 4:24

God never accepted in His worship the efforts of man or the imitations of self-will. But He gave a system of beautiful and instructive forms to Israel, who had His law till Christ came to Whom they all pointed, and Who superseded all by a fulfillment which more than accomplished all. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. The law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never, with the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, perfect those that approach. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having been once purged, have no longer conscience of sins?

Totally different is the standing of the Christian through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Who came to do perfectly the will of God. “He taketh away the first (i.e. Levitical offering) that. He may establish the second (i.e. God's will), by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:9, 10.) Yea more; “for by one offering He hath perfected forever (uninterruptedly) them that are sanctified” or set apart to God (ver. 14).

Our Gospel here views Christian worship from another point of the highest importance, the need and blessing of eternal life in Christ and of the consequent gift of the Spirit that dwells henceforth in the believer. The Epistle views him as in himself at a distance from God, needing propitiation, and his conscience to be purified from dead works to serve religiously (or worship) the living God. Both blessings attach to faith. They are the portion of the believer only. For Christ is his life; and his sins are forgiven for His Name's sake; and the Holy Spirit seals him as having believed the glad tidings of his salvation.

Thus pardoned, furnished, and blessed by grace, the Christian draws nigh to God, instead of standing far off like a Jew; he is exhorted to approach with boldness, as may well be, since it is “unto the throne of grace” (Heb. 4), to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh. There alone is a Great Priest over the house of God. All others are human pretenders over their own society, even if they have ambition enough to claim the whole of Christendom, or all the world. In this respect an apostle or a prophet takes common ground with all the faithful; for the blood of Christ is equally efficacious for all that believe. It perfects them each and all before God, and this here and now; so that all various efficacy of that blood is excluded, whatever the different positions in the church the sovereign will of God may assign as He does (1 Cor. 12:28), and whatever the differing place in glory, as we know from Matt. 25:14-22, Luke 19:1, 15-19 Cor. 3:8), and elsewhere. But the inspired word to all brethren is, Let us approach “with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water.”

And what is worship but thanksgiving and praise? Thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ and gives freely to us who believe; praise for what we know by His word and Spirit He is, not only to us, but in Himself, His majesty, holiness, truth, goodness, mercy, love, and delight in us, the eternal self-existing One, now revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

Dear reader, do you know the only true God? Do you know the Father? From 1 John 2:13 we learn that the little children, the babes of God's family, know the Father. But only he that confesses the Son has the Father also. God is no party to His Son's dishonor. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,” Faith is the operation of the Holy Spirit by the word. But to worship we need, besides, the gift of the Spirit, which is received when we rest on Christ's redemption; as in the O.T. oil was put where the blood (not merely the water) had been. Indeed as we see in Lev. 8, though Aaron alone had the oil without blood (12), Aaron's sons as well as he were sprinkled with the oil and the blood after the blood sprinkling (23, 24).

Is it so with you? Are you resting by faith on the sacrifice of Christ? Then you are anointed also; you are sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption—the redemption of the body, as you already have in Christ redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of your offenses.

See then that you worship the Father in spirit and truth. We have in the N.T. the clear impression how the believers worshipped since redemption. No doubt there were at first the effects of their old religious associations. But the fresh grace and mighty truth of a risen and exalted Savior led them out surely if slowly. And the Lord's Supper became by His institution the central symbol and ever-recurring observance every Lord's day at least. Nor did the now sent and ever abiding Spirit fail to work in the assembly, not only in teaching, and exhorting and edifying, but in singing, blessing, and giving thanks. Flesh might deceive and intrude; but the holy responsibility of all was to worship in spirit and truth—to worship the Father in that near and blessed relationship, as the Son revealed Him and the Spirit gives us to enjoy, to worship God in that holy nature and majesty Whose perfect love has cast out our fear; for He has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

It is not enough to be “true worshippers,” blessed though this is. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” How sad for the true worshippers to swamp themselves with notorious men of the world, and in acts and words suited to a mixed multitude! This He called not for nor accepts. It is not worship in spirit and truth which our Lord declares “must” be.

It is a necessity of His nature, and of theirs too, seeing that believers are become partakers of it in His grace (compare James 1:18, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 3:9). If true worshippers, look to it that your worship be, according to His will, “in spirit and truth,” not in forms or falsehood, but as we have been taught by the Lord Himself and His inspired servants. Since the Son of God is come and has given us understanding that we may know Him that is true, formal and false worship is hateful to Him and a shame for “true worshippers” who have the Spirit and know the truth, and are called to worship consistently.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, Worship of the Father (4:20-22)

John 4:20-22

When the conscience is awakened, the need and the duty of worship are felt. So we see of old in Naaman when cured of leprosy by the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 5:27). Yet the difficulty is great for souls, as men differ in nothing more, and too often plead this patent fact to excuse themselves from all concern. Not so does the Samaritan now at least. fie Who had told her the truth and brought her conscience before God could surely solve the dilemma. Directly therefore after owning Him as a prophet, she presents the case. Divine authority must clear up what was contested so stoutly. And she is the more bold to ask after the wondrous persevering grace she had experienced.

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews” (vss. 20-22).

A venerable antiquity has a strong hold on human feeling, and especially in religion. Even a Samaritan could go back a long way and boast of succession. “Our fathers... in this mountain.” It was a serious thing virtually to condemn their race and ancestors! It is more serious still to leave God out of a question which He has the right to answer. The Samaritans after all never had been a great nation. Yet what great nation ever had God so nigh to them as Israel had their covenant God Jehovah whensoever they called on Him? But did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as Israel heard, and live? They alone were His chosen nation, as Jehovah is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath: there is none else.

Therefore the Lord Jesus could not but allow the plea for Jerusalem as against “this mountain” of Samaria. The Samaritans worshipped that which they did not know. The Jews were used to worship that which they knew; and this on a firm foundation, because “salvation is of the Jews.” Theirs are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law giving, and the service, and the promises; theirs the “Fathers” in the best sense; and of them as concerning the flesh is the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen. He as the woman's seed, as David's and David's Lord, Son of God (Psa. 2) and Immanuel, had been evermore the One to Whom Israel looked and on whom faith rested; and this Himself here vindicated.

“Salvation is of the Jews “; in that line only is the promised Seed in Whom dead and risen shall all the nation be blessed. For if the promise be to the Jews, pre-eminently to their Messiah, never was it for them alone, but that the grace of God might bless faith wherever it wrought, and so in particular where need was greatest and man could least boast.

So did the Lord now deal with the woman, guiding her to boast only in the Father, the only true God, far from the vain confidence of man; and assuredly Samaria had nothing better than others. The truth comes not by succession. Natural descent is no guarantee, any more than human priests or sacred places, still less scribes and lawyers. Jerusalem was proving itself as far from the Father as Gerizim; for His Son was

“rejected by men,” and by none so bitterly as by the Jews. This gives occasion to the richest display of grace in the gospel; and the Savior announces it more fully than ever before, not to Nicodemus who heard much but to her of Samaria who heard far more. “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.”

That hour is now come.. When the crucified Lord died, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. This solemn act on God's part ratified the Savior's sentence. The place of worship is changed from earth to heaven. The earthly people refused, even to the death of the cross, the Lord of all the earth. But He is no less the Lord of heaven; and on high God has highly exalted Him Whom not man only but His own people chiefly cast out, and thus proved their own evil and ruin to the uttermost. This is just the moment for God to prove His own good; for through that very death of Christ propitiation was made for sins. Thereon the Holy Spirit was sent down to proclaim God's glad tidings to guilty sinners; so that the vilest may be forgiven by the faith of Christ and His blood, yea become thereby sons of God, free and called to worship the Father. Even the babes or little children of God's family know the Father (1 John 2:13.), and are capable of worshipping Him, not as Jehovah now, but as Father.

Nor is any other worship now acceptable. For God is thus fully revealed: the Only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. The partial measure of Judaism has passed away, no less than Samaritan pretension or any other. Grace and truth came through Jesus; and the testimony of the Holy Spirit is to Him as the sole way to the Father.

My fellow-sinners, renounce self, renounce man; for all sinned, all are lost, and are seen to be so when the true light shines as it does now, as truly as in the day of judgment. This, however true, would be the saddest news, were it all. But the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. If we believe in Him, our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake. For this is He that carpe by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because He is the truth. The Son of God is the Son of Man Who came to seek and to save that which is lost.

Say not that you are too bad for Jesus to receive and bless, and bring you to God. You are indeed too bad for anyone but Jesus, Who has assured us that “him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” Fear not then to cast your soul on His grace just as you are. Beware of Satan and his ministers who would persuade you to make yourself more worthy before you believe on His name: there is no surer way to put Him off and lose your own soul forever. Undoubtedly your sins apart from Jesus deserve perdition; but Christ and His death have infinitely glorified God as to sin, so that the door of salvation is open to you or any other that believes in Him. Then and not till then will you worship the Father. There is nothing higher in heaven; yet you on earth begin that worship, which is of heaven and will never end.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, Go Call Thy Husband (4:16-18)

John 4:16-18

It is the way of grace to speak and act in a love beyond creature thought to one that deserves only blame. This had the Lord Jesus shown thus far to the Samaritan. In every way He is the image of the invisible God. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Nevertheless grace alone suffices not; for man is fallen, evil, and hostile to God without knowing it aright if at all. Now his ruin morally must be known if he is to be saved and blessed. He must therefore know himself as well as God; and himself in God's presence as God sees him. How can this be? Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And He is “full” of grace and truth. Grace and truth came by Him; and both shine as none can deny, through His person and words on the Samaritan. She felt already in a measure His grace; but truth enters through the conscience in order that both grace and truth should be really known in the soul. Therefore, when the woman betrays by her dark request in ver. 15 (“Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw”) that she was still outside the marvelous light of God, “Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband and come hither.” It seems abrupt and at first sight strange. It was the direct path to her conscience and divinely wise. For grace cannot accomplish its purpose, God's purpose of love, till man is brought to see and own the truth of his own state. Then only can one appreciate the truth of what God is in the holy mercy that saves the unholy through Christ our Lord; and righteously too, for sin must be judged as it deserves.

The woman was still walking like the rest of the world in a vain show. From this the Lord delivers her. “Go, call thy husband, and come hither.” “I have no husband,” she answers quickly. “Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly” (ver. 18). How overwhelming, yet how gracious! Not a reproach in His mouth; but He Who knew all men drew from her, by a word of His, the confession of her actual state of sin and shame, and set before her such a sketch of her life as testified to her conscience, that in her case at least all things were naked and laid bare to His eyes with Whom she had to do.

Her answer proves that His words had entered her conscience, and that her soul fell under them. There was no effort to parry, no attempt to excuse, no seeking to hide or escape from His presence. On the contrary, she stood there a convicted sinner and owned, not merely that He spoke truly, but that she perceived Him to be “a prophet” (ver. 19). It was the word of God living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. She was manifest in His sight, but by the grace now applied, however humbled to the dust, content to own what she really was and to receive from Him as from God's mouth. For His is not man's word, but, as it is truly, God's word, which also works in every soul that believes.

Thus divine light must act out he soul now, in order that for it all things may be real before God. Hence where His word enters, discovering a life of sin and self, yet in full grace on God's part, the soul bows to God in confession. There is moral reality truly begun, however little developed in detail. How wondrous is God's intervention in Christ, as worthy of Him as suitable and cleansing to the sinner! It is the washing of water by the word, as says the apostle, speaking of Christ's love to the, church all the way through. And this the woman here proves.

So it ever is. The message of God to sinners (and all are such), when by grace received, deals with the conscience and not merely with the affections. Repentance ensues no less than faith; repentance by God's word judging all within, and faith in receiving God's word and God's gift from without. This now is fully revealed in Christ; and He is life, “Christ our life.” For the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining, and in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and consequently the seal of the Spirit. For it is of God that the soul, repentant and believing, should know grace and truth, beyond even what the Samaritan could then bear. Nor does any falsehood more dishonor the gospel than the dim religious light or rather darkness, which would plunge souls and even believing souls in uncertainty, and belie the God of all grace as if He begrudged the blessing to the contrite spirit.

Listen not, dear reader, to those enemies of the cross of Christ, who are so blinded as to teach that our Lord practiced reserve about His own precious work. It was He that announced, even before His Galilean ministry, that the Son of man must be lifted up (that is, on the cross) that whosoever believeth on Him may have eternal life; and that God so loved the world, the sinful, guilty, Christ-rejecting world, as to give His Only-begotten that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life. It was He, that in its course and in the presence of incredulous and blaspheming scribes, would have a most crowded company to know that the Son of man hath power, yea rightful title, on earth to forgive sins—a title assuredly not less since He died and rose, and has all authority given Him in heaven and on earth, saying to His servants, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation. It was He Who even before this lovingly rebuked the aspiring or murmuring twelve, who were in danger from vain-glory, with the words, “The Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” That Satan would stick at nothing to cloak from needy souls such words of grace is as certain as that the Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost, among other ends worthy of God, to empower those that preach the gospel unto all the nations, beginning from the city wherein our Lord was crucified.

It is thus that the soul meets God, not in truth only but in grace; it is in His Son, Jesus Christ. “This is the true God and eternal life.” It is after the sin, but before the judgment, that the dead may hear and live—believing, have eternal life and come not into judgment, but have passed from death into life. Less than this is not the gospel of God—is not Christianity—as the Holy Spirit has revealed it.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, In Him a Well of Water (4:14)

John 4:14

To the unrenewed mind there is nothing so foreign as grace. God's grace to a sinner seems to a moral man making light of sin; and therefore the higher his idea of divine holiness, and the greater his reverence, the less is it credible. The sinner himself regards it as too good to be true. Only when we stand convicted in our own consciences before God, revealed as He is in Jesus, do we believe it; and only as we walk by faith, are we enabled to use His grace without abusing it. Nothing so needful to the sinner, nothing so blessed to the saint, as grace, unless it be the God of grace in Christ, the source and fullness and display of it all in the Only-begotten.

Here the woman of Samaria was at first bewildered, though struck and attracted by the wondrous Man that brought God so near her in compassionate love to meet her sin, misery, and want. She answers the expression of infinite grace with the difficulties she considers insuperable. “Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou this living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?” (vers. 11, 12.) It was but natural thought and natural religion; wholly inadequate for man's case, now that he was sinful and an outcast from God; and how much less adequate for God, dishonored and disobeyed, unknown and disliked, because He must judge sins? What then must become of the sinner? How can he save himself?

Jesus spoke of another well incomparably deeper, of which as yet she had no comprehension. Jesus had—yea, was—everything to draw with; Jesus has and gives the living water. He is the Son of the Father, and entitled to give the believer eternal life, and, more than that, the Holy Spirit as the power of enjoying it in fellowship with the Father and the Son; and all this on earth now, in spite of what we naturally are, by virtue of His redemption. He is both the life eternal and the propitiation for our sins. He had the living water as the Son; He could and would give it to the poorest sinner that believes the gospel as the Savior of the world, fruit of His sufferings unto death of the cross, and of His resurrection.

“Greater than our father Jacob"! ay, immeasurably greater than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; than Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; than Noah, Daniel, and Job; than all the saintly men and women that ever were; than Michael and all angels and principalities, to say nothing of powers. For He is God, the eternal Word, the Only-begotten of the Father. He is therefore divinely competent as He is absolutely reliable. And He is full of grace and truth—the very thing that lost man has not and can find nowhere else. Could the law, truly of God as it was, save the guilty? It could only condemn; and to this an awakened soul sorrowfully but humbly and thoroughly submits. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. Is not this grace, the saving grace of God?

But no one receives it who doubts the full glory of Christ's person. For indeed there is otherwise no sufficient basis before God for sinful man. No mere man could dispense the living water. The Samaritan saw Jesus wearied with the journey, sitting just as He was at the fountain; and she heard Him to her surprise ask of her to drink, though then she judged Him but a Jew, though she could not but feel increasingly as He spoke how extraordinary He was. Come of woman indeed He was to save lost man, come under law to redeem those under law, that either and both might receive sonship as a gift of God's grace, and not this only but the Spirit of God's Son sent out into their hearts, crying Abba, Father. This could only be because Jesus is the Son of God, as no other is or could be, though by grace every believer is truly child and by adoption son of God.

Hence, that the faith should be of divine source and character, the necessity of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1 John 5:1, 5). As yet, the Samaritan was in the dark, though moved and drawn by His gracious ways and words; and so she understood not His words no less plain than marvelous. God's grace was no more believed than Christ's person, and thus the blessing was to her inscrutable. Yet to her unbelieving and unintelligent question the Lord replies with what, when she did believe, would prove a truth full of comfort to man as of goodness from God. “Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him

shall never thirst. But the water which I shall give him shall become in him a well [or, fountain] of water springing up into eternal life” (vers. 13, 14).

The Lord thus explains more clearly than ever how the living water is the great supernatural gift man needs. The water of an earthly spring, however good, like every natural boon, lasts but for the moment. It quenches thirst, only to recur soon and constantly, as is the nature of all things seen and temporal. The soul, immortal as it is, needs more to satisfy, as God delights in giving when He is looked to in felt want. But here the Lord vouchsafes what satisfies the believer and God Himself, what forms a blessed and permanent and intimate relationship with the Son and the Father. It is not only eternal life, as in John 3, but the Spirit of adoption given, and therefore said to become in him, the believer, a fountain of water springing up into eternal life. Not only are creature things no longer an object of desire, but a fountain of divine refreshment is within through the indwelling Spirit, Who ever leads the believer to worship by His own power, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh. It is not holy longings only as of old, but present possession and enjoyment by virtue of Christ come and redemption. It is inexhaustible and leads the soul to the sources on high.

My reader, have you thus found rest and everlasting joy in the Son of God? The Holy Spirit is given, now that His atoning blood is accepted for the believer, to glorify Him. It is as free as air, but only to faith in Christ. “Whosoever"! Forsake not your own mercies; despise not God's grace. Receive Christ, believing on His name: and all is yours forever. For God Who calls is faithful.

Bible Treasury: Volume 18, Thou Wouldest Have Asked of Him (4:10)

The Lord proceeds to lead on the woman and inspire confidence in her heart; and the Holy Spirit records it for others who were to hear His words when written: for they surely are spirit and life, words of life eternal. As yet she was spiritually dull and dark. She saw not the True Light, she believed not yet on Him in Whom is life, the light of men—guilty but favored men. Had she known God as the Giver (not exactor, as all hearts naturally conceive), had she believed in the glory of Him Who had humbled Himself to save (of which she had a sample in His asking of her a drink of water), she would have asked of Him, and He would have given her living water.

For the blessing of the grace of life to a needy lost sinner (and so it is with every child of man) is no question of self-effort or even self-sacrifice, of a charm or a rite, but of faith in the Son of God to Whom the word of God bears witness. On the one hand, “what is born of the flesh is flesh,” and sinful man, Jew, Greek, Samaritan is dead before God. On the other hand, life comes solely to us in the Light of life, it is in Jesus the Lord. Hence said He (John 5:24), “he that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.” The Lord therefore, Himself the quickening Spirit (1 Cor. 15), said not a word to her of baptism; nor did the disciples any more than the Lord baptize her in fact. Whatever the importance of baptism, to impart life is never attributed to it once in all scripture. “He that believeth,” says the Lord (John 6:47), “hath life eternal;” and so in substance often, and never otherwise. “I thank God,” says the apostle Paul, “that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gains, lest any should say that I baptized (or, that ye were baptized) unto mine own name... For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:14-17). “In Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). So James 1:18, and 1 Peter 1:23-25, and 1 John 5:1. The divine testimony is uniform and full, clear and conclusive.

But the word was not yet mixed with faith in the Samaritan's soul. Else self-judgment had been produced, and such a sense of sin in herself, and of goodness (if not yet salvation) in Him, as would have drawn her to the Son of God in earnest. To be saved the individual soul must meet God now, and meet Him about its sins: otherwise it cannot evade Him in the person of the Son of man, the Judge of quick and dead, on the great white throne. Then it is too late. Judgment is irreparable and everlasting perdition. To hear Christ's word, to believe God Who sent Him, is to have life, eternal life. This was exactly what the sinner needed, but had not yet. If His word had penetrated, she would have asked of Him, and He would have given her living water.

But it will be asked, What of the church? what of the sacraments? Now it is a notable fact that in the Gospel of John, where eternal life is preeminently set out, not a word is said of either. There is always harmony in divine truth. The church, baptism, and the Lord's supper, are fully treated in the apostle Paul's Epistles, to say nothing of the inspired history in the Acts. But nowhere does scripture connect eternal life with the church any more than with the public Christian institutions. As everything is ordered aright in scripture, so are souls inexcusable who fall into so grievous an error as to stake life eternal on church or sacraments. It is contact with Christ by faith, it is His word applied by the Spirit, that gives life in the Son of God. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

Faith therefore is always individual, even if a thousand believed at the same instant out of a multitude listening to the word of God. The church does not preach, but a servant of Christ or as here the Lord Himself; and when the soul accepts it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God, it effectually works in such as believe. Its earliest effect is deep anxiety before God and calling on the Lord. “Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.”

“By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8. Such is the blessed standing and assurance of the Christian in due time. Nor is it otherwise now than it has ever been, though far greater light and privileges be now enjoyed. “For therein [i.e., faith] the elders had witness borne to them,” or obtained a good report, as the A. V. says. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. There was not, there certainly cannot be, another Savior; and by God's word and Spirit He was always received. Righteousness, as the apostle proves, was reckoned to Abraham himself in uncircumcision. He was circumcised afterward, as a seal in the flesh. He believed God long before; and this was reckoned to him for righteousness. It is the same now in principle, when souls are baptized, not circumcised.

Salvation like faith is individual. From first to last one must come to God believingly, for without faith it is impossible to please Him; with genuine faith ever is genuine repentance. We judge and condemn ourselves when we truly believe Him, and trust His grace in giving His Son. “Already are ye clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” John 15. We are born of water and of the Spirit. The truth thus sanctifies; which a ceremony never can, nor a body, were it even the church, however important and of immense moment in other ways. “He that disbelieveth shall be condemned,” i.e. damned, even if baptized by Peter or Paul.

In believing God's word the soul hears and answers the call of God. All the blessing may not be at once; but the Lord is confided in and the heart goes out to Him Who came to die for us, for our sins. “Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” And in truth it is not only life in believing, but the Holy Ghost subsequent on it, that peace and joy might be full, and God's love be shed abroad in the heart. The gift of the Holy Spirit is more than life, however blessed life may be. It is the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. It is the Spirit not of fear or bondage, but of power and love and soberness.

Dear reader, have you got this blessing? or do you still lack it, like the Samaritan at first?

Bible Treasury: Volume 18, If Thou Knewest the Gift of God (4:10)

John 4:10

The woman of Samaria knew it not, nor did the Jews a whit more; nor does the natural man in Christendom. It is wholly beyond the heart and mind till renewed from above. The heathen could not but regard their deities as the projected image of themselves, of like passions and lusts, envious of man's complete happiness. Had men known them to be as they really are, demons availing themselves of man's guilty conscience to set themselves up as gods and turn away their votaries from the true God, they would have understood that demons could only reflect the hatred and malice of the devil.

God is love, as well as light. In Him is no darkness at all; but being love He sent His Son to shine in this world darkened as it is through sin. Nor is this all the love He shows, but rather the beginning of what is infinitely superior to every difficulty and want. God is not demanding but giving, and only this, as regards eternal life and redemption. Both are His gift in Christ. Thus only must He be known by the sinner, not as a receiver but as the Giver. It would be beneath His majesty to take any other place; it denies His nature, falsifies the truth and leaves no room for love.

This was not at all manifested under the law. There man is prominent. “Thou shalt not do this,” “Thou shalt do that.” Man was by it required to do his duty to God and man, in order to prove that, being fallen, he could not; and so force him, if he had a conscience as to his own state and faith in God's word, to look to another, the Messiah, as all the saints did from Adam downwards. But the law, as it made nothing perfect, so it fell in with the natural thought of man that all depended on him, on the obedience he should render to God. As law, it excluded grace; and therefore those who saw nothing beyond the law stood on their own merits, not on the coming Messiah. All taught of God whether under the law or before rested their hopes on Christ, not on themselves. Therefore man as he is may admit the reasonableness of the law, as he doubts not his own competency to fulfill it; but grace he hates and understands not. The gospel flows from God's love in Christ to the world. It is not a call for man to love God, but the revelation that “God so loved the world.”

The Samaritans were only heathen who adopted somewhat of Jewish elements and were darker still than the Jews. But the True Light was that which, coming into the world, sheds its light on “every man,” not on Israel only, but on any, be they the vilest. This is the moral glory of Christ, as also of the gospel, God's testimony concerning Him and His work.

The woman who came and found the Lord sitting at the well was just the one to prove the virtues of grace. In truth He was there to find her as she was, and to bless her according to the riches of grace forever. It was not the time when women came to draw water. She was alone, and might well in her circumstances shun the society of others. She had ardently sought happiness in the flesh and had not found it. She could not now but feel herself degraded, despised, and wretched. But here was One yet more alone in the world He had made; with a heart toward all to bless them, but the loneliest Stranger through man's selfishness.

But grace sought her. “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” He sought her wholly ignorant of Him, He perfectly knowing her, as He knew and knows all men. Bent on giving her “living water,” He asks a drink, as one wearied with the journey; for indeed though true God He was not less really man. She was astonished that a Jew would so humble himself. Ah! had she known that He was the Lord of glory; but this was as unknown to her as to the princes of this age, who crucified Him. No doubt He was athirst, but He sought an avenue to her heart and would not work a miracle for Himself. He would give the best gift, and have her learn that every good giving and every perfect gift comes down from above from the Father of lights.

Are not you as dull and dark as she of Samaria? Do you really know “the gift of God” any more than she did when the Lord accosted her? Do you believe in Him as a giver, and not an exacter? He is giving eternal life in Christ to every needy soul that hears the Shepherd's voice, as the Samaritan did. It is therefore without money and without price. It is wholly independent of the demerits it finds. Who could be more depraved than this sinful woman? God in the gospel is a giver of His best. What more blessed than eternal life? What more necessary to enjoy God and please Him, to serve and to worship Him here and in heaven?

This is Christianity. There may be and there is much more; but less than this is not Christianity. Beware lest you rest on some external sign, which your unbelief exalts into an idol to your extreme peril, perhaps to your utter ruin. Eternal life is inseparable from faith in Christ. “He that believeth hath” that life, and none else. Therefore is it of faith, that it might be according to grace, as every eternal blessing is. For God will not give up His love and glory as a Giver. When you have received life in Christ, He loves to accept your little offerings and to graciously put honor on that which lacks it. “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations,” said the blessed Lord to His feeble disciples. Why! to every other eye it was He Who deigned to continue with them, to sustain and uphold them in all pitiful love: else had they too gone back and walked no more with Him

Yes! Jesus our Lord alone vindicated and set out in attractive brightness the grand essential truth, so new to mankind in all states and ages—“the gift of God” —the truth that every soul needs to face and learn for itself—that God is the Giver and will be nothing else to sinful man. Our pride likes it not: rich or poor, high or low, we want to earn of Him, and are unwilling to be debtors to nothing but mercy in Christ. “If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?” is the feeling of the heart now, as truly as of Naaman the Syrian.

May you, if yet unblest, give up “Behold, I thought,” and, believing in Christ, be enabled to say, “Behold, now I know.”

Bible Treasury: Volume 18, Father Seeking Worshippers, The (4:23)

John 4:23

This chapter shows God's grace and truth in dealing with a sinner by Jesus His Son; and the sinner not convicted only, but brought to worship the Father in the relationship of a child, to worship God according to His nature as a saint. It is the revelation in short of Christianity; and this the more impressively, because the one thus blessed on the spot was just before a wretched guilty woman of Samaria, saved to worship Him Who is God and Father in spirit and in truth.

Doubtless men ought to worship, as they ought to obey and love God. But their state unfits them: they are sinners, in their sins, and alienated from Him. As they are, to take the place of worship and of obeying the law is to deny their ruin. For it is too late to talk of your duty when you are all wrong and lost, as His word declares, in order to bring men to repentance. Again, it is worse than vain, “in the hour that now is,” to pretend to worship our God and Father unless we are genuine worshippers. The apostle adds, that the worshippers, having been once purged, or cleansed, have no more conscience of sins (Heb. 10:2). Adam, now that he had conscience of his sin, hastened to hide from God when he heard His voice in the garden. So would all unpurged worshippers, if they heard His voice to-day. It is no question of sincerity, but of salvation; cleansing by the blood of Jesus is absolutely requisite. Impossible to worship Him in spirit and in truth, till we know Him by faith as revealed by and in His Son; and we never know Him thus till convicted of what we have done and are by His word as the Samaritan was.

Nor are any so guilty as those who seem so near in Christendom. Christening or a catechism does not purge the conscience. The servant who knew his lord's will, and made not ready nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes (the heathen), shall be beaten with few. God is not mocked: evil unjudged and unremoved cannot escape His judgment; and none are so far from Him really as those that hear the gospel and despise it, unless it be those who profess the Lord's name hypocritically, or such as from a bad conscience become apostates from Christian profession.

For there is grace enough in Christ to meet and save the vilest, as this chapter proves. Hear Him, “wearied with His journey,” sitting at the well, and asking a drink of the sinful woman, to win her heart to God's love, to awaken a just sense of her state, to give her faith in Himself, and in fact to make her a true worshipper. And the Father, as He told her, is seeking such: wondrous truth! not they seeking Him, but He them. Sinners, convicted and believing, are made true worshippers. They contribute nothing but their sins. Grace does and gives all that is of price. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all take part. The sinner has but to abhor his sins and submit to be blessed by God's grace. No wonder, that the result is immense, as the work is; but it is of faith that it may be according to grace, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, Whose is the glory and the dominion unto the ages of the ages, Amen.

And this is “the hour that now is.” Have you yet listened to the Savior Son of God, as did the Samaritan? Then you too are a true worshipper, bound to worship God in spirit and truth, not formally like a Jew, nor of course falsely like a Samaritan. Yea, if a simple-hearted believer, you are entitled to adore Him evermore as Father; for you are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Grace does not find in any sinful man what pleases God; it creates and confers all that pleases Him, when it has brought us to confess that in us, that is in our flesh, dwells no good thing. Naturally I am a man, a wretched man that needs a deliverer; and this is none other than the Lord Jesus, Who went down below man's sin and God's judgment that we might be set free in His righteousness, yet all in pure and sovereign grace. For grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

But have you owned your sins, your life of sin, as the Samaritan did when convicted by the word of Jesus? Or will you hide your sin like Adam and set yourself as far as you can from God? Oh the infatuation! Do you not know that you must be made manifest another day before Christ? For He is the appointed Judge. What will it be with you then? Assuredly everlasting perdition, unless you have all out with Him now and here. But repenting, and believing God's love in Him, you become the true worshipper that the Father is seeking. So the Samaritan became that very day: why should not you to-day? Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. The mountain of Samaria can bring you no blessing, nor can Jerusalem, or those that follow in the wake of either, remove your curse: none but Jesus can avail, Who became on the cross a curse for all under curse. But He is all-sufficient; He is the Giver of the living water. The water that He gives the needy one that asks of Him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto eternal life. Such are the true worshippers that the Father seeks; and they only then worship God in spirit and in truth.

“ To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace but as of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.” It is God reckoning righteousness apart from works; yet it is the only principle that produces good works as its fruit. Oh let not the pride of unbelief blind you to your truly lost estate; but may you turn to God as you are, a poor lost sinner, and find in the grace of Christ all you want!

Then and thus, met with the free-giving of God, and sealed of His Spirit, as one resting solely on Christ and His finished work, your heart will go out in praise and adoration. This is to be a true worshipper; and such is the Father seeking to the praise of His Son, Whose things the Holy Spirit takes and declares to us who believe. As the Son glorified the Father, so does the Father glorify the Son on high; and the Spirit glorifies Him here below and bears witness of Him. Are you a witness of Jesus, God's Son, the Savior of the world—ay, of a poor unworthy Samaritan? Or are you, alas! a witness of yourself or of other men? Such are not those to be saved. The saved are true worshippers.

Bible Treasury: Volume 9, Worship in Spirit and in Truth (4:21-24)

(John 4:21-24.)

My present task is to speak a little, not on the worshipper, but on the worship—on worship in spirit and in truth. On this subject many, not to say most, of God's children have accustomed themselves to language and thought in general vague, often removed far from the truth of God They have allowed themselves the habit of calling every religious service worship, embracing not only prayer, but preaching or teaching. Even the larger part of that which is thrown into meter and verse in hymns is only the expression of desire, sometimes of doctrine, very generally of prayer. Proper worship is the rarest thing possible, even among the true children of God. The reason is plain. You cannot have true worship unless the worshippers are set consciously in their Christian place before God. I endeavored to show on a former occasion that the worshippers suppose, not only divine life in the soul, but also the relationship of a child of God known by the Spirit now. This is not the state of Christians generally. They have been, by some sad means or other, I am sure with upright enough intentions, turned aside from the full grace of God. They have been afraid of confiding in what the Lord Jesus has done for their souls. It is granted entirely that the grace of God is so infinite, and so above the thoughts and reasonings of men, that nothing but the power of the Holy Spirit can keep the soul in the enjoyment of it, and that all attempt to look at grace out of God's presence is attended with the utmost danger. The flesh would habitually turn it to license; and thus it is that many godly souls have been stumbled, seeing such overwhelming evil by wrong representations, or, we should rather call them, by misrepresentations, of the grace of God.

They have heard the most high-flown expressions, the cover of sin, or even of hypocrisy. Instead of judging the man, they have sometimes slipped into misjudging the truth of God. This is not wise; for it can never be without the virtual impeachment of the word of God. Their consciences are thus at the mercy of evil or careless men who dishonor all the truth they talk of. When we open the scriptures, we see His grace and truth clearly. The very object of God in so revealing Himself is to put believers convicted of sin and repentant, in the bright, thorough, simple-hearted enjoyment of His grace, that the whole life should be the expression of thanksgiving and praise, as well as service and devotedness to Himself. There is another reason why people shrink from this, because they have accepted the mischievous idea that the Christian is left in this world to improve the race and be an ornament, if not an ameliorator, of society, to deal with mankind as under probation and the law of God, just as Israel were before redemption. Now, I do not for a moment deny the Christian is meant to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. He is here for a testimony; but a testimony of what? of his own goodness, or of Christ's? It makes a great difference, “Let your light so shine before men,” said our Lord, “that they seeing your good works shall glorify your Father in heaven.” This is the grand point, It is not, Let your good works shine before men, the effect of which would be to glorify yourself. And here is where men are apt to err, because the glory of a certain individual casts a sort of halo around the race to which he belongs.

But it is a totally different thing where our light shines. By our light I understand our holding forth Christ, not qualities of our own, but that which we have only in the Lord. Consequently it is the good confession of His name. When men see good works coupled with the holding up of the Lord Jesus, the profession of Him does bring glory not to us but to bur Father in heaven. These are the words of the Lord Jesus, but men shrink from that which gives them the distinctive consciousness that they belong not to the world; for there it is man has not a little inclination to figure. It does not matter how humble he is, he would like to be somebody. But this is the very thing that Christ would relieve one from; for if the gospel be true, and it is not for Christians to doubt, one of its first principles is that we are dead to the world, and that our life is hid with Christ in God. When a man is dead, there is an end of him. This is what Christ writes upon the believer, what He makes good and true in everyone who has accepted Him and His mighty work. We are crucified with Him, not simply called to crucify nature; but all that are Christ's have crucified the flesh and its affections. Thus you see the first principles of Christianity sever those that are Christ's from the world, from its interests and its objects; while they introduce them, if you will, on a new ground into the world, for it is granted that this is also true. “As thou [the Father] hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” The death of Christ takes us out of the world, but by His resurrection we are sent into the world on a new footing of life and righteousness. It is on the new ground of God's righteousness that we stand as true worshippers, and thus only can we render worship to our God and Father in worship and in truth.

Now even God's children shrink from this place. They love the Lord Jesus. They cleave to His person, they find comfort in His love, they cannot do without His blood; but they would rather not go farther. They would rather not give up the world quite. They would like to be sure of the next world; but the tenacity with which they hold to this world forbids their having a true consciousness of the next. In such a state true Christian worship is impossible. Hence, therefore, as it would never do to deny that they are worshippers, or that they worship, they get to call even going to hear a sermon worship. We all know this, and perhaps some now present are in the habit of saying so. I refer to it for the purpose of showing the too common vagueness of God's children to worship. The condition out of which worship springs by grace is so feebly realized that we must not wonder at it.

What then is Christian worship?

The worship of the Israelites was suited to their condition. In that worship every Israelite joined. He brought his oblation, his gift, his peace-offering; and there were also presented the fruits of the land that God gave them, as we know that God prescribed on their entering the land. Now we should feel that such things do not belong to the Christian properly but to the ancient elect people.

God is not forming since redemption another company of worshippers having no connection either with Jerusalem, or with that mountain of Samaria. A new thing has taken place. Worshippers are no longer called to Jerusalem, nor does grace exclude the Samaritans; but contrariwise, wherever the Spirit of God forms a people for the praise of God the Father of the Lord Jesus, throughout the world, these are the true worshippers; and the true worship is—their adoration of Him who has brought them into such a blessed relationship. Their hearts delight in what He has done and suffered for them; they find their joy in Himself. God has given Him, and He has displayed Himself in Jesus Christ His Son. True Christian worship is their hearts' return for all.

Accordingly, by the Spirit, our Lord Jesus here gives a certain characteristic of it, which I shall dwell on for a few moments. “The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father.” Now it is remarkable, if you look at the language of Christendom at large how little the Father's name appears. Take up any form of worship in any part of West or East: there is trifling difference in this respect. They all agree in sinking down from conscious nearness as children to the Father, into the distant place of a people; before a governor and a judge. If they approach God, it is to God at a distance, to a God that they are in quest of but dread; to a God from whom they are seeking in some way to win a certain measure of enjoyment they do not yet possess, a certain confidence they desire but do not as yet know.

Hence, therefore, we find distance and doubt, fear and anxiety, marked in the formal language of such souls even if children of God. Take one very well-known instance, and by no means, as it appears to me, an extreme case. Texts illustrating the wicked are selected to prepare the soul for a knowledge of God, such for instance as Ezekiel's, “When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath done,” &c.; or the words of the prodigal son, “I will arise and go to my Father.” What is the meaning of all this? It is surely not for the Christian. Is the Christian a wicked person, or even one who is arising to go to his Father like the prodigal? In such a state of soul Christian worship is and must be unknown. · After these texts are read, there is a confession, and this again is followed by an absolution; and then, but still with fear and vacillation and perplexity, a certain recognition of and yearning after God is expressed, a deprecation of His anger, entreaties for favor, especially in earthly things, withal prayers for pardon and so forth. You may say, is not that scriptural? But I say, is it scripture for Christians in their worship? No, beloved friends, but for those who have lost the idea of worship, and have sunk into another people who are not another, but rather half Jews and half Christians.

We have referred to the prodigal son. Now if we wanted to take that text to describe Christian worship, it should be the prodigal not in his confession of sin, but when he has arisen and gone to his father, when the best robe is put on, when the ring is on his finger, and the shoes on his feet, and when there is the scene of gladness, not merely the prodigal or the friends or the whole house rejoicing, but, best of all, the father himself rejoicing. “Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and he merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.” Some no doubt will exclaim, That is heaven. Not a bit of it. It is here, it is now. It is true of the Christian in this world. It would be perfectly impracticable for the world; and herein lies their hitoh. They want to bring the world into the worship, and as they cannot raise the world to Christian worship, they sink the Christian in worship to the level of the world. But I deny that the parabolic scene of joy in the parable means heaven; and I will tell you why: The eldest son was in the field; and when he came to the house, he did not understand the reason of such joy. He in effect disowns the prodigal as his brother, and casts up to the father “this thy son,” who had wasted his substance with riotous living. Is not this here below?

Thus the real point is God the Father finding His joy in blessing the prodigal, yea, bringing him into the communion of His own joy. Such is the character and spring of Christian worship. It is the sons of God that enter by the Holy Ghost's power into the delight of the Father Himself in Christ. But, again, you see it cannot be heaven; for when we are there, there will be no elder brothers murmuring at the grace of God. Can you deny this? Can you affirm that this is not the just application of the parable? Can you say that there is any shifting the scene?

It is not in heaven that the prodigal was clothed and blessed. It was here; and it is very solemn to think that it is here, and here only. When we come to be with Christ, there is no putting on Christ in heaven. If I have not put on Christ here, then I shall be found naked, according to 2 Cor. 5:3: “If so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked.” The wicked when they rise at the resurrection shall be clothed; they shall have their bodies; but when thus clothed, they shall be found naked, for they have not put on Christ here. The just will have been clothed too, but the clothing of their resurrection-body does not leave them naked, but rather manifests them like Christ. Now, no doubt, men by their clothing may, in the eyes of their fellows, cover over what they really are; but in the resurrection-state all must be manifested, whether they be just or unjust. It is the Christian's comfort that in glory he will be manifested; but for the wicked, what a solemn thought that they will be seen through and through! Then they must—I will not say be honest—but then absolutely be unveiled, and detected in all their hatred and evil. When clothed, they will be found naked. But we put on the best robe now.

We have all the blessing of Christ now as the fruit of redemption; and this is exactly what was intended to be shown. You cannot separate the worship from the worshippers; and consequently, as the revelation of God is always the ground of the worship, and as He makes Himself known as the Father× He necessarily looks for and desires the loving praise of the children of God. He could not look for or accept anything less than such worship. We deserve nothing indeed but judgment; but redemption has made us spotless according to the faultlessness of Jesus Christ before God. What has put us in this absolute purity before Him is the work of Christ already done, and the Holy Ghost is given to us as the power of enjoying it. The Holy Ghost is not given to us in heaven, but on earth. We shall enjoy and worship in perfection there; and no hindrance can he there. We shall be in eternal and complete enjoyment, and in the possession of all that God has given us through His own Son; but here we are brought by faith, yea, in the Spirit, into the reality of it, though there may be hindrances many and great.

The grand object of Christ's becoming incarnate was to reveal the Father. He grew up perfect as an infant, as a boy, as a man. We find Him blending the most entire submission to His parents, with the consciousness of divine relationship. I refer to this to show the consciousness of His Sonship as man here below, for throughout all His life on earth He speaks of God as His Father. Yet when He on the cross made atonement for sin, He poured out His soul unto death, and as He did so with these most solemn words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” On arising from the dead, He sends by Mary of Magdala the message, “I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.” Thus He addresses His own disciples in these two relationships, the one in which He had walked all His life, the other expressed in His dying upon the cross. But He puts His disciples in both His relationships after their judgment was past, after their sins were taken away from them so that all that God is as God, and all that He feels as Father, should be nothing but love and satisfaction in them as believers because of Christ's redemption. What wisdom and grace! and therefore it is that we are now brought into enjoyment of Him not only as Father but also as God—so terrible before redemption, but now the source of the deepest blessing to the Christian. If I did not know Him as God, it would be a very great loss to my soul. We need to be kept with solemn thoughts of His majesty, as well as rest in His love as Father; and the Son of God keeps the whole balance of the truth undisturbed, and lets me learn what He knew of God as God no less perfectly than what He knew of Him as Father. He has now brought all to me in the way of perfect grace. Thus grace makes believers as Christ Himself, apart of course from His deity.

This is exactly what the Lord Jesus brings them into as worshippers. He says that the worshipper should “worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Unspeakable goodness! We see this by the person He was then seeking Himself. The woman of Samaria—what was she? She thought Jesus was only a Jew; she did not know that He was the Son of God. But the Lord soon woke her from her dream. In a few words He brought before her all her life up to that moment. He told her of her five husbands, and that the one with whom she now lived was not her husband. Thus she was laid bare before the light of God. She felt that He was a prophet, and the Lord did not leave her until she knew that He was the Messiah, the Son, the Savior. This was a worshipper the Father was seeking, and could she not worship in spirit and truth? He comes with power to make us what He seeks us to be. He does not look to find it in us. He seeks ourselves, no doubt; but He gives us a new life, a new power, the Holy Ghost; and the consequence is, we are thoroughly furnished, not only for every good work, but for Christian worship. This woman is just an instance of it.

But there is more. It is not enough that we worship the Father, as grace reveals Him in the Son. There, is the two-fold relationship, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” When He speaks of the Father, it is the fullness of grace to make us what He wants us, but when He speaks of God, it is a necessity of His nature, and of ours too as born of Him.

Just so it is that one sees so beautifully in Rom. 2, a witness of the same truth. The apostle is going to bring in redemption through the blood and resurrection of Christ. The one is the basis of justifying, the other manifests its power. But before this he lets us see that God's principles are immutable. He shows us that it is only those that are found neither contentious nor disobedient, but on the contrary, that seek Him according to His own nature, that have eternal life. As he says in verse 6, “Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jews first and also of the Gentiles.”

Thus God's moral principles are not at all hampered by the grace of the gospel. There is the secret by which He makes an ungodly man a godly one. But though there is the grace of the gospel by which a man is brought out of guilt and sin unto God, the nature of God is not altered by the grace of redemption in Christ. This may suffice for the general principles of Christian worship for the children of God, I should rather say for such as are capacitated by the Spirit of God to draw near in the love of Christ and in the knowledge of His redemption, by the power of the Spirit to praise and adore the God and Father of our Lord Jesus that has brought them into such a place, and has manifested Himself in such goodness to our souls. And accordingly, it is in this spirit that we should read the New Testament.

Take, for instance, Eph. 1 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” I refer to this to show the condition, as also the spirit which alone produces worship. Is it any wonder that one cannot get the world to worship? It is not a question of educating men up to the point. The question is, when are people brought into the Christian state? It is then incumbent on them to worship in spirit and in truth. You see the same relationship here, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. He is not merely going to bless. A man who is waiting to be blessed may be a hopeful person; but he is not yet set free, as in Rom. 8:2, &c.

I remember, well, some time ago, during the revival movement, being often pained by rash expressions, from men talking lightly upon the grace of God. The truth is that bringing a man from darkness to light, from Satan's power to God's, is a serious thing; but I do not believe its reality unless there be a true (I do not say a deep) work in the conscience of the individual; I see this in the case of the woman of Samaria. Christ brought the whole truth of her life into the light. She was convicted. There is no grace unless faith be accompanied by repentance. Here we see all these blessings, but the point I refer to is that it is a present reality. When the children of God have the Spirit as a well within according to His word, then we have Christian worship.

I shall enter, of course, upon the helps as well as the hindrances according to the notice already given, but merely touch now on the principle of Christian worship. Take another passage from scripture, the Colossians. The apostle says in chapter 1, “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, and to all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Now just contrast these words with any liturgy that was ever invented. “Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!” Do you think that those persons who believe it would be very much afraid of sudden death? that is, of a speedy going to heaven to be with Christ? Why is it that professing Christians are in such dread of sudden death? It is because they think of a needful preparation for death. It all arises from an uncertainty about the Christian deliverance already effected. What is wanted even by real children of God is a better, a truer, knowledge of what salvation is—not a state we are hoping for, but in which we stand virtually now. The Old Testament speaks not of the Father and the Son as the New, or of salvation in the Christian sense of the word; but the one does not set aside the other, they are the complement of each other. In the Epistle to the Ephesians referred to, salvation is always spoken of as past and present. It is a state that flows from what has been done by and in Christ. But then quite in another way we are waiting for salvation. We have got the salvation of our souls, we are now waiting for the salvation of our bodies. But the salvation of the soul is as completely effected as it can be; redemption is wrought by Christ and accepted of God, and the Holy Ghost is already poured out on man. It is a solemn thing to affirm the possession of the Holy Ghost, but at the same time nothing is more sweet. Yet let me tell you that many good men are mistaken by founding the basis of it in something in themselves, instead of what Christ has done, sealed by the Holy Ghost. He never sealed until the work of redemption was done. In the Old Testament times there was never any saint without being quickened by the Spirit of God; but they could not have His seal until redemption was accomplished, as in Eph. 1.

So here we see saints described as giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Without multiplying instances, I give one passage more: “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” (Heb. 13:10-13.) The apostle takes advantage of a beautiful type in the law. When a victim was brought to the brazen altar, the blood was not brought into the holiest at all; the animal was killed outside. But when the blood was carried into the holiest, the body was taken and burned without the camp. This, he says, is what was found in Christ who suffered without the gate and is now gone into the presence of God, in order to place us within the holiest and without the world. Some look for a middle way. It is a poor comfort to have anything but the full grace and glory of God. We should not rest short of the truth of God on man's prudence. The way of prudence is unsafe in the sight of God. It is not faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God. Hold on, therefore, not to the reasonings of common sense, but to the revelation of the divine word. We are brought into the holiest because of that blood that has cleansed us and removed every trace of sin; and here, too, we who are brought into the holiest take the place of Him who was crucified, bearing His reproach.

Are you willing to be despised? to be nothing here, because made everything in the presence of God? This is the true glory of the Christian, and the Christian does most for God when he is most despised of men.

May our record be not in the newspapers, or on tombstones, but on high, where it is never forgotten. The Lord grant, meanwhile, that we be worshippers in the holiest, and witnesses without the camp, bearing His reproach.

Bible Treasury: Volume 9, Worshippers, True (4:20-24)

(John 4:20-24.)

The grace of our Lord is as rich as it is conspicuous in the scene before us. Had it not been so, He would not have unfolded worship to this woman of Samaria. He would have chosen some more worthy person. He might have found readily such a one as Peter or John, or had He gone beyond the bounds of His own disciples, such a one as Nicodemus, or Joseph of Arimathea. But not so. He was making known expressly the free-giving of God, revealed in Himself the Son, and distinguishing in the broadest and the most distinct manner the difference between that which had been and that which was now to be. The old worship was altogether unsuited to the new purposes of God; another hour was dawning. She of Samaria thought, like many a one since, that the worship of God was only a question of human opinion. Strange that even God's children should doubt that God's worship must be of God's will! That He Himself should be denied a voice the voice in His own worship is indeed the climax of man's incredulity, But so it has been, and so it is, and men see not the self-will that will not allow God to decide what is His will for the worship of His children.

There is no subject in which men think that difference is more allowable than in worship. But our Lord Jesus brings out the truth of God as to it unmistakably. Not that one pleads for the light of God in this matter and not elsewhere. Be assured that those who complain of lack of light on such a subject in scripture have a far more serious question to settle. Man's will is bad enough anywhere but specially so where it intrudes into God's worship. For this is as much a matter of revelation, and so of faith on our part, as the salvation of a man's soul; and the same faith which can trust God in one thing can trust Him in everything; while on the other hand the incredulity which doubts God on one point is ready to doubt in all. Those who talk doubtingly of the authority or the certainty of God's word as to Christian worship, ministry, the coming of the Lord, or anything else that is revealed, will be found to have no rest in Christ for their souls. The evil heart of unbelief is at work and unrebuked.

I deny (as a matter of fixed principle) that the word of God is obscure: the allowance of such a thought arises from nothing but secret infidelity, and infidelity from an unjudged will. For let us for a moment consider, Is it God's word, and is it for man, that is, for His people? Will you say then that man can speak more clearly than God? Will you say that God, when He proposes to reveal Himself to man, cannot make Himself understood by His own or others?

It is freely admitted that there is another characteristic of God's word. It is necessarily a moral test of the heart; and God, therefore, does put His word in such a form that dependence on Him must be exercised, and that rashness or a heady spirit will mistake. Not that this makes obscurity, but that faith and the affections are thus put to the test. “If thine eye be single,” says the Lord Jesus, “thy whole body shall be full of light.". The light of God always supposes and discovers a certain moral state; but God by His grace makes the heart to welcome the light.

The Lord then clearly draws a contrast between what was and what is now. Undoubtedly the woman of Samaria was wrong in her thoughts. She belonged to a people who took up the law, a heathen people who copied the forms of Judaism in part. “Salvation” says the Lord, “is of the Jews.” They knew whatever had been known in the matter of worship; but no matter what the darkness of the Samaritans, or the glimmer of light among the Jews, another hour was coming when a new character of worship would be brought in for the children of God; and I specially draw your attention to this. It is not for a moment denied that there were other vast changes, such as the preaching of the gospel to every creature. I merely now refer to the fact that the two things were to go on together, but altogether distinct in their own nature. In short, then, the gospel was to he preached to every creature, and the children of God were to be made true worshippers.

What then did our Lord mean by “true worshippers?” He first speaks negatively. “The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” (Ver. 21.) It was no longer to be a question of “this mountain,” with its spurious imitation of Israel, nor of Jerusalem with its imposing ritual of the law. But “the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. (Ver. 23.) This is the first point of which we have to take notice. Henceforth it is a question of worshipping the Father, a simple but wondrous privilege, in a general way easily enough understood, but not so easily carried out. To do so one must clean break with the world. For man, the world as such, does not affect it, nay, dares not to worship the Father. Nor need you wonder; for if you search the word of God you will always find that “the world” and “the Father” are in constant antagonism; just as the Son of God is to the great enemy, and the flesh or fallen man to the Spirit of God, so is the world to the Father.

One marked feature then of this new worship is, that the world is necessarily excluded. I do not mean by this that the world may not be present to hear; but that the nature of the worship shuts out the world from taking part. This will be made still more evident when we enter into particulars. It is God's children alone, those who have faith in Christ Jesus, who worship the Father. Yet doubtless the attempt has been made in many lands and ages to bring the world into Christian worship. The invariable effect is that such worship turns out fit neither for the world nor for the family of God. The effort to comprehend both on such a ground and for such an end must be a failure, a delusion. For the world, by the very fact that it is the world, is incapable of worshipping. Worship supposes the truth known, yea, it supposes God Himself known; worship supposes a new nature given; worship supposes the gift and power and action of the Holy Ghost; it supposes the Christian assembly wherein the Spirit works by whom He will. And all these things are wanting in the world. Nay, further, to put the world upon this ground is to deceive it; it is to be active parties in falsifying the conscience, and in deluding men as to their true condition in the sight of God.

But there is another and very grave result. The children of God never preserve their own elevation by grace in attempting to comprehend the world as worshippers; for thereby the world is not raised up, but the church sinks to the level of the world. Consequently, the language of

such worship savors always of uncertainty, hesitation, and dread, in the soul's relation to God; entreaties for pardon, deprecation of judgment, unbelieving prayers for the Spirit of God to be poured out afresh, and all the other petitions which naturally flow from a position which is essentially false. This is found in all religious systems invented by man.

Yet if there be intermingled with God's solemn judgment of sinners, incongruous as this may be, it appears in some sense a merciful inconsistency, rather than that the unconverted should be cheated by a more consistent worship to take the place of God's children without a warning. For what could be more awful in its way than to hear an unconverted man formally assuming the language of the church, expressing a delight in God of which he knows nothing and a communion with the Father whose love is hateful to him? But in fact all the liturgies I have seen (and they are not few) merely fall back upon the feelings of men, with a slight tincture of gospel and a large infusion of law. There may be sublime language and glowing ideas, chiefly borrowed from the Old Testament; but in substance they are utterly beneath intelligent Christian use, apart from faults of form, and the very idea of a liturgy now.

But, when we come to search and understand the distinctive truths of the New Testament, we see that what the Lord Jesus here intimates of the immense change in worship now at hand was connected with the accomplishment of the revelation of Himself, His work, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord could not but say, if one compares the Jews with the Samaritans, “We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” For worship is always according to the revelation: what then could it be where salvation was not? The Jewish worship was set out in figures and shadows; it was a hope, not an actual relationship and possession. The Jews were looking—and they were right in looking—for the Messiah, who would not only tell, but accomplish, all things; He whom they were looking for was to be a Savior. The salvation that the Jews had before their eyes was still a thing in prospect, and not yet brought home to the heart as a present reality. While they waited for Messiah, the worship was suited to their stale. It was surrounded with priests and forms, which showed that the way was not made manifest into the holiest. (Heb. 9)

But an end came to this state of promise and provisional imagery. The veil was rent from top to bottom, when the Jews led the Gentiles to crucify their Messiah, God's Son. Wonderful to say, in that crime of man, in the cross, God wrought redemption; and man first stood in presence of God, a Savior God. The whole Jewish system was at an end; it was dead if not yet buried, for God allowed a decent time for the funeral. But Judaism cast away life in rejecting the Messiah, and the cross made it evident. From His rejection the Lord (as the Spirit afterward) was gradually unfolding, as the disciples could bear, the new order of things; for those accustomed to the old wine did not relish the new all at once. They frequented the temple at the hour of prayer, though they went to their houses to break bread. For a little while they were half Jews and half Christians. But God was about to lead them out finally, and the Epistle to the Hebrews cut the last cord which bound the Christian Jew to the old economy. From that moment it was unfaithfulness to Christ, as He was now made known, to linger among the old things.

In the same Epistle God instructs us in Christian worship as contrasted with the Levitical service. What do we find? The legal sacrifices superseded by that of Christ, and the Jewish sanctuary, figure of the true into which Christ is gone and we now draw nigh in faith. The old sacrifices were always renewed; the Christian knows but one sacrifice, and the reason why is, that it has brought in perfection. Otherwise you only repeat and thereby give witness that you have nothing perfect. But the essence of the sacrifice of Christ is that it is once offered, and by that one offering He has not merely sanctified, but perfected forever them that are sanctified. Nothing can be more distinct than the doctrine of the apostle as to the offering of Christ for the Christian. He is looking not at passing circumstances, but at the essential difference between the Jewish worshipper and the Christian. The Jewish worshipper needed the constant succession of offerings to meet his wants; the Christian's wants are already met in the cross and in Christ Himself.

The new state of things has been effected by the grace of God through our Lord Jesus. The Christian is brought into the enjoyment of God for heaven and eternity; and this now by the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, whilst waiting for Christ to take him on high.

Let us look briefly at some of the privileges that constitute the true worshipper. It is evident that the very first want of the soul arises from the fact that he is a sinful, yea, lost man. For a sinner is rather a leper than a worshipper; and a leper, as you know, was by God's word an outcast, one who must stand afar off and announce his own uncleanness; one who was not only out of his tent, but out of the camp of Israel, and so incapable of bringing his gift to the presence of God. Such is really the condition of every sinful man before God. A leper typifies not a Christian in a bad state, but man who is wholly in the loathsomeness and corruption of his natural state, far from God. But the Christian is born of God, has received a new life or new nature that no man possesses naturally, with which Christ alone quickens. How is it to be had? Only in the Son of God, and this only by faith. There is no other life Godward.

It is granted that there is no true faith without repentance, and that what is commonly called Sandemanianism or Walkerism is in this utterly wrong. All efforts to obliterate repentance, in order to ease or simplify believing in Christ, are dangerous, false, and evil. They slight the work of God in the conscience and reduce faith to intellectualism. This, however, is not the point now, but the great truth that he who believes has, according to scripture, everlasting life.

Yet new birth alone does not make one a Christian worshipper. Supposing you had ever so many born of God, you would, were this all, have not one “true worshipper.” Not only, therefore, the world cannot be true worshippers, but even if people were truly converted, this of itself would not constitute them such. Hence it is that Christ does not say a word about true worship in John 3, because He is there simply insisting on the necessity of the new birth. But in John 4 we have Christ Jesus the Giver of the living water, and true worship follows. In John 3 Jesus is the Gift, in John 4 He is the Giver. If some think these distinctions very fine, it is because they do not understand them. They are as plain as they are important; and men simply show their own lack of intelligence in the truth by such quibbling. Are they ever happy men? Do they really enjoy peace with God? When we see clearly our own state and His grace, the rest follows and is enjoyed without cavil. I have said that in John 3 the Lord Jesus is the Gift of God the Father, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” In John 4 the Son of God says, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” The living water is therefore the figure not of Christ, but of the Holy Ghost; and I wish to prove the truth that you not only need life in Christ, but even if you had it, unless you have also the living water, you cannot be a true worshipper. The Holy Spirit must be given in order to this.

Many assume that the moment a man is born again he receives the Holy Ghost. But this is to confound the new birth with the gift of the Spirit. It is untrue that every man receives the Holy Ghost at the moment of being born again. There is an essential difference between the two operations. When one is born again, he is awakened from the slumber of sin and cries to God in the consciousness of his guilt and ruin. From the grace of Christ he may have some comfort, but God lets him taste of the bitterness of his own heart and ways. In the great majority of cases converted souls know what this is; and it is well that they should.

I do not deny that it is an imperfect state, a state very different from the just effect flowing from a full knowledge of the gospel. Such may look to Christ but not know His work, or the good news of salvation. In this state one is not a true worshipper. How could one not realizing his delivered condition worship in spirit and in truth? Is it pretended that one who cries “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” can at the same time say that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death?”

Outward affliction well consists with joy in the Holy Ghost at the same time, but not inward bondage with inward liberty. Those who say so cannot know the deliverance in their own souls, or are blinded by tradition and will. Till set free as well as quickened, we cannot truly worship our God and Father. Christian worship is the expression of the heart's joy, of its perfect satisfaction in Christ, of conscious nearness to our God and Father, as children beloved. Salvation (not life) was what he wanted, that the living water might flow, and he adore and praise. We may be born of God, yet without simple submission to the perfect work of the Lord Jesus, one is sure to be craving this or that, doubtless cleaving to Christ, no longer in the dead state of nature but still without real enjoyment of God in peace, perplexed, tried, and unable to say, “Abba, Father.” In this condition, then, Christian worship is impossible, and you do wrong to invite such to worship the Lord. You place them in a false position, you tempt them to become hypocrites in leading them to sing hymns altogether beyond their faith or experience.

With this state of things the doctrine of the Lord entirely coincides. He does not hurry on souls before they have the requisite power through His own grace. When the woman asked Him whether He was “greater than our father Jacob,” He answers, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” He who has so drunk can worship God as a Christian. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” All else is the sacrifice of folly, at least it is not worship in spirit and in truth. There is a divine spring of joy given inwardly, and, until one is brought into that condition, it is in vain to expect true Christian worship from him. It is of importance to recognize this, as it is a fact that many converted souls are not thus emancipated from self and the law.

In order to make it clearer, let me refer for a moment to the day of Pentecost, when the Apostle Peter bid those convicted of sin,” Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” When men truly repent, are they not believers? It would be a sorry doctrine that supposes genuine repentance without real faith; yet the gift of the Holy Ghost was consequent upon all. He Himself received the Spirit as the Holy One of God, sealed by the Father as man here below. But we could not have the Spirit thus till sin was judged in the cross and ourselves washed in His blood. Then we could, on the ground of His mighty work which annulled sin, not only be quickened of the Spirit as sinners, but be sealed of the Spirit as saints. This is the Christian, and he is a true worshipper: till a soul is brought really to this, he cannot be. Thus we see in this instance how truly Christ is the Giver of the Spirit to those who already believed. Until redemption was accomplished, there was not a clear space or righteous ground for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. But when the Lord Jesus had effected that mighty work, He went up on high, and sent the Holy Ghost down. He is thus the Giver of the Spirit. He gives that living water to the believer, not to the world; to the soul that rests on Him and His redemption; not to the soul that hates sin merely, but to him that has found in Jesus and His work all that the heart and conscience need before God. He has received the Holy Ghost, and the grace of God has given it to him.

Those under law, doubtless, do not as yet possess the Holy Ghost. This is why they so often fear and doubt; but when they how to God's righteousness in Christ with simple faith, they receive the Holy Ghost. It may too account for so many persons as are supposed to be brought to God on their death-bed. The great majority of those who are made happy there have been already converted; but there were, perhaps allowed hindrances. With death staring them in the face they submit to the righteousness of God, and the Holy Ghost is then given to them.

But look again at another case in scripture. In Acts 19 it is mentioned that there were at least a dozen men at Ephesus who were believers but had not received the Holy Ghost. They did not even know about it. Of course they had heard of the Spirit, but they had not heard of the gift of the Spirit. They knew from the teaching of John the Baptist that the coming Christ was to baptize with the Holy Ghost; but when they heard the full truth from the Apostle Paul, they received the Holy Ghost. This is the grand point, for miracles and tongues might cease; the Holy Ghost was to abide forever. Therefore I believe that not even the dark ages of popery nor all the divisions of protestantism, so painful to the spiritual mind, have driven back the Holy Ghost to heaven. I believe in His continued presence, because I receive the words of Christ. The Holy Ghost is always given to the believer when he has submitted to Christ's redemption. This shows the great importance of the gift of the Spirit: without it there is no true worshipper. He is not only quickened, but one who has found rest in Christ and is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Such as those the Father seeketh to worship Him.

Accordingly this is the condition that is supposed in all the Epistles. Take for instance the Epistle to the Romans. The apostle addresses them all, the saints that were then at Rome, as being dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, as being in the Spirit, and having the Spirit in them. How blessed! There is a true worshipper.

So again, in the Epistles to the Corinthians, the same thing re-appears. There were many lamentable features there requiring to be dealt with even by public discipline. Did these destroy the standing of the worshipper? Paul calls on the Corinthians to put away the evildoer from the assembly, but not to cease breaking bread themselves. In chapter v. he is speaking, not about the Lord's supper, but of ordinary intercourse with a known unclean professor of the Lord. Certainly we should never be suspicious; but where plain undeniable evil exists, the wicked person should be put away from the saints. Whether he be converted or not is not the question, but proved evil in one bearing the Lord's name in the church is inconsistent with the fellowship of saints on earth. Here it was the very one whom, on repentance, they were called to receive back in 2 Cor. 2; 7.

In the Epistle to the Galatians serious error is corrected and solemn warning given; but they are addressed as God's children, having the Spirit of sonship, and thereby crying Abba Father in contrast with the Old Testament saints. They could worship therefore.

In that to the Ephesians the Christians are treated as already blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, and hence, as having redemption and sealed by the Holy Spirit, able to draw near to the Father. So the apostle, though solemnly admonishing the Colossian saints presents them as “giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” &c. They were true worshippers.

The Philippian believers the apostle calls to rejoice in the Lord alway, and says that we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Even the Thessalonians, young saints as they were, are exhorted to rejoice evermore, and not only to pray unceasingly, but in everything to give thanks as the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them.

The Hebrew Christians are addressed as having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, &c.

The apostle Peter calls the Christian Jews to whom he writes throughout Asia Minor, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus.

The Apostle John treats even the babes of God's family as having known the Father, and all the family as having their sins forgiven, and now children of God. He tells us that, as confessing Jesus to be the Son of God, God dwells in each and he in God. He declares that love with us is made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because, as Christ is, so are we in this world.

There can be no doubt therefore that the contrast is painful in the extreme between the uniform language of the New Testament about Christians as thus called to worship in liberty and joy and nearness to God, and that of liturgies ancient or modern; and this because the results of redemption soon got merged and hidden in Jewish forms, and the law was recalled to the place of the Holy Ghost, and man in the flesh intruded wholesale into precincts which belong only to those solemnly accredited as God's assembly, the body of Christ.

But even the best position and highest privileges will fail to keep a man right with God; dependence on the Lord and obedience alone can do this. Nay, further, the greater the privilege the worse the fall, if the soul wait not upon God. It is a great mistake to think that only the wicked can fall: Christian men may, yea must, if unwatchful. The condition of the true worshipper is not such that he remains immoveable as a statue. He is alive unto God, but is responsible morally; he ought to grow but may decline. No doubt he has his old nature, the only thing to do with which is to judge it, treating it as vile and evil, according to the cross, where it was condemned root and branch in Christ made sin for us.

But, as the rule, all saints are now called to join in the worship of God. They are saved that they may, not serve only, looking down, but worship, looking up. Hence the all-importance of the Lord's Supper, the center of Christian worship, and of its celebration on each first day of the week. (1 Cor. 11; Acts 20) But this will come more fully before us when we treat of worship itself, and of the helps or hindrances to it.

The souls whom the Lord contemplates are those who, as believing in His name, have not life only but the Spirit, who have therefore liberty and power, and can thus unaffectedly and with simple hearts unite in thanksgiving and praise of their God and His God, of their Father and His Father. Such as may be born anew but are not yet delivered nor in peace with God need the gospel that they may join their brethren, apart from the world in that which will occupy them all forever, begun even now on earth by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

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The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Father Seeks Worshippers, The (4:21-24)

“Woman, believe Me” (John 4:21). The Lord more than meets every desire of the Samaritan’s heart. Here we have the first unfolding of Christian worship ever given by God to man. “The Father” was to be worshipped-what a revelation! It is no longer a question of Jehovah God of Israel. There is a richer display of God and far more intimate. It was God as the Son knew Him and was making Him known in the fullness of love and fellowship, bringing His own that were in the world into the conscious relationship of children as born of Him.

No wonder that, in presence of such nearness and the worship that befits it, the Samaritan’s mountain melts and the sanctuary of Jerusalem fades away, for the one was but the effort of self-will and the other but the test and proof of the first man’s inability to meet God and live. Christian worship is found on the possession of life eternal in the Son and on the gift of the Spirit as the power of worship.

Ye Know Not What

“Ye worship ye know not what” (vs. 22). It is remarkable that the Lord does not say “who,” but “what,” for in Judaism God dwelt in thick darkness, and the testimony rendered by the Levitical system was that the way into the holiest had not yet been made manifest. When Christ died, the veil was rent and eternal redemption found: The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins and are invited to draw near. Such is Christianity, God having revealed Himself as the Father in the Son through the Spirit. To know Him, the only true God, and Him whom He had sent to reveal Him, even Jesus, was life eternal. We know therefore whom we worship, and not merely “what.”

Who Can Worship?

It is an hour now when the true worshipers worship the Father. Who and what are they? The epistles answer with one voice that they are God’s children, born of Him through the faith of Christ, and sealed by the Spirit consequently as resting on His redemption. So the Apostle

says that we worship by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in flesh (Phil. 3:3).

What is said of the worship excludes all but true believers, for they are to worship in spirit and truth. How can any worship who have not the Spirit and know not the truth?

In Spirit and Truth

“They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (vs. 24). The Lord’s words express more than the necessity of having the Holy Spirit or of acquaintance with the truth, though this would suppose the Christian with his Christian privileges. But He says that they worship in that character, not merely that they have the Spirit and the truth in order to worship. A real Christian might act unspiritually and not according to the truth. However true the worshipper then, if he were grieving the Spirit or dishonoring the Lord, this would not be to worship in spirit and truth. Clearly, none but “the true worshippers” could so worship, though on a given occasion or in a given state they might not in fact as they ought.

The Father seeks the true worshippers. Undoubtedly, when sought, they gather unto the name of the Lord and enjoy His presence by the Spirit. It is not enough that they are washed and thus are every whit clean; it is not only that they have the Spirit, the spring of praise and power of continual thanksgiving. What confidence for them! What grace in Him! Yet is His seeking such true of every Christian. May they answer His grace by eschewing all that is unworthy of it in this evil day.

God Is a Spirit

“God is a Spirit” (vs. 24). It is the nature of God which is here in question, not the relationship of grace which He now reveals in and by Christ. And this is not without the greatest importance for us, for He must be worshipped correspondingly, and He most fully provided for this, seeing that the new life we enjoy is by the Spirit and is spirit, not flesh (John 3:6), as indeed He begot us of His own will by the word of truth, and we are thus born again. Assuredly we should walk and worship in the Spirit, if we live in the Spirit. As God is a Spirit, spiritual worship is all He accepts. It is a moral necessity flowing from His nature a nature fully revealed in Him who is the image of the invisible and we should not be ignorant of it, we who are born of Him as believers in Christ.

W. Kelly (adapted from On the Gospel of John)

Notes on John, John 4:43-54, Notes on (4:43-54)

Thus, without a miracle, the Lord has been owned, as we see, in Samaria, first, as a prophet by one, finally, as Savior of the world by all, who believed on Him there. Thus the fullest confession of His grace was found where one might have looked for least intelligence; but faith gives new wisdom so different from the old that those who are wise must become fools if they would be wise according to God. How blessed for those who have no wisdom to boast, whom grace forms with all simplicity according to its own power! Such were the Samaritans among whom the Lord abode for this little while.

“And after the two days he went forth thence1 into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.” (Vers. 48, 44.) He resumes His place among the despised and lowly. The first Gospel points out that this sphere of His ministry was according to prophecy, for Isaiah, in setting forth the sins and judgment of Israel from first to last, had spoken of the light shining in Galilee when darkness enveloped the favored seats in the land. All the evangelists indeed, for one reason or another, dwell upon His ministry in Galilee—John alone bringing into prominence some characteristic incidents in Jerusalem. Mark speaks much of Galilee, because his office was to describe the Lord's ministry, and there in fact we must follow Him if we would trace its details, Luke again gives it as illustrating the moral ways of God in the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the activities of One who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. John, on the other hand, as usual, lays it on a ground that pertains more strictly to His person. It was His own testimony that a prophet hath no honor in his own country. He had come down not to seek His own honor but that of Him who sent Him. He had riches of grace and truth to dispense He was sent—He was come to do His Father's will; content to be nothing—have nothing from men, He goes away into Galilee. But if the Galileans paid Him no honor when He was in their midst, they were not unmoved by the fame that had gone out, specially by the impression made in the capital. “When therefore he came into Galilee the Galileans received him, having seen all that2 he had done in Jerusalem during the feast, for they too went unto the feast.” (Ver. 45.) Galilee was not only the place where He had spent the greater part of His earthly life in humiliation and obedience, but there He had begun to make Himself known to the disciples, and there He had first wrought a sign in witness of His glory. “He3 came therefore again into Cana of Galilee where he made the water wine.” (Ver. 46.) That first sign held out the promise, pledge, and earnest of Israel's future joy and blessedness, and He Himself in the day that is coming will be there in the land, no longer the guest, nor the master of the feast alone, but the bridegroom. And the barren one shall know her Maker as her husband, Jehovah of hosts His name, and her Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The God not merely of the land but of the whole earth shall He be called.

But it is not yet the day for singing, but of sadness; not yet for enlarging the place of Israel's tent, nor of stretching. the curtains of their habitation, or of strengthening the stakes: no breaking forth yet on the right hand or on the left, no inheriting the Gentiles, or making the desolate cities to be inhabited. Contrariwise, did not Messiah come to His own things, and His own people receive Him not? Nay they were about to consummate their sin in His cross, and to seal their unbelief in their rejection of the gospel, forbidding His servants to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always, so that wrath, is come upon them to the uttermost, however grace may turn their fall to the salvation and the riches of the Gentiles. Nevertheless grace is yet to make good every sign which is hung out to Israel, and the Lord adds on this occasion a fresh and suited display of His power for their actual circumstances and present need.

“And there was a certain courtier whose son was sick at Capernaum. He, having heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, went away unto him and asked that he would go down and heal his son, for he was about to die. Jesus therefore said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in nowise believe.” (Ver. 46-48.) How strikingly in contrast with the simpler souls in Samaria! There was faith in the

power of Jesus, but it was of a Jewish sort. The courtier had heard, no doubt, of miracles wrought by Him personally present. His faith rose no higher; yet evidently, if it were the power of God, there could be no limits. Absence or presence could account for nothing—they were but circumstances, and the very essence of a miracle is God rising above ill circumstances. It is irrational as well as unbelieving to measure a miracle by one's experience. It is solely a question of God's will, power, and glory; and therefore the Lord justly rebukes the unbelief of all such thoughts.

How finely too the grace which wrought in the Gentile centurion whose servant was sick contrasts with the limited expectations of this Jewish courtier! There, just to exercise and manifest the power of his faith, the Lord proposed to go with the elders of the Jews who begged Him to come and save his bondman. But even though He was not far from the house, the centurion sent to Him friends expressly not to trouble Him, for he was not worthy that He should come under his roof, any more than he counted himself worthy to come to Him. He had only to say by a word, and his servant should be healed. This accordingly drew out the strong approbation of the Lord, not His censure, as here. “Not even in Israel” had He found such great faith.

Nevertheless the grace of the Lord never fails, and little faith receives its blessing as surely as greater faith its larger answer. “The courtier saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.” (Ver. 49.) Here again how scanty the faith if urgent the appeal! Still faith must have a gracious assurance. “Jesus saith to him, Go, thy son liveth.” (Ver. 50.) It was better for the courtier's soul in every way and more to the glory of God, that Jesus should bid him go, instead of going With him. If it crossed the man's thoughts and words, it was meant to exercise his faith so much the more. “[And4] the man believed the word which Jesus had said to him, and went away.” (Ver. 50.) He had not long to wait before he knew the blessing.

“But as he was now going down, his5 servants met him and brought him word, saying, Thy child liveth. He inquired therefore from them the hour at which he got better. They said to him then, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that [it was] at that hour in which Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed and his whole house.” (Vers. 51-58.) Thus God took care to arrest the servants, who were all the more interested and responsible because of their master's absence. They would watch the case; they would mark the changes in the malady of the patient; and they therefore were the first to see when he began to amend. They could tell their master the precise hour when the fever left the child—the very hour, as he could tell them, when Jesus spoke the word of healing power. “This again a second sign did Jesus, on coming out of Judea into Galilee.” (Ver. 54.) It is not a sign of what He is to do in the day when, giving life to the dead daughter of Zion, He will also change the water of purification into the wine of joy for God and man. Meanwhile He relieves the one ready to perish in Israel where there was the faith, however feeble, to seek it from Christ. It was true even then of His ministry in all its meaning and force.

Notes on John, John 4:27-42, Notes on (4:27-42)

What a moment, a present Messiah, and One speaking to a Samaritan

“And upon this came his disciples, and wondered1 that he was speaking with a woman: none however said, What seekest thou or why speakest thou with her?” (Ver. 27.) Their wonder was that He spoke with a woman: what was hers who knew that, every secret of her heart was naked and open before Him with whom she had to do? His grace however had fully prepared the way. He who searched all the recesses of her soul had already encouraged her by revealing the richest grace of God the Father—Himself, the only true Revealer of it, about to give the Holy Spirit that even she might receive and enjoy it truly. It was no question of seeking on His part or even on hers—the Father was seeking such; nor was it talking with her, but of revealing to her. The disciples had much to learn. Had they known the subject matter of converse, they might well have wondered incomparably more.

“The woman then left her waterpot and went away into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man who told me all things that2 ever I did: is not this the Christ? They went out of the city and were coming unto him.” (Ver. 28-30.) The moral change was immense. A new world opened to her which eclipsed the present with new affections, new duties, the power of which asserted itself in lifting her entirely above the things that are seen, whatever might be the effect ordinarily, in strengthening to a better fulfillment of present earthly toil. But the revelation of Christ to her soul was both all-absorbing and the most powerful stimulus to make Him known to others. Where the eye is single, the body is full of light. She felt who needed Him most and acted on it forthwith. She left her waterpot, went off to the town, and told the men of Jesus. How well she understood Him! He had not formally sent her, yet she went boldly with the invitation. Nor was it merely that she bade them go, “Come, see a man.” She would go along with them. Her heart was in the current of His grace and counted upon the same welcome for others, unwarranted though it might appear, as for herself. Such is the power of divine love even from the very first.

Yet there was no enfeebling of the truth because of His grace. They too must prepare for what had smelled her. “Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not he the Christ?” Well they knew what she had been, and if He had so dealt with her, might not they too see and hear Him? Such a personal experience has great power, and it is safe too where it is not merely an appeal to the affections, but conscience is searched along with it.

3“ Meanwhile the disciples were asking him, saying, Master, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat which ye do not know. Then the disciples said to one another, Hath any one brought him to eat? Jesus saith to them, It is my food that I should do4 the will of him that sent me, and finish his work.” (Ver. 31-34.) How humbling to find His disciples at such a time occupied with the body and its wants. And this the Lord makes them feel by His answer. They knew not as yet such food—disciples though they were. It is not as men often quote it, “his meat and his drink,” for there was an inner spring of loving and delighting in His Father beyond doing His will and completing His work. But this was His food. He came to do His will. In this He was never wearied, nor should we even now, whatever might be the fatigue of the body. For, “he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” Without Him even the “youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail, but they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wine; as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.” Jesus knew this Himself in perfection, and here is a sample of it.

“Do not ye say that there are yet four months and the harvest cometh? Lo, I say to you, Lift up your eyes, and Behold the fields; for they are white unto harvest already.5 He6 that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both7 he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For in this is the saying true,8 It is one that soweth and another that reapeth. I sent you to reap that on which ye have not toiled: others have toiled, and ye have entered into their toil.” (Ver. 35-38.) Whatever might be the times and seasons of the natural harvest, the fields spiritually were ripe for the reaper. Man, the world, undoubtedly deserved judgment; but the very same state of sin which calls for judgment God uses for His call of grace. The gospel comes expressly of the ground of man's total ruin, and therefore levels all distinctions. Jew, Samaritan, Gentile—what are any now but sinners? The Jew had been under probation, but he was now rejecting the Messiah—the Son of God. All was lost, but the rejected Christ is the Savior, and now there is salvation for any, and grace carries it among such as these Samaritans.

Not that grace had failed to work during the past times of probation. Man had broken down utterly, but God was preparing the way when it should be no longer experimental dealings and man's righteousness sought, but God's righteousness revealed in virtue of the work of Christ. His witness had not wrought in vain, however little seen the effects meanwhile. But the true light was now shining, and things appeared as they are to the eye of grace. What a sight to Christ the Samaritans coming to Him! coming to hear One who tells us whatever we did! The fields were white indeed.

It is remarkable that the Lord speaks about reaping now rather than sowing, though sowing of course goes on, and has its place elsewhere, as in Matt. 13. Of old it was rather sowing than reaping; now in this day of grace there is a characteristic reaping—fruit not only of God's past dealings, but of His coming and mighty work who thus speaks to the disciples: “the reaper receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both the, sower and the reaper may rejoice together.” So shall it be in the day of glory, as the spirit of it is even now true in the church and the Christian’s heart. “For in this is the saying true, The sower is one and the reaper another.” But while there are these differences still, it remains that the apostles are characterized by reaping rather than by sowing, and so of course are other laborers also. “I sent [or, have sent] you to reap that on which ye have not toiled: others have toiled, and ye have entered into their toil.” How emphatically this was verified at Pentecost and afterward, all know.

“But out of that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the, woman as she bore witness, He told me all things that [ever] I did. When therefore the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to abide with them. And he abode there two days; and many more believed because of his word. And they said to the woman, No longer on account of thy saying do we believe, for we have ourselves heard and know that this is indeed the9 Savior of the world.” (Ver. 39-42.) It is cheering to see how God honored the simple testimony of the, woman. Many out of that town believed on Him because of her word. Here again she bears witness to the searching of her conscience by His word. “He told me all that ever I did.” It is a good guarantee that the work is divine when there is no shrinking from such a scrutiny—otherwise grace is apt to be misused as a cover for sin or a slight dealing with a sinner, instead of judging all in God's light. But faith whenever it is real rises from the instrument to Him who deigns to use it, and God loves to put honor upon the word of Jesus Himself. Hence we are told that, when He graciously acceded to the desire of the Samaritans and abode there two days, “more by a great deal believed because of his word.” How sweet to the woman when they said to her,” No longer because of thy saying do we believe, for we have ourselves heard and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world!” God led them too in dropping His Messiahship, and the copyists have inserted it without due reason. Ancient authority seems conclusive that the words “the Christ” should disappear. Their confession is much more simple and emphatic when so put. They now knew and confessed the truth—the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. (Compare 1 John 4:14.)

Notes on John, John 4:20-26, Notes on (4:20-26)

Recognizing the divine power of His words, the Samaritan seizes the opportunity to have light from God on that which had not been without perplexity and interest even to her—the religious difference between her race and the chosen nation, and this not merely in homage to God but in formal or express public worship. She wants to have the question, old as it was, settled for her now. The Samaritan like many another in grievous error could talk of great antiquity. Happy the soul that has recourse for it to Jesus! He alone is the Truth. Others may deceive, themselves deceived.

To this end was He born, and for this cause came He into the world that He should bear witness to the truth. What is more: every one that is of the truth heareth His voice. Alas! how different has it been with Christendom, corrupted first, then rent hopelessly, most haughty when it has most reason to be ashamed. Be it ours in such a state of ruin to keep His word and not deny His name.

A time of declension beyond all things tests the soul; for it seems proud to differ from the excellent of the earth, especially if they are many, and those who cleave to God's word are few and have nothing to boast. For this very reason it is precious in God's eyes and on small testimony to the absent Master. Still it becomes all who differ from the mass to be sure of their ground, as this woman sought when she appealed to Jesus; and the Christian need seek no other—yea, is guilty and infatuated if, where men's uncertainty is so great and grave, he heed aught other—than Jesus speaking by His word and Spirit.

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where one must worship. Jesus saith to her, Woman, believe me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship what ye know not: we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for also the Father seeketh such as his worshippers. God is a Spirit; and his worshippers must worship him in spirit and truth. The woman saith to him, I know that Messias is coming, that is called Christ: when he shall come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith to her, I that speak to thee am [he].” (Ver. 20-26.)

The Lord more than meets every desire of the Samaritan's heart. For here we have, not merely the vindication of Israelitish worship as compared with its Samaritan rival, but the first unfolding of Christian worship ever given by God to man; and this as superseding not Samaritanism only but Judaism also—a change withal then at hand. Yet is all conveyed in language that was plain enough even to the soul thus addressed, while there is depth of truth which no saint has ever fathomed, however deeply he may have drawn on it and enjoyed it.

“The Father” was to be worshipped henceforth: of itself, what a revelation! It is no longer a question of the Jehovah God of Israel, nor even of the Almighty as was the name by which He was made known to the fathers. There is a richer display of God, and far more intimate. It is not as the Eternal who put Himself in covenant and government and will surely yet make good His ways with Israel, as He has chastised them for theirs. Nor is it the God who shielded His poor pilgrims, who hung on His promises in their wanderings among hostile strangers before their children formed a nation and received His law. It was God as the Son knew Him and was making Him known in the fullness of love and fellowship, who would accordingly bring His own who were in the world into the conscious relationship of children as born of Him. (Compare John 1:12, 13, 18; 14:20, 4-10; 16:23-27; 20:17-23.)

No wonder that, in presence of such nearness and the worship that befits it, the mountain of Gerizim melts and the sanctuary of Jerusalem fades away. For the one was but the effort of self-will, the other but the test and proof of the first man's inability to meet God and live. Christian worship is founded on the possession of eternal life in the Son, and on the gift of the Spirit as the power of worship.

In verse 22 the Lord leaves it impossible for the Samaritan to draw the inference that, if Christian worship was about to be alone acceptable to God, independently of place or race, Samaritan had been just as good as Jewish. Not so. The Samaritans worshipped what they did not know, the Jews knew what they worshipped; “for salvation,” as He added, “is of the Jews.” They had the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, the law-giving, and the service, and the promises, whose were the fathers, and of whom as pertaining to flesh was the Christ who is over all God blessed forever. Amen. The Samaritans were mere imitators, Gentiles jealous of Israel and hostile to them, without fear of God, else had they submitted to His ways and word.

Thus God's privileges to Israel are vindicated; but none the less was the Lord at that time driven out by Pharisaic jealousy, and none the less had He set aside all pretension to traditional and successional blessing. He was there to communicate from God, not to accredit man; and, He being rejected, Jerusalem and Samaria alike vanish away. Old things are judged; all things must become new. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, now that those who had the institutions of God are rejecting His counsel against themselves. And if that unbelief went to the uttermost in hatred of the Father and the Son, it would only bring out the fullness of divine grace and righteousness, leaving His love absolutely free to act supremely above all evil for His own glory, as we know is the fact in a crucified but risen Christ.

It is remarkable accordingly that the Lord does not say “who,” but “what.” For in Judaism God dwelt in thick darkness, and the testimony rendered by the whole Levitical system (with its sacrifices and priests, door, veil, incense, everything in short) was that the way into the holiest had not yet been made manifest. When Christ died, it was: the veil was rent from top to bottom, eternal redemption was found, the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins, and are invited to draw near. Such is Christianity, God having revealed Himself as the Father in the Son through the Spirit. To know Him, the only true God, and Him whom He had sent to reveal Him even Jesus, is eternal life. And the mighty work which was done on the cross has dealt with all our evil, so that we are free to enjoy Himself. We know therefore whom we worship, and not merely “what.” When God was hidden in the thick darkness and only the unity of His nature proclaimed, the Godhead remained vague. When the Father is revealed as now in the Son by the Spirit, what a difference

Hence this exceeding blessedness is opened in its positive character in verses 24, 25. For it is an hour when form is repudiated, as it could not be in Judaism. Reality alone is endorsed. National worship therefore is now an evident delusion, being but an effort to resuscitate what has vanished away as far as regards any recognition on God's part. It was owned in Israel under law for its own purpose it will be so on the largest scale in the millennium; but it is not, if we believe the Savior, during the hour which then coming, now is. It is an hour now when the true worshippers worship the Father. Who and what are they? The doctrinal utterances of the apostle answer with one voice that they are God's children, born of Him through the faith of Christ, and sealed by the Spirit consequently as resting on His redemption. So the apostle says (Phil. 3:3) that we (in contrast with mere Jews or Judaizers) are the true circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ and have no confidence in flesh. But we must cite the New Testament as a whole to give the full proof, if one asks more evidence than the Lord affords in this context, though I feel assured that he who bows not to such a witness would not be won by ten thousand. A single word from God is more to the believer than every other evidence: how many would convince the unbeliever?

Further what is said of the worship excludes all but true believers. For they are to worship in spirit and truth. How can any who have not the Spirit and know not the truth? Granted, that the article is wanting. But this in such a case as the one before us adds to the strength of the statement; for it predicates a spiritual and truthful character of the worship. That is to say, the Lord's words express more than the necessity of having the Holy Ghost or of acquaintance with the truth, though this would suppose the Christian with his distinguishing privileges. But He says that they worship in that character, not merely that they have the Spirit and the truth in order to worship. Now plainly a real Christian might act unspiritually and not according to the truth. Even Peter and Barnabas failed at a grave crisis to walk according to the truth of the gospel.

However true the worshipper then, if he were grieving the Spirit or dishonoring the Lord, this would not be to worship in spirit and truth. But it remains still more manifest that none but “the true worshippers” could so worship, though on a given occasion or in a given state they might not in fact.

Moreover “the Father seeketh such as his worshippers.” (Ver. 24.) Let us weigh it. Time was when every Jew went up to Jerusalem to seek Jehovah; time will be when all nations shall flow to the same center when the Son of man comes in power and reigns in glory. But the characteristic working of grace is that the Father seeks the true worshippers. Undoubtedly when sought they gather unto the name of the Lord, and enjoy His presence by the Spirit. It is not enough that they are washed, and not by water only, but by water and blood, and thus are every whit clean; it is not only that they have the Spirit as the witness of the one efficacious sacrifice and the spring of praise and power of continual thanksgiving: the Father also seeketh such as His worshippers. What confidence for them! What grace in Him! Yet is it true of every Christian. May they answer His grace by eschewing all that is unworthy of it in this evil day!

But there are other words of profound import. “God is a Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth.” (Ver. 25.) It is the nature of God which is here in question, not the relationship of grace which He now reveals in and by Christ, And this is not without the greatest importance for us. For He must be worshipped correspondingly; and He most fully provided for this, seeing that the new life we enjoy is by the Spirit and is spirit, not flesh (John 3:6), as indeed He begot us by His own will by the word of truth (James 1), and we are thus born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by God's living and abiding word. (1 Peter 1) Assuredly we should walk and worship in the Spirit,

if we live in the Spirit. He is given to us that we should judge and reject the first Adam, glorifying only the second Man, our Lord Jesus. Nay, more, as God is a Spirit, spiritual worship is all He accepts. His worshippers must worship in spirit and truth. It is a moral necessity flowing from His nature—a nature fully revealed in Him who is the image of the invisible God; and we should not be ignorant of it and its character who are born of Him as believers in Christ.

The woman, struck by words plain indeed but no doubt far beyond her, for they reach up to God as surely as they come down to man, at once thinks of the Messiah, owns her confidence in His coming, and is sure that when He is come, He will tell us all things. (Ver. 25.) Would that all who believe in Him believed this of Him! Would that, when He has spoken peace to them, they turned not again to folly! And what folly greater than to turn from His words on this very theme, and in this very chapter for instance, to follow the traditions of men and the ways of the world in the worship of God?

And now break on her ear and heart the last words needed to clench all the rest and insure her blessing evermore: “Jesus saith to her, I that speak to thee am [he].” (Ver. 26.) It might be the lowest form of presenting the only One who can avail the sinner; yet it remains ever true from first to last that every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God. And this the Samaritan did. Her heart was touched, her conscience searched, and now the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ was all to her. All the blessing was hers in His person who was then present and received by her in faith.

Notes on John, John 4:11-19, Notes on (4:11-19)

It is not then quite correct, as some have said, that Christ is here alluded to as meant by “the gift of God,” the next clause being viewed as explanatory. Undoubtedly He was the means of displaying it, but the first of the clauses in this rich word of our Lord sets forth the thought, so strange to man, of the free-giving of God. Nature as such never understands it; law alone makes it still less intelligible. Faith only solves the difficulty in the person, mission, and work of Christ who is the witness, proof, and substance of it; but it is the gratuitous grace of God that is meant. Hence the second clause, instead of being merely exegetic of the first, directs attention to Him who was there in the utmost humiliation, weary with His journeying and asking a drink of water from one whom He knew to be the most worthless of Samaritans, yet the Son of the Father in unshorn fullness of divine glory and of grace to the most wretched. And this was so true that she who was as yet blind to all this had but to ask Him and have the best and greatest gift the believer can receive living water, not life only, but the Holy Ghost. Thus, while Christ is the way of it, the Trinity was really involved in making good these words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman, all the Godhead engaged in the proffered blessing.

“The woman saith to him, Sir, thou hast no bucket, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou the living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank of it, himself and his sons and his cattle?” (Ver. 11, 12.) She comprehends none of the gracious words she had heard: they were not mixed with faith in her heart. She therefore reasons against them. If the water was to be drawn from Jacob's well, where was the bucket to let down, for the well was deep? Did He pretend to be greater than Jacob, or His a better well than that which of old supplied him and his house, a well which was now theirs? Thus the mind argues against the Lord, according to the senses or tradition: so fatal is ignorance of His person and of the truth. Circumstances are the trial of faith and the swamp of unbelief, which gladly avails itself (with or without any just title) of a great name and its gifts, alas! to slight a greater, yea the greatest.

Mark now the Savior's grace. He develops with the utmost fullness to this dark soul the unspeakable gift of God, in contrast with her own thoughts, and with those of man generally. “Jesus answered and said to her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him, shall in no way thirst forever,1 but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life.” (Ver. 13,14.)

Water of whatever spring nature boasts may refresh, but thirst will come again; and God has ordered for the creature that so it should and must be. But it is not so when one is given to drink into the Spirit. Christ gives the Holy Ghost to the believer to be in him a fresh fountain of divine enjoyment, not only eternal life from the Father in the person of the Son, but the communion of the Holy Ghost, and hence the power of worship, as we shall see later in this very conversation. Thus it is not only deliverance from hankering after pleasure, vanity, sin, but a living spring of exhaustless and divine joy, joying in God through our Lord Jesus, and this in the power of the Spirit. It supposes the possession of eternal life in the Son, but also the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

Even then the Samaritan remains as insensible as ever. “The woman saith to him; Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst nor come2 here to draw. He saith to her, Go, call thy husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I have not a husband. Jesus saith to her, Thou saidst well, I have not a husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and now he whom thou hast is not thy husband: this thou hast spoken truly. The woman saith to him, Sir, I see that thou art a prophet.” (Ver. 15-19.) She would gladly learn how she might be relieved of her wants and of her labor for this world. As yet not a ray of heavenly light had entered her. Not to thirst nor to come here to draw formed the boundary of her desires from the Savior not yet known to be a Savior.

This closes the first part of our Lord's dealings with her. It was useless to say more as before. Jesus had already set before her the principle on which God was acting, and His own gracious competence to give her, on her asking, living water; He had also shown the incomparable superiority of His gift as being divine over any or every boon left by Jacob. But her heart did not rise above the sphere of her daily wants and earthly wishes. She was deaf to His words, albeit spirit and life, which disclosed what is eternal.

Had it been in vain then to have so spoken to her as He did in the fullness of God's love? Far from it. It was all-important, when a door was once opened within, to reflect and find that such riches of grace had been brought to her absolutely unsought. But it was useless to add more till then. Hence the Lord's abrupt and seemingly unconnected appeal, “Go, call thy husband, and come here.” But was the digression apart from the question of her salvation? Not so. It was the second and necessary way with a soul if it is to be blessed divinely. It is through an awakened conscience that grace and truth enter; and it was because her conscience hitherto was unreached that the grace and truth were not at all understood.

On the one hand it was of all consequence that she and we and all should have the clearest proof that the testimony of the Savior's grace goes out before there is any fitness to receive it; for this, as it magnifies God and His free-giving, so it abases and exposes the wholly evil and frightfully dangerous state of man.

On the other hand it was equally momentous that she should be brought to feel her need of that free and wondrous grace of which the Savior had assured her, in all its depths and amplitude and everlasting continuance, before she had judged herself as a sinner before God. To this point He now conducts her: for if it is impossible to please God without faith, without repentance faith is intellectual and worthless. It is man discerning evidence and accepting what he in his wisdom judges best; not a sinner who, met by sovereign grace, is judged, owning himself in his sins, but too glad to find the Savior, the only Savior, in Jesus Christ the Lord.

For the Lord still holds to grace. He does not say, “Go, call thy husband” without adding “and come here.” He does not repent of His goodness because she was dull; on the contrary He was using the fresh and necessary means to have the need of such goodness felt. How painstaking is grace, working in the soul that it may enter and abide, now that it had been testified of in all its fullness and without any preparation for it, any more than desert, in man!

The woman answering “I have not a husband” is astounded to hear the withering reply, “Thou saidst well I have not a husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and now he whom thou hast is not thy husband: this thou hast spoken truly.” She was convicted. It was in demonstration of the Spirit, and power. Yet were the words few and simple, not one of them harsh or strong. It was the truth of her state and of her life brought home most unexpectedly, as God knows how to do and does in one form or another in every converted soul. It was the truth which spared her not and laid her sins bare before God and her own conscience. She did not doubt for a moment what it was that made everything manifest. She recognized it to be the light of God. She owns His words to be not men's wisdom but God's power. She falls under the conviction and at once confesses, “Sir, I see that thou art a prophet.”

It is plain hence that “prophet” does not mean one who predicted the future, for this was not in question, but one who told out the mind of God—one who spoke by the evident guidance of the Spirit what could not be known naturally, yet what therefore so much the more put the soul before God and His light. So Abraham is a prophet (Gen. 20:7), and the fathers generally (Psa. 105:15), and the O.T. prophets in all their ministry and writing, not merely in what was prediction. The same thing is emphatically true of New Testament prophesying as we may see in 1 Cor. 14. It is communicated from God which judges the life, yea, the secrets of the heart before Him.

Notes on John, John 4:1-10, Notes on (4:1-10)

We find ourselves still in that part of our Gospel which precedes the Galilean ministry of our Lord presented in the three Synoptic Gospels, though this journey through Samaria is conducting the Lord to their starting-point. In chapter 3:24 it will have been noticed that John was not yet cast into prison. When he was put in prison (Mark 1:14), and Jesus heard it (Matt. 4:12), He came into Galilee, preaching. Our chapter speaks of a previous moment and, se usual, lets us into a deeper view of all that was at work.

“When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees heard that Jesus maketh and baptizeth more disciples than John (though Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples), he left Judaea and went away [again] into Galilee.” (Ver. 1-3.)

Little did the disciples know the depth of the glory that was in Him or the consequent blessing for man, though they zealously baptized and thus exposed their Master to the spleen of those who could ill brook His increase and honor. It will be noticed that not He but His disciples did baptize. He knew the end from the beginning; and this finds its appropriate statement here. They might baptize to Him as Messiah; but He, the Son of God, knew from the first that He must suffer and die as the Son of man: so indeed He had already declared to Nicodemus with its blessed results for the believer. The baptism He instituted was therefore after and to His death and resurrection. The Son of God knew what was in man, even when he was disposed to pay Him homage because of the signs which He wrought: So did He know the effect of His disciples' activity on the religious men of that day.

It was the jealousy of the Pharisees then which in reality drove the Lord from Judaea. What was that land longer? What without Him, above all when it rejected Him and He abandoned it? They might boast of the law, but they had not kept it; they might claim the promises, but He, the promised One and accomplisher of all the promises, had been there, and they knew Him not, loved Him not, but were more and more proving their heart-estrangement from Him, their Messiah. What could the first covenant avail now? It must ensure their condemnation; it could work no deliverance. The Jew was to reap only ruin and death under its terms. We shall presently see more; yet here at the beginning of the chapter is the Son of God through the ill-feeling of those who ought most to have appreciated His presence forced out, we may say, from the people of God and the scene of His institutions, but in the power of eternal life, whatever the humiliation which the haughty religionists put on Him who saw in Him a man only, little suspecting that He was the Word made flesh.

“And he must pass through Samaria. He comes therefore to a city of Samaria called Sychar near the land which Jacob gave to Joseph his son. Now a fountain of Jacob was there. Jesus Therefore being wearied with the journeying sat thus at the fountain. It was about the sixth hour.” (Ver. 4-6.) He is as truly man as God, but the Holy One always and only. Weary and rejected, He sits there in unwearied love. The false pretensions before Him can no more hinder now than the proud iniquity He had just left behind. Jerusalem and Samaria alike vanish. What could either do for a wretched heart, a guilty sinner? And such an one approaches.

“There cometh a woman out of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith to her, Give me to drink (for his disciples had gone away into the city to buy provisions). The Samaritan woman therefore saith to him, How dost thou being a Jew ask to drink of me being a Samaritan woman? for Jews have no intercourse with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” (Ver. 7-10.)

He that made the heart perfectly knows the avenue to its affections. And what grace can He not show who came to give a new and divine nature, as well as to reveal God in love, where there was nothing but sin, self, and unrest? God in the lowliness of man asks a favor, a drink of water, of the Samaritan woman; but it was to open her heart to her wants, and give her life eternal in the power of the Holy Ghost, communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God cometh. So said the Spirit of prophecy by Isaiah of old; and so it will be fulfilled in its fullness by-and-by, as even now it is in principle. But what a sight to God, and indeed to faith, the Son of God, when driven out by the jealous hatred and contempt of man, of His own people who received Him not, thus occupying Himself with an unhappy Samaritan who had exhausted her life in quest of happiness never thus found! Surprised she inquires how a Jew could ask aught of one like her: what had she felt, had she then conceived who He was and that He knew to the full what she was? And how reassuring to her afterward when she looked back on the path by which God had in gracious wisdom led her that day that she might know Himself for evermore!

Alone He spoke to her alone, beginning in her soul His work for heaven, for eternity, for God. No miracle of an external sort is wrought before the eyes, no sign is needed without. The Son of God speaks in divine love, though (as we shall see) intelligence is not till the conscience is reached and exercised. The law is good if one use it lawfully, knowing that its application is not to a righteous person but to lawless and insubordinate, to impious and sinful, and in short to all that is opposed to sound teaching. But Christ is the best of all as the revelation of God in grace, giving all that is wanted, producing (not seeking) what should be, not to dispense with the absolutely needed lesson of what we are, but enabling us to bear it, now that we know how truly God Himself cares for us in perfect love spite of all that we are.

This is grace, the true grace of God. No error is more complete or perilous than the notion that grace makes light of sin. Was it a slight dealing with our sins when Christ bore them in His own body on the tree? Did law ever strike such a blow at any sinner, as God when He sending His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, and thus brought no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus? Nay, it was expressly what the law could not do. The law could condemn the sinner with his sins; but God has thus in Christ condemned not only the sins but the root of evil, sin in the flesh, and this in a sacrifice for sin, so that those who otherwise had nothing but condemnation inwardly and outwardly, past and present, in nature as well as ways, have now by grace “no condemnation.” All that could be condemned has been condemned, and they are in Christ, and they walk not according to flesh but according to the Spirit.

Here doubtless there was no such standing yet existing, or consequently possible to any. But the Son was here acting and speaking in the fullness of grace which was soon to accomplish all for the believer and give all to him. Yet He lets the Samaritan know that she knew nothing. For, whatever His goodness (and it has no limits), grace does not spare man's assumption; and the revelation it bring! from God and of God never really enters till self is judged. Samaria and Jerusalem are alike ignorant of grace; and only Christ by the Spirit can open the heart to bow and receive it. “If thou knewest the gift of God.” Such is the reality and the aspect of God in the gospel. He is not an exacter but a giver. He is not commanding man to love Him, but proclaiming His love to man, yea, to the most wretched of sinners. He is not requiring the creature's righteousness, but revealing His own. But man is slow to believe, and religions man the slowest to understand, what makes nothing of himself and all of God. But such is the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation; such the free-giving of God, which the Lord was then manifesting as well as declaring to the woman of Samaria.

But there was and is more. The knowledge of the gift of God, in contradistinction from the law on the one hand or from blank ignorance of His active love on the other, is inseparable from faith in the personal dignity of the Son of God. Therefore does the Savior, all-lowly as He was, add “and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink.” For without this nothing is known aright. Jesus is the truth, and abides ever the test for the soul, which owns with so much the more decision and adoring thankfulness the glory of Him who, true God, became man in infinite love that we might have eternal life in Him. For otherwise, we may boldly say, it could not be. The truth is exclusive and immutable; it is not only the revelation of what is, but of what alone can and must be, consistently with the real nature of God and the state of man. Yet is God acting in His own liberty, for His love is always free and always holy, and the truth can only be what it is; for it is He who has brought down that love in man to men in all their sin and death and darkness.

It is the revelation of God to man in Him, who though the Son of God stooped so low to bless the most needy and defiled and distant from God as to ask a drink of water that He might find in this the occasion to give even to such an one living water. For this too He does not fail to say as a consequence, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” For grace truly known in Christ produces confidence in grace and draws out the heart to ask the greatest boon of Him who will never be below but above the highest position that can be conferred on Him. Never can it be that the faith of man equals, still less surpasses, the riches of the grace of God. If men, spite of their evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more should the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him? If a guilty Samaritan woman is assured by the Son of God, that she, knowing the gift of God and who He is that asked of her to drink when weary by the fountain, had but to ask of Him in order to receive living water, still none that so asked and received had anything like an adequate sense of that infinite blessing, the Holy Ghost given to be in the believer.

Such is the living water that Christ here speaks of: not power in gift, nor yet simply eternal life, but the Spirit given of the Son to be in the believer as the spring of communion with Himself and the Father.

Lectures on the Church of God, Lecture 4: Worship, the Breaking of Bread, and Prayer. (4:10-24)

John 4:10-24.

THE first and weightiest part of the subject now before us is worship. It most of all concerns us, because it most nearly touches God himself; and this, I am convinced, is the truest criterion, as well as the safest and most salutary for our souls. No doubt the breaking of bread may be included in worship, but it calls for a separate notice, as being of a complex nature and having a distinct aspect toward the saints themselves;

whereas worship as such is essentially God-ward. Again it seemed due to its important to give it a place of its own, as furnishing most impressively, and in an act which engages all hearts, that which brings before our souls the deepest and most solemn revelation of divine holiness and grave in the Lord's death, in presence of which all find their level, all recognize what they were without His precious blood, what they are now in virtue of it, and above all what He is who so died in atonement for them, that they might remember Him—yea, forever—in thankful and adoring peace.

The scripture read to-night shows not only that worship forms a blessed, lofty, and most fruitful part of Christian life, but that the Lord Himself puta it in contrast with that which God enjoined in times that are past. As on previous occasions a consideration of God's ways of old helped us to see more distinctly the fresh revelations of God in the New Testament, so we shall find in the matter of worship.

First of all let me premise that there is a certain state of soul that is needed for worship. God looks for the worship of His children, and it is a duty in which all of them have a direct and immediate interest; yet there is a basis necessary both on God's part and on theirs, in order that there should be real proper Christian worship. So it was with regard to the one body, the assembly of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If there be one domain more than another where the allowance of man's will is both a sin and a shame, it is in intruding into the worship of God. Yet is there anything more frequently done and with less conscience? Is there an act where man more exalts himself, and does greater despite to the Spirit of grace? Let none suppose that this is speaking with undue severity. Can one speak too strongly of an interference which deludes the world, defiles the Church, and destroys the moral glory of Christ? On a false foundation or rather without foundation man all the while is but actively dishonoring God, and this in the face of the brightest manifestation He has made or can make of Himself; for it is in His Son. If in truth God has so spoken and acted, then we have God fully revealed; and we must have one superior to the Son of God in order to find a brighter and fuller revelation than what we have in Christ.

This then is both the source of all our hopes and blessedness, and the basis on which Christian worship proceeds; nevertheless, though it is absolutely essential to Christian worship that there should be a perfect revelation of God in Christ, this infinite as it is does not suffice. There is a need on man's part which must be met according to divine glory. God has not failed to reveal Himself fully; He has left nothing undone; He has done nothing that is not absolutely perfect; and all this so that there need be no doubt or question about it.

There was doubtless a gradual unfolding of God's mind and will and glory: indeed I think we might say that He could not have brought out all His mind until He gave His Son. But now that the Son of God is come, we can as believers say without presumption—"He has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." In fact, we should be deliberately slighting or guilty disbelieving what God has given in order that He should be known, if we did not say boldly "We know." Is it not a great thing in a dark world like this to have God preparing, even for His babes, such language as "we know"? Yes, and He would have us prove the truth of these words "we know," not only as to ourselves but Himself. It is much to have a divine book in which we can, as led of the Spirit, look back on the past, forward on the future, down upon the maze of the present, and say as to all "we know." It is infinitely more and better that we can humbly and truly say, "we know Him that is true, and we are in Hira that is true, oven in His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 5)

It is not a question of how far there may be intelligence developed in the child of God. There is such a thing as growth in knowledge; but along with it we must also stand up for the great blessing and fundamental truth, that every soul God has brought to Himself has an unction from the Holy One and knows all things. Now the possession of this divine capacity is far beyond any measure of difference there may be in practical development. Of course there are such differences, and there is thus room for the exercise of a spiritual mind, and the Spirit of God no doubt acts through the truth upon us that we may make progress. But then we may rest confident, as we think of the children of God, that, wherever they are, under perhaps the most untoward circumstances, God has given them a new nature, and this a nature capable by the Spirit of understanding and appreciating and enjoying Himself. All the time here below is or ought to be just the season for growth. It is the school where we are to learn truth in practice; but then it is the application and deepening in our souls of that which we have already in the grace of God. "I have not written unto you," says the apostle, "because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." (1 John 2) This is the portion of every child of God.

But this very privilege indicates the great essential on man's side in order to be a worshipper. Man as such, unless born of God, is incapable of worshipping God-no more able to do so than a horse is capable of understanding science or philosophy. I deny entirely and in principle that there is any capacity in man, as he is naturally, to worship God. He needs to be a new creature in Christ; he needs to possess a new nature that is of God, in order to be able to understand or to worship God. Not that the simple fact of eternal life, which every soul receives in believing on the Son of God, alone qualifies for worship; but then God does not give it alone. He has provided other means of the greatest possible moment, and He has vouchsafed them not merely to some, but to all His children. In many cases however, lamentable to say, the appearance and the enjoyment of this great grace may be hindered. It may be hardly possible to discern either the divine capacity or the power of worship. But we are entitled always to reckon on the Lord, the unfailing truth of His word, and the fullness of His grace.

If God has given a new life to His children, and reconciled them to Himself by Him who has borne their sins in His own body on the tree, wherefore has this great work been done? No doubt for His own glory and out of His own love; but it is as a part of that glory and an answer to His love that He calls upon His children to praise as well as serve Him now. And we have before us the consideration of this very subject—Christian worship, which demands the gift of the Pentecostal Spirit quite as much as either the assembly or ministry can do—a part of the homage of the children of God, and a return of heart which God claims from all that are His.

The first great requisite then for man, in order to worship as a Christian, is that he be born of God as the object of His grace in Christ, and receive the Holy Ghost to dwell in him. The Lord teaches the principle of it in the answer He gives to the Samaritan woman—"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." There we have the kernel, as it were, of worship—"If thou knewest the gift of God." It is not the law, were it of God Himself, though even that she knew not as one that was under it; for the Samaritans were a mongrel people, Gentiles really though partially Jewish in profession and form. But even if the law of God had been known in all its fullness, unimpaired and uncorrupted by man, it certainly would not have fitted for Christian worship. But the word was, "if thou knewest the gift of God" —His free-giving; if she knew God as a giver—that He is acting out of His free bounty and love. This is the first truth. But in the next place, "If thou knewest.... who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

Al! the time God sanctioned the law as a system, He dwelt in thick darkness; that is, He did not reveal but hide Himself, as it were. But when the only-begotten Son declared the Father, God no longer occupied the position of a claimant on man, which was necessarily the form in which the law presented His character. Of course this character was right and just and good, like the commandment itself; and man ought to have bowed to Him and answered His demand. But man was a sinner; and the effect of pressing the claim was to bring out more plainly the sins of man. Had the law been the image of God, as ignorant and perverse theologians falsely teach, man must have been hopelessly left and lost. But this was far from the truth. The law, though of God, is neither God nor a reflection of God, but only the moral measure of what sinful man owes to God. God is light; God is love; and if man is in the depth of need, He gives freely, fully, like Himself. Indeed it is what becomes Him, and what He delights in. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It were strange if God were defrauded of that which is the more blessed of the two. According to the law He should have been a receiver, had not man broken down; in the Gospel He is unequivocally a giver, and what is more, a giver of His very best to those whose only desert is everlasting destruction.

But this is only possible through the glory and the humiliation of the Son of God, stooping down and suffering to the uttermost for sinners. How truly and beautifully then the Lord says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water:" in other words, had she known God's grace and the glory of Him who freely talked with her, she would have sought and found all she wanted. Little did she suspect who the lowly One was whom she supposed to be but a Jew, though she did wonder that a Jew could be so tender and so bend down to a Samaritan woman. Little did she think that it was the Lord God of heaven and earth, the only begotten in the bosom of the Father; had she known but a little of this, she would have asked, and He would have given her living water. It is the Holy Ghost that is meant by the "living water." Thus in a single verse we have the whole Trinity in one way or another concerned. God's own grace is the first thought, the source; then we have the glory of the Person of the Son, and His presence in humiliation among men on the earth; finally the Son according to His proper glory gives to needy thirsty souls the living water—the Holy Ghost. Is it necessary to say that none but a person supremely divine could impart such a blessing?

Mere then you have testified by our Lord Jesus the necessary basis of Christian worship: first of all, God revealed as He is in the Gospel as contrasted with the law—God in His grace; secondly, the Son coming down in perfect goodness, and willing to be man's debtor in the least things that He might bless him in the greatest by a love which can win the most careless and obdurate; and thirdly, the gift of the Holy Ghost. What must Christian worship be according to its true character and object in the mind of God, if all these things are necessary in order that it should exist! It does in very deed suppose on God's part a full revelation of what He is in His own nature and in His grace to man does assume that the Son has come amongst men m love to make good that revelation in the thorough putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It also supposes that the heart, awakened to its real wants, has asked and received of the Lord living water, the Holy Ghost, not only as the agent of lite and renewal, but as a well within of unfailing refreshment springing up into everlasting life.

Accordingly a little lower down in the chapter we have more developed instruction on the subject, although we have had the foundation of it in verse 10. The woman, when her conscience was touched, and she learned that she stood in the presence of a prophet, though not yet recognizing in Him the Messiah, put her religious difficulties before Him for solution, quite sure that He brought the truth of God—"I perceive that thou art a prophet.”

Remark in passing that the essential idea of a prophet, both in the Old and the New Testament sense, is one that brings the conscience directly into the presence of God, so as to have His light shed upon the soul. There were many prophets who predicted scarcely anything, but they were not the less prophets. Finding herself then in the presence of one who was able to announce the truth of God, she wants to have the questions of her soul answered. She turned to Him about that which at all times and everywhere has and must have unrivaled interest. The world itself, blind and dead, will fight for nothing faster than its religion. There were differences then as there are now. "Our fathers," she said, "worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The Lord solemnly tells her: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." He gives a rebuke too: "Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." It is clear that whatever hopes of salvation were held out to the Jews, they were founded on their belief in Christ. But while He vindicates the position (not the condition) of the Jews, He proclaims the dawn of a brighter day: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." He could speak thus plainly and strongly because He was Himself the Son in the bosom of the Father, and was entitled, in virtue of the glory of His Person, to bring in worship suited to His own intimate knowledge and perfect revelation of the Father.

Thereon at once follows the full and distinctive character of Christian worship. God is made known as a Father calling and adopting children; nay, more than this, He is seeking children. In this is the fullness of divine love going out from heaven and for heaven. In Israel men had to seek Jehovah, and this with carefully prescribed cites and rigid ceremonies: thus only could even the chosen people in their worship come and appear before God. Notwithstanding the nicest tare, not one could approach into His presence—nay not even the high priest himself; and if it had been possible for him to draw and stay near, it was not to God revealed as a Father. God was no more Father to Aaron, or Phinehas, or Zadok, than He was to the least member of the most obscure tribe in Israel. There was at that time no such manifestation of God. But now the hour was coming, and in principle come, when the Father was seeking worshippers. The Jewish system had been tried and found wanting, and was now doomed. Before God the worldly sanctuary was already fallen, and Christ was the true temple. The Son of God was come, and this could not but change all things—not only teach, but change all. No wonder then that there was, in and through His presence, a new and full display of God, a declaration of the Father's name. Here Christ makes known the new thing in this point of view; how earthly worship must vanish, not merely at the mountain of Gerizim, but even in Jerusalem; that it was a question henceforth of worshipping the Father, and this in spirit and in truth; for, wondrous to say, the Father was seeking such to worship Him What a truth 1 God the Father going out in His own uncaused, creative love in quest of worshippers! Of course, He was accomplishing this task by His Son, and in the energy of the Holy Spirit. Still, this was the principle, in direct contrast with nature and Judaism—the Father seeking worshippers. Not only was it an entirely new character of worship, suited to and demanding the new revelation of God Himself, but it necessarily and completely extinguished the old lamps of the sanctuary hitherto acknowledged in Jewry. Not only was the spurious worship of Samaria more than ever condemned, but the brightness of heaven, now shining freely, eclipsed the feeble rays which in Israel were meant at least to make the darkness visible, and to keep up a testimony to better light that was coming. What had been temporarily owned and used of God was now becoming a nullity and a nuisance; and God, as we might expect, brought in the vast change most righteously. Up to this time man was on his trial. The Jew, as the sample of chosen, favored man, was being proved; and what was the issue of it? The cross and shame of the Lord Jesus. They rejected and

slew their own Messiah, little knowing too that He was Jehovah. God over all, blessed forever. Justly therefore and after long patience the Jews were put aside. Such was the moral development of the ways of God. There was nothing arbitrary, as every one who believes what God declares in His word as to Israel's rejection of the Messiah must at once see and feel. In the life and ministry of Christ was a manifestation of such grace and longsuffering as had never been witnessed or even conceived on the earth. But now the end was come before God. The Jews, by their conduct, were cutting the last ties which a people in the flesh could have with God. In rejecting their Messiah they rejected themselves. But when the cross was a fact, and redemption accomplished, when Jesus was risen from the dead, the grace and truth which had come by Him shone out in His work on the cross, and the plenteous redemption, not promised now, but accomplished, was made known by the Holy Ghost. Accordingly those who believed were in a capacity to worship the Father. It is not merely that they had faith in the Messiah, for this they had when He was here. But now that they had in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; now that Christ made God Himself known as His Father and their Father, His God and their God (and this in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven), they could draw near into the holiest, and truly worship the true God; they could say, not only by, but with the Lord Jesus, "Abba, Father."

Not merely were spiritual life and redemption needful, but the Holy Ghost also; and accordingly hen the Lord adds that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Mark the difference of the language. When He speaks of His Father seeking worshippers, it is pure grace flowing freely out; it is He who is seeking. It is not merely that He accepts the worship of His people, but He seeks worshippers. Yet let us remember that our Father is God. It is a thing easily forgotten, strange to say; but this is mere fleshliness, and not from our privilege in infinite mercy of nearness to Him, which ought not in the least degree to dull, but to increase and strengthen our sense of His majesty. "God is a Spirit," He says; "and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." There is a certain moral necessity here, which cannot be dispensed with. The truth is, Christ creates, the law never does. The law kills; what else can it do or ought it to do for sinful creatures? It would be a bad law if it did let us off. If I deserve to die as a guilty man responsible to God, then, I say, the law is just, holy, and good in condemning me. It is the province of the Saviour alone to give me life, and not this merely, but to give me life by His death and resurrection, without sin, fruit or root, that I may stand in Him possessed of a new nature, wholly delivered by grace from the misery, guilt, power, and judgment of the old man.

This is the place of every Christian. These are the simple but most blessed elements of his life and standing before God; but then, as they are inseparable from the gift of the Holy Ghost, so is He absolutely needed that we may worship our God and Father; and for this purpose and others He is given. Thus we see what the living water means. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is the Holy Ghost given by Christ to be in the believer; without Him there can be no such thing as the power of worship. But He is given, and the hour of true Christian worship is come in the strictest sense.

And you that are here assembled to-night, are you prepared to acknowledge, for any consideration whatever, worship which is not of this character? You, especially, who are young in years, and perhaps, also, little established in the truth of God, hearken. You may be tempted, not only through natural hankering after the world and its worship, but you have relatives, connections, friends, who think it hard you do not join them. In what? In Christian worship? Join them in it by all means. Whenever, wherever you find worship in spirit and in truth, fear not to join; seek it, yes, earnestly seek it. Rather would I ask, are you disposed to slight such worship for that which does all it can to return to the mountain of Samaria, if it cannot reach Jerusalem; for a religious service that is both untrue and formal; and an order that mingles some genuine worshippers in a crowd of false? How many there are now-a-days who, in word boasting of their heavenly liturgy, in reality hurry through it with such evident heedlessness as to show that the sermon is all they care to hear One might fancy they were men who knew nothing, desired nothing, but to heat the way to be saved, instead of being God's children, called and capacitated to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. But this is the misery of being in a position which is bound up with what they value in the flesh and in the world; where worshipping the Father according to His word never was nor can be known.

I admit that even this is better than belonging to another class of religionists, nominally in the same sect, who, being ignorant of Christ's redemption, bear with an evangelical discourse for the cake of services, the darkness of which is to them delightful, because it answers to their own condition. Fleshly worship suite a fleshly state.

My charge is not about the slipping in of a hypocrite amongst the true—these no doubt may creep in anywhere. The main point insisted on is the error and sin of embracing the world in divine worship through a false principle, than which there is nothing in the present day more common, and in some eyes more desirable. Clearly this is not Christian worship; but still it is so styled; it is accepted and justified as such; and the refusal of it is branded popularly as the fruit of a harsh unloving censorious spirit, instead of being seen to be, as it is, simplehearted desire to carry out the will of the Lord. Worship there cannot be, unless the ground of grace is taken: there must be life in the Spirit, nothing less than divine life and the power of the Holy Ghost working in the worshipper.

Again, it ought not to be very difficult to discern where there is Christian worship. One can easily say where it is not. How can it be where there is no recognition of the assembly of the faithful in separation from the world? where human formularies largely displace the divine word? where the Holy Ghost is not welcomed to work in the order laid down in scripture? where anybody may be in membership, and the evidently unconverted can join in or lead the most serious services? The invariable effect is that as you cannot raise the world to the height of faith, the believers who mingle all together indiscriminately must descend to the world's level. Hence, fine buildings, imposing ceremonies, exciting music, poetic sentiment, are apt to come in by degrees, where Christian worship is unknown or forgotten. Hence too the need of legal order, for it seems bold to trust the grave of God.

You may have Christian worshippers in such a state of things; for I have no desire to exaggerate; but Christian worship there cannot be. Do you doubt this? Perhaps the doubt is because you have never known what worship really is. So much is this the case at present—the thoughts of Christians are so vague, unformed, and dark—that to many the very meaning of worship is lost. How many call a building where they meet to hear preaching a place of worship; and when they go to hear, they think and say they are going to worship! Does not all this show that the very idea of worship is unknown? Nor is it to be wondered at. The truth is, there is a great deal of preaching of Christ in these much calculated to arouse and also to win souls; but where is there a full setting forth of the Gospel of God's grave? That Christ is preached at all is a matter for which we have to thank God. Souls are converted, and learn, as far as the usual orthodox testimony goes, what is most true of their sins and their danger; but we want the gospel of God fully proclaimed—the gospel as we see it set forth in the epistles—the glad news

not only that the work of Christ has put sin away, but that the believer stands in a new life and relationship with. God, of which the Holy Ghost is given as the sea', Where this is known, worship is the simple necessary fruit; the heart, thus set free by grave, goes out to God in thanksgiving and praise.

So in the chapter we began with, the believer enjoys not only a new life communicated, but a well of water within him, which springs up into everlasting life. Thus, by the energy of the Holy Spirit given to us, we possess, as a conscious thing, perfect, unbroken place, and we cannot but breathe the joy of our ransomed souls to the praise of our Saviour God. As a fact this may not be found among the children of God, save few comparatively; because in general, where there is a perception of Christ, they put the law in the place of the Holy Ghost, and thus fall into the uncertainty which invariably, where there is conscience, flows from the law thus misused, instead of enjoying the light, and power, and peace in Christ and His redemption, which is the proper fruit of the Holy Ghost's testimony to Christ and of His indwelling in the believer. Here only can you have Christian worship. It is founded upon the full revelation of grace in Christ dead, risen, and ascended; and it is in the power of the Spirit of God that this is enjoyed by the believer. But not this only: for God is a Spirit, and the consequence is, that Christian worship repudiates formality. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." There we have the nature of God revealed, and thence is deduced the moral need of worshipping Him in spirit and truth, not according to earthly form or human will.

This then is the source, groundwork, and cha-meter of Christian worship. But we have one element more when we pursue the further instructions of the New Testament. In 1 Cor. 14 we find it connected with the assembly. We learn there on what principle, and by whom, worship is now paid to God. This is an important addition to our knowledge of God's will. No one contends for a moment that the gospel should not be preached, or that believers should not be instructed in the truth. These are duties confessedly according to scripture. There we have everything provided for, that can be needed for the good of the Church, and for the well-being of souls; we have both the principle and the fact of all Christian service most clearly laid down in the word of God. Among the rest there is no lack of testimony to the manner according to which Christian worship should be conducted. We have seen that none can render acceptable worship to God but Christians: from it the world is plainly shut out, according to the teaching of scripture. It is not a question of closing the door, or of excluding persons from the place where the faithful assemble. It is clear from scripture that unbelievers might be present where the assembly of God may be gathered; but they are incapacitated from rendering proper and acceptable worship unto God, because they have neither the new nature, nor the Holy Spirit, who is the only power of worship; they neither know redemption, which is the basis of worship, nor do they know the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who, with the Son, is the object of worship. Thus, in every point of view, the world is necessarily without the pale of Christian worship, and the bringing the world in is a large part of the sin and ruin of Christendom.

Again we gather from 1 Cor. 14 the place which the giving of thanks has in the worship of God; and this connected, not with any one individual only, or a separate class, but with the order and operation of God in the assembly. Hence we read (ver. 15), "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Important as singing is, its end is not, of course, the sweet sound: the essential thing, as we are told, is “singing with the spirit and understanding also." What a proof that the Lord is looking for the intelligent service of His people! So in verse 16 we read," Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" If in Christian worship there were the utterance of an unknown tongue in the giving of thanks or in blessing God, it would traverse the roles of edifying the assembly, because it would leave out those that could not intelligently join their "Amen." The passage is cited also to show that thanksgiving and blessing, like singing, and other constituents of Christian worship known to us familiarly, were found from the first in the Christian assembly.

But there is just the difficulty. Look right or left—look where you will, where can you find the Christian assembly? Where is there the gathering together of the children of God in the name of the Lord Jesus engaged in thanksgiving and blessing, praising and singing, as we read of here? Yet the assembly of God, meeting as such, is essential to Christian worship. There might be the best of men chosen to conduct the service, and the order of praise and prayer might be as faultless as existing liturgies are opera to severe criticism; but what then? Would it be the worship of the family of God? If not, how could it be of really Christian character? God looks for the worship of His children in the Spirit. Do you say that after all it is only the slight difference of several taking part, instead of one? But grave as that might be, such a difference is not the essential thing, but this—that there be perfect openness for the Spirit's action by whom He is pleased to speak. It is not then a question of one man, or half-a-dozen. On some occasions the Holy Ghost might use one or two; on others, more than six in various ways. What scripture demands is, that there be faith in the Spirit's presence, proved by leaving Him Hila; due right to employ as may please Him. It is not therefore a mere question of one, or few, or many mouthpieces to give thanks, or bless, or take part in acts of Christian worship. The real and essential feature is, that the Holy Ghost, being present, should be counted on, and His employment of this Christian or that as He will. In an assembly where there were many spiritual men, it would have a strange appearance if but one or two took an active part in the worship of the Lord. Still, whether few or many speak at any given time, the only scriptural mode by which acceptable worship is rendered is where the whole assembly unites in the liberty of the Spirit, with heart and mind, in the offering of their praises and thanksgivings to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost, acting in the assembly by its members may think fit to employ one or twelve to speak the praises suitable to His mind, and according to the condition of the assembly. And what can be sweeter to all, whether or not they be thus employed as the audible channels of worship, than to have the consciousness that the Holy Ghost in very deed so deigns to guide in one and all? The one point of value is, that He should be free to direct all for the glory of Christ.

There is another remark of a practical kind to be made as to worship. We must guard against bringing into the assembly our own thoughts of the worship to be offered unto God. An individual may give out a hymn to be sung in which he delights, and which may be not only beautiful but true and spiritual in itself; but it may be a mistake in him to give it out—a wholly unsuitable hymn for the occasion on which he desires it to be sung. Again, there may be some outside the assembly, known or unknown, who, out of curiosity, are come to see what the worship is like. Now are you, fearing that they might wonder at the silence from time to time, to read a chapter, or give out some sweet hymn? Need I say that such a step is indefensible, and beneath men who believe in the presence of the Holy Ghost? Some may think there is liberty to do this or the like; but who put such thoughts into the mind? Do you think the Holy Spirit is occupied with what those without may say or think of those within, or anything of the kind? Is He not on the contrary filled with His own thoughts of Christ, and communicating them to us? The becoming thing, therefore, for us to do under such circumstances is to look from ourselves, and those within and without, to God, that He, working by the Spirit, may give us communion with the present thoughts of the Spirit of God about the Lord Jesus Christ.

When such is the case, how simple is the, flow of thanksgiving for His special mercies to us and all saints! how fragrant the sense God gives us of His delight in Christ! what praise of His grace! what anticipations of glory, and of Christ Himself there! All these and more are but ingredients; and they will variously predominate as the Lord sees fit. Even a lower character of worship, if it be but suited to a given state, is, in my judgment, a far more pleasing thing to God than any strain ever so high, which has not the real present energy of the Spirit of God connected with it.

Further, as to criticism: I cannot think the assembly of God is the right place for any man to stand up and show his superior wisdom in; on the contrary, therein, above all occasions, is the place for the greatest to show his littleness before God. There may be seasons and circumstances where a judgment of what is given out may not be amiss, but a duty; but the assembly of God is not the place for such a course. May I not take the liberty of applying to this what the apostle lays down as to another innovation: "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the assemblies of God"? How, where, could any one gather such a practice from the word of God? Nor do I confine myself here, or in these remarks generally, to a bare text, but I am speaking of the whole tenor, and texture, and object of all that is given us in the scripture. Accordingly, as it is unauthorized, so the result cannot but be pernicious. What can the effect of criticism in the assembly of God be but the sowing of discord and distraction where unity and concord should prevail? And yet it may be a thing too often done; against it I would warn my hearers earnestly. All are liable to make mistakes, and all deserve to be corrected occasionally; but, as a general role, comment upon another is altogether out of place in the Christian assembly. There is a meet time and place for every real duty; and it never can be right to rectify one wrong by another, however godly the intention Next, as to the breaking of bread, a few scriptures will suffice. The Lord's Supper, not baptism, was revealed of the Lord, we all know, to the apostle Paul, as it is brought out in the same epistle (1 Cor. 11) from which much has been already quoted. It is a holy institution, intimately linked with, and the distinct outward expression of the unity of Christ's body, which it was The apostle Paul's work especially to develop. We have the Lord accordingly there revealing it afresh to the apostle Paul. He had not sent Paul to baptize, as he says, but to preach the gospel. There is not the least doubt that he did baptize, nor that it was perfectly right in him to baptize. But baptism, so expressly charged on the eleven, after the Lord's resurrection, is not only a single initiatory observance—"one baptism,"—but it is for each individual the confession of the foundation truth of Christ's death and resurrection. The subject of it stands forth as a believer in Him who died and rose; he is no longer therefore a Jew, or a heathen, but a confessor of Christ. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, belongs to the assembly, and forms an affecting and important object in the worship of the saints of God. It is primarily and strictly the standing sign of our only foundation; it is the witness of His love unto death, and His work, by virtue of which such as we can worship. No wonder therefore we have the apostle Paul showing the very solemn and blessed place which the Lord's Supper claims in the revelations of the Lord: do him. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." It is evident, on the face of the statement, what a large and deep place the Lord's death has in His Supper. No joy, no brightness of the favor of God in heaven, no consequent communion, nor hopes of everlasting blessedness with Mm, can be allowed for a moment to distract from, or overshadow, the death of the Lord. But the reverse is the truth; for the more the Lord's death has its own central value before the Christian, all these things shine out not only more brightly but also more sweetly and affectingly to the heart. And so the same man who was God's blessed instrument for developing the full extent of the Christian's privileges, is the very one who gathers us around our Lord's death as that which pre-eminently attracts and fills every heart that loves His name.

From Acts 20:7, it is plain that the saints should break bread on the first day of the week, not of the month or quarter. But it is the resurrection day, not the day of His death, as if we were summoned to be there in mourning as for the dead. But He is risen, and therefore, with grateful, solemn joy, we take the Supper on the day that speaks of His rising power. I cannot but believe that the Holy Ghost records the day for our instruction, as well as the object that called together the believers primarily. No doubt the apostle, passing through after a short stay, discoursed to those assembled; but they carne together on that day to break bread. Have we consented to other thoughts and arrangements? Or do we act as if we believed the Holy Spirit knows and shows us the best and truest, the holiest and happiest way of pleasing God and honoring Christ? The death of the Lord keeps constantly before the soul our utter need as once guilty sinners, proved by the cross; the complete blotting out of all our sins by His blood; the glorifying of God up to, and above all in, death itself; the manifestation of absolute grace, and withal the righteousness of God in justifying us; the perfect glory of the Saviour;—all these things, and infinitely more, are brought and kept before us in those simple but wondrous words—"the Lord's death!”

To take the Supper in remembrance of the Lord, and thus show forth His death, is what gathers us together as our prime desire. There can be no doubt about the meaning of the word of God which records this for our comfort and edifying; yet how could one inter that such was His will if one looked at the practice of Christians? Compare what they are doing Lord's-day after Lord's-day, with the obvious lessons of scripture, and intention of the Lord in so revealing His mind to us; and say whether for the most part this simple, touching memorial has not been slighted by real saints, and whether its character has not been changed universally in Christendom. I speak not of points of form, but of its principle—of such an interference with its mode of celebration as leaves hardly a single shred according, to the Lord's institution.

Beware of thinking anything can be of equal moment with duly showing forth the Lord's death. The Supper of the Lord claims an unequivocal prominence in the worship of the saints. Not that one thinks of the mere fact of celebrating it, as to time, in the middle of the meeting. Indeed, it is remarkable how the Spirit of God avoids laying down laws about the Supper (and the same is true of Christianity in general)—a circumstance which the unfaithful may abuse, but which gives infinitely greater scope to the spirit of Christian affection and obedience. This however we may safely say, that it is not a question of the point of time when the act of breaking the bread occurs. The all-important thing is, that the Lord's Supper should be the governing thought when the saints are gathered for this purpose on the Lord's day; that neither the prayers of many, nor the teaching of any, should put that great object in the shade. In ministry however spiritual, man has his place; in the Supper, if rightly celebrated, the abased Lord alone is exalted. There might be occasions where the evident guidance of the Spirit brings it early before us, or postpones it late in the meeting, and thus any technical role binding it to the beginning, or middle, or' end, would be human encroachment on Him who alone is competent on each occasion and always to decide.

This openness may seem strange to such as are habituated to rigid forms, even where there are no written formularies; but that apparent strangeness is chiefly due to their habitual lack of acquaintance with the real presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost la the assembly. Where however the door is open to the action of the Spirit according to scripture, and where a just sense of what is in hand pervades the

assembly, the Spirit of God, somehow or another, according to the truth of things in His sight, knows how to adjust the right moment as well as all else, and to give us the comfort of His guidance, if the Lord be but the confidence of our souls.

Again it may be that you sometimes go to the Lord's table and return disappointed, because there has been no exposition of the word, or no exhortation. Is it possible that you have gone to remember and show forth the death of Christ, and yet have come back with feelings of dissatisfaction? How can this be? Is it not the morbid influence of the present state of Christendom? No doubt there is that in the natural heart which suits and likes what is now the vogue; and the excitement of Egypt's food is readily craved, where the heavenly manna is loathed as light food. Unquestionably we have that within which helps what is found outside; still it is humbling and afflicting to my own mind that a discourse should seem indispensable to garnish the breaking of bread, and that there should be a thought of want in the meeting where the Lord's death has been before the heart; when one has met around the Lord in His own name with those that love Him! Do you suppose that there is any service more acceptable to God Himself than the simple remembrance of Christ in His own Supper?

But, however that may be estimated, all this has been often and plainly forgotten, and the Supper of the Lord has not only been made, in many instances, a much rarer thing than scripture warrants, but its proper character has been tampered with, and the great landmarks that the Lord laid down have been utterly disregarded, so that the celebration is become anything men please to call it, except the Lord's Supper. Say that it is a sacrament, if you will; but one may perhaps doubt that, if so, it is the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians used to take a common meal together on the Lord's day; for in those days Christians strongly felt the social character of Christianity, and one may regret that it has been ever since so much lost sight o£ After the meal they celebrated the Lord's Supper. The devil, however, contrived to bring shame and confusion among them at Corinth by license at this feast; some of them got intoxicated. No doubt it was a dreadful dishonor on the Lord's name; but it ill becomes those to speak harshly who are apt to utter the loudest reproaches. We must remember that in those days they had just been brought out of heathenism; and it used to be a part of the worship of false gods to get drunk in their honor. The Gentiles did not feel the immorality of it in the way that everybody knows now. It was thought no improper thing then to be thus excited and worse in their religious rites, and, indeed, at other times. It is probable therefore, that in this infant assembly at Corinth it was not counted such an enormity as we know it to be, that Christians should so far forget the Lord at the agape. What aggravated the sin was the mixing up the Lord's Supper then and there, it seems, with the love-feast. Such conduct was destructive of the character of His Supper. To eat and drink thus was to eat judgment. (1 Cor. 11:29.) What had been begun in the Spirit ended in the flesh. I refer to this merely for the purpose of showing that, by bringing carnal feasting into such a holy assemblage, we lose or destroy its true nature and aim.

Thus, without confining oneself to the notice of any particular body, the practice of appointing particular officials, whose role right and title1 it is to administer the bread and wine to each communicant, is clean contrary to the teaching of Scripture, and flies in the face of the evident intention of God, quite as much as the distressing conduct of the Corinthians themselves. For what is the Lord's Supper? Is it not the family feast? When you derange the Father's order among the members of His family, or when you bring in those that are not of His family, its character is gone, it is the family feast no more. Let us then assume the least unfavorable supposition of a Christian company, and of none but Christians. Yet supposing that the administration, as men call it, of the Supper of the Lord is committed to a real minister of Christ, or to all who are His ministers, as the exclusive prerogative of such as minister only—I put the most favorable form which can be conceived for the popular notion under any and all circumstances, it is a human invention, not only without the authority of Christ, but decidedly contrary to the doctrine and facts recorded in scripture. I admit ministry most fully; but the Lord's Supper has no connection with it. Make it a necessary function of those that rule to administer the bread and wine, and it bears not even an outward resemblance to the Lord's Supper. It becomes a sacrament, not His Supper; a manifest innovation, a decided and complete departure from what the Lord has laid down in His word. The very idea of a person standing apart and claiming to administer it as a right alters and ruins the Supper of the Lord. That Supper, according to scripture, leaves no room for the display of human importance in the pretensions of a clergy; least of all when the apostles were on earth. Blessed and honoured of God as these were at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, they were there in His presence as souls that were saved from sin and its judgment by the Lord's death. In the regulation of the churches, in the choice of elders, in the appointment of deacons, they had their own proper place of apostolic dignity. The word of God clearly and fully proves that the administration of the Supper by an official is a figment and tradition of men, wholly wanting the support of scripture.

But there is another point that often troubles souls, and might possibly harass, even where the bread is broken in a holy simple scriptural manner—the danger of eating unworthily, and so of incurring "damnation." Let me meet this at once by the assurance that, though one has to watch against a careless or otherwise unworthy participation, there is no thought of damnation, which would indeed upset for the believer all the comfort of the gospel and the general drift of God's word. But some may say, "Do not the scriptures assert as much?" I admit the English version does, but not the word of God; and we must not confound them. We have every reason to thank God for the English Bible, which, as far as I am acquainted with the subject, I believe to be as good a version, if not better than any other current in the world; but for all this, it is only a version, and therefore a work in which the weakness of man appears, and in which are found here and there defects which human infirmity has not been able to avoid. One of these errors is on this very subject (in 1 Cor. 11:29). The apostle is showing how essential it is that we go to the Lord's Table, which invites us freely as every week opens, our hearts filled with grateful remembrance of Christ's self-sacrificing love, who died in atonement that we through him might be saved. What is the result of a light heedless state at the Lord's Supper? If we take the bread and wine at that holy feast as we eat the common food God provides in our own houses, not discerning the Lord's body—in other words, if we eat and drink unworthily, it is not the Lord's Supper we are eating, but rather judgment to ourselves. The Lord's hand will be on such, as the apostle shows by the case of the disorderly Corinthians; but even in that aggravated instance, it was expressly temporal judgment, that they should not be damned or "condemned with the world." On the other hand, there is no excuse for absenting yourself from the Lord's Table. There is no escape from the hand of the Lord, save by humbling ourselves and vindicating Him by self-judgment, and then coming. The Lord's Supper is no more a sweet privilege than a solemn duty for all His own, save those under discipline; and when we think of the love He has shown us in the boundless sacrifice He has made for us—the deliverance wholly undeserved He has wrought for us in His own deep abasement and suffering under God's wrath on the cross, together with all the gracious encouragement He has therein brought before us for our comfort, admonition, and support in our conflict through the world, we cannot but regard the thankful commemoration of the Lord's death as a paramount obligation which under no circumstances ought to be neglected.

Another person's fault should not keep me away: if it rightly acts so on one, it ought to hinder all. Is the Lord then to be as it were forgotten because somebody deserves censure? Let the faulty individual be reproved or otherwise dealt with according to scripture; but my place is to "do this in remembrance of Christ." Again, a sense of my own faultiness should not keep me back. “Let a man examine himself, and so let

him eat—not stay away. He who abstains from the Lord's Supper virtually says he is none of His.

This will suffice as to the breaking of bread, barely as the subject has been touched. A few words remain to be added in regard to prayer. There is very often a great mistake made as to this. We hear, sometimes about the "gift of prayer;" but where do you find it? Show me a passage of scripture which speaks of a "gift of prayer" in the sense in which people commonly use the term? What is the effect It largely hinders conscientious modest simple souls, who otherwise would join heartily in public prayer. But they cannot give themselves credit for possessing the "gift of prayer." They are frightened by what is a mere bugbear—by what is really, if they but knew it, a blunder. The consequence of this for them is, that they hang back, and are silent, when the meeting would be greatly benefited by their help. Are there not some now present who know well that they have had many a time a desire to pray, and thus express the wants of God's assembly to Himself, but who have been deterred because they feared their lack of a "gift of prayer," and that they might not be able to pray long enough, or in a way acceptable to some whom they have heard insisting on the "gift of prayer"? Is it not a fact? I entreat you, beloved friends, to listen to them no more, nor heed your own thoughts and feelings.

Examine the word of God for yourselves, and you will find that the apostle lays down (1 Tim. 2), and even peremptorily, his desire that the men pray everywhere. Let them then commit themselves to the Lord without doubt, and at the same time remember, that scripture at any rate never even hints about a "gift of prayer." This brings us to another point connected with the one I have just endeavored to explain. It is in my opinion a mischievous notion, that those who possess a ministerial gift should be regarded as the only proper persons to let their voices be heard in the Assembly of God.

Notes on John, John 3:31-36, Notes on (3:31-36)

The glory of the person of Christ shines with rich luster here. It is not merely His nearness of relation to His people as distinguished from John, nor His increase while the greatest of woman-born decreases. He is superior to all comparison. “He that cometh from above is above all.” (Ver. 31.) Neither Adam nor Abraham, Enoch nor Elijah, could take such a ground. They, like John, did not come from above, nor could any one of them be said to be above all. Nor could our blessed Lord Himself be so described, as born of Mary and heir of David, had He not been God—the great theme of our Gospel. But this it has been the grand aim to show He is, a truth of the deepest moment, we can say boldly, not only to us the children but to God the Father. For thus and now are to be solved all the questions that had ever risen between. God and man, insoluble till He appeared, and appeared a true man, who is no less truly God, and thus both “from above” and “above all.”

And it was fitting that John the Baptist's own lips should give utterance to the incontestable supremacy of the Lord Jesus in presence of his own disciples jealous of their leader's honor. Hence follows the explanation: “he that is of the earth is of the earth, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh of heaven is above all.” (Ver. 31.) The Lord may vindicate John; but John asserts the glory of Jesus who had lost none of His intrinsic and supreme dignity by deigning in divine love to become man. Like all other men John could not claim to have any other origin naturally than the earth. Jesus alone is out of heaven; for such is the virtue of His person that He raises up humanity into union with His divine nature, instead of being dragged down by it into its degradation as some have vainly dreamed.

Nor is it of His person only that we are here taught. His testimony is invested with kindred value. “And what he hath seen and heard, this he testifieth; and no one receiveth his testimony.” (Ver. 32.) His is the perfection of testimony; for what was there of God, of the Father, and this in heaven, that the Son had not seen and heard? There could be no conceivable defect here in the glory whence He came, and in the grace with which He made all known to man. How withering therefore the sad result! For surely beforehand it must have been universally anticipated that all but the most besotted would eagerly welcome such a witness of things divine, heavenly and eternal. But such is man's estate through sin, not only the savage and the brutal, not only the idolater or the skeptic, but those who pique themselves on their religion, whether it be theory or practice, ordinances or tradition, effort, ecstasy or experience,— “no one receiveth his testimony.” How solemn the sentence! and the more so as being the unimpassioned utterance of holiness. Doubtless they knew not what they did in their dislike of, or indifference to, His testimony; but what a state man must be in, to have the heavenly and divine Savior thus bearing witness of things most deeply needed by himself in relation to God and heaven and forever, without ever finding out the worth of the testifier or of the testimony! It is not that grace did not open some hearts, here and there, now and then: but the point which is noted is the rejection of His testimony by man, not the reserve of sovereign mercy when all was lost in sin and ruin.

Faith is in no way a growth natural to the heart of sinful man. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and without His grace faith is impossible, such faith at least as pleases Him. For they that are in the flesh cannot please God, and who are not in flesh till brought to God? Man conscious of sin and shrinking from divine judgment dislikes the God whose punishment he dreads. His grace he sees no reason, as far as he is concerned, for believing; and no wonder he sees none, for it would not be God's grace if there were a ground for it in himself. Grace excludes the desert of him to whom it is shown; and this is as offensive to his own. Self-sufficiency as it supposes love in Him whose displeasure he knows he deserves. Thus there is no disposition in his heart to believe in God's grace, ample to make him doubt, and the more as he reasons on what God must be and on what he himself has been toward God. Christ is not seen to change all, as the manifestation of love, and His death the ground of that righteousness which justifies the believer, spite of past ungodliness.

His testimony therefore puts the heart thoroughly to the test; for it tells the truth of the sinner as decidedly as it announces the grace of God; and the heart resists the one and distrusts the other. The last thing submitted to is to think ill of oneself, and well of God. But this is just the effect of receiving the testimony of Christ. We then begin to take God's aide against ourselves; for if there is genuine faith, there is genuine repentance, without which, indeed the faith is human and worthless, as in John 2, where men believed beholding the signs wrought, and Jesus did not trust Himself to them. Such faith is not of God's Spirit, but merely of the mind drawing a conclusion from the probabilities of the case. In it man judges; which pleases him, instead of his being morally judged, which is humbling and offensive. He sees no sufficient reason to reject the evidence; and, his will goes along with it, be believes accordingly. As this was the case with many in Jerusalem at the passover, so is it with multitudes throughout Christendom now and ever since. The vague creed which prevails generally awakens enough neither of interest nor of opposition to put men to the test. But when any great truth, even of that creed, is pressed on the conscience or comes distinctly before the heart, it will then be seen how little men believe what they in words accredit, only because they never seriously apply it

to their souls before God.

Take the simple truth, for instance, of our Gospel, the Word, who was God made flesh and dwelling among us, or again remission of sins in His name the message to every soul, the possession of every believer: who doubts either as long as they are preached abstractedly in the pulpit? But the moment a soul receives them for his own soul, and, though feeling and owning his sins more than ever, blesses God for forgiveness and rejoices in Christ, while he worships God and the Lamb, others shrink back and cry presumption! as if such truths were never intended for the heart and life and lips of every day, but only as a religious service or rather a form for the multitude keeping holiday.

The fact is however that the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, being perfect in themselves and in Him whose glory is adequate to display and make them good, as well as perfectly adapted to man, sinful and lost as he is, test him absolutely, “and no one receiveth his testimony.” Where the quickening power of the Spirit acts, it is far otherwise. So proper is it to win the heart, that he who is not won shows that his will is against God and His grace and truth in Christ, hatred naturally and soon following. He who bows, being begotten by the word of truth, judges himself. He has received not men's word, but, as it truly is, God's word which effectually works in the believer; or, as it is put here, “he that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” (Ver. 88.)

This is the essential character of real living faith. His testimony is received because He gives it: nothing more simple, but we are not simple; nothing more right and due to Him, but we have been all wrong, and most wrong to Him. It is received because He says it, not because it seems reasonable or wise or good, or for evidence of any kind; though one need not say there are the fullest evidences; and the testimony is that which alone could suit God or man, if one be a sinner, the other a Savior where His testimony is received. A divine faith is due to a divine testimony; but the faith which is grounded on human motives is not divine: only that which is founded on God's word truly searches heart and conscience. When a man is broken down to feel his own state of sin, as well as what he has done against such a God, the heart desires that the good news of the gospel should be the truth, instead of yielding to the indifference or active repugnance natural to it; and this is to believe with the heart.

Further the ground of confidence is laid plainly and expressed fully. We are not left to inference. “For he whom God sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure.” (Ver. 34.) To receive the words of Jesus then is to receive those of God. What possible ground is there for hesitation? To faith alone belongs absolute certainty. And of this the Spirit is the power, as in Him perfectly, so in and by us as far as flesh is judged. He was the holy vessel of the Spirit, so that the testimony was poured out as pure as it was poured in, or rather as it is in Him who is Himself the truth. As for what inspired men have written, it is just the same. “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 14:37.) In all others, whatever the power, there is no such guarantee against infirmity or mistake, though one may be perfectly kept and guided, where only and simply dependent: so real is the connection between the truth and the Spirit.

We have had the supremacy of Jesus, and His testimony, so thoroughly marking Him off from all others. But there is more. He is “the Son,” and the especial object of divine affection and honor. This follows; and here accordingly we rise far above His position either as the Messiah, the Bridegroom on the one hand or the heavenly prophet on the other, whose testimony absolutely detected every child of Adam, while it brought him that received it to the knowledge of God and His mind with divine certainty. Hence we hear of the Father and the Son. “The Father loveth the Son and hath put all things in his hands.” (Ver. 35.) Jesus is the heir of all, as the Son of the Father in a sense peculiar to Himself, the true Isaac who abides ever, the beloved Son who has all that He Himself has, and has all given to be in His (the Son's) hand.

Consequently it is no question here of blessing for any measured time or for glory on earth under His reign as king. All things come to the point at once and for ever before Him who is the object of testimony, and not the testifier merely. “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.” One need not then wait for the blessing in the days of the kingdom. Then no doubt Jehovah will command blessing, even life for evermore. But he that believes in the Son has eternal life now. For the same reason it is of all things the most fatal to refuse subjection to His person now. Therefore is it added, “and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (Ver. 36.) If disobedience is intended, it is to Himself as well as to His words, as indeed by the obedience of faith the apostle Paul meant not practical obedience, however important in its place and season, but subjection to Himself—to the truth revealed in Him. He that refuses Him in unbelief abides in unremoved death and the wrath of God, who cannot but resent such insult of heart to His Son.

Notes on John, John 3:22-30, Notes on (3:22-30)

The next paragraph has for its object the homage rendered by the Baptist to the Lord. This the Spirit of God introduces by telling us the occasion of it. The conversation with Nicodemus was in Jerusalem; and in this was unfolded the absolute need of both the new birth and the cross. Only that when the Lord speaks of these things, He could not but let us know that it is eternal life which the believer receives, and that He Himself was not more surely the Son of man who must be lifted up for man's desperate case than He is the only-begotten Son of God given to the world in divine love. Salvation was in His mind, not judgment, though the unbeliever in Him must be, yea is, judged already; and this on the deepest of all grounds, the preference of darkness, that they might do their wicked works at ease, to the Light come into the world in Christ. The case then of every rejecter of Him is thus solemnly decided.

It is evident that the person of Christ is the key to all and shines out more and more in the secret scene with Nicodemus. Still it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, who gave a yet fuller witness to His glory by John at a critical moment, to reproduce this permanently for us with the circumstances which led to it. The thought might enter some minds that the Lord only used His predecessor to continue the work and outdo it. It was fitting therefore that John the Baptist should give a final testimony to Him where human nature is apt to be most grudging.

“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there was tarrying with them and baptizing. And John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because much water was there and they were coming there and being baptized: for John had not yet been cast into prison.” (Ver. 22-24.) We have thus a view of what was going on previous to the public Galilean ministry of our Lord in the three synoptic Gospels. They do not touch on any work of His before John's imprisonment; whilst the early chapters of the fourth Gospel are

devoted to this after the revelation of His person and glories at the beginning.

“There arose then a dispute on the part of the disciples of John with a Jew1 about purification. And they came unto John and said to him, Rabbi, he who was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, lo! he is baptizing and all come unto him.” (Vers. 25, 26.) A Jew's reasoning did not ruffle them; for their souls could not but feel the moral superiority of John's call and baptism to repentance in the faith of the coming Messiah; but the nearness of Jesus and the fact of His attractive power, veiled as it then might be, was a fact that disconcerted them, though the appeal to their master took the shape of zeal for one who had been prompt to own the dignity of Jesus when He came to John for baptism. But now He was baptizing and all were flocking to Him: so complained John's disciples.

Let us well weigh the reply. “John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear [me]2 witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.” (Vers. 27, 28.) It was lowly yet wise withal; it put, as truth always does, both God and ourselves in the right place, thus securing a like recognition of His sovereign disposal of all and the contentedness of each with his own lot, and, it may be added, quiet firmness in the discharge of the duty which flows from it. For there is no greater error than the thought that our own will is really strong. Be it ever so, obedience is stronger still. “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” Out of this spirit of dependence and happy submission to God did John answer his disciples. If he were eclipsed as the morning star by the dawn of day, it was to fulfill, not to fail in, his mission. He, the servant and fore-runner, had never set up to be the Master, as they could all attest.

Then John applies to himself a figure taken from the circumstance of a bridal feast to illustrate his relation to the Lord, in beautiful harmony with the Lord's own use of it elsewhere. Here of course all is connected with Israel, though, when the church took the place of that nation, the Holy Spirit applies it freely to the new relationship constantly before us in the Epistles and the Revelation. “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom that standeth and heareth him rejoiceth with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom: this my joy then is fulfilled. He must increase, but I decrease.” (Vers. 29, 30.) John was indeed the most favored servant, yea, “the friend,” of the Bridegroom. It was his joy therefore that the bride should be Christ's, not his whose highest distinction was to be His immediate herald, seeing those days which kings and prophets had so ardently desired to see, seeing Him who gave those days their brightness. It was his chiefest joy to hear His voice of love and satisfaction in those He deigned to love as His bride. His mission was closed. If Simeon could depart in peace, John could say that his joy was fulfilled. It was right, it was necessary, that He should increase and himself decrease, though no greater was born of woman. Instead of feeling a pang, his heart bowed and delighted in it. By-and-by when Christ comes in power and glory and sits on the throne of David, as well as of the yet larger dominion of the Son of man, there will be no end of the increase of His government, as the prophet declares. But John could say it now in the days of His humiliation, as His soul rests on the glory of His person, and the Spirit leads him on in the sense of what was due to Him.

Notes on John, John 3:19-21, Notes on (3:19-21)

I am aware that the Puritan divines drag in the law even here and will have it that Christ, in illustrating the certainty of salvation for those that believe in Him, shows on the contrary the condemnation of unbelievers to be twofold, one by the law and the other by the gospel. Their idea is that the unbeliever is here declared to be condemned already by the sentence of the law; which they still lie under and have it confirmed by the gospel, since they do not by faith lay hold on the offered and only remedy in Christ.

But there is no trace of such a scheme either here or anywhere else in scripture, which teaches expressly that “as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law…. in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ;” (Rom. 2:12-16.) Paul's doctrine therefore excludes the assumption that every unbeliever is already under the law, which would surely involve his being condemned by it, law affecting only those under it, whilst those who have it not are dealt with on their own ground. With this entirely agrees the language of our Gospel, which does not say a word about the law, even where a teacher of it was before the Lord inquiring into eternal life and salvation. It is solely a question of Christ. “And this is the judgment that the light hath come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light lest his works should be convicted; but he that practiceth the truth cometh to the light that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God.” (Ver. 19-21.)

Inasmuch as the true light now shines—no longer the law in Israel, but the light come into the world, a criterion is in force which decides for every man. There is a far deeper question than a man's own state or conduct. Indeed this too is already decided: man is no longer under probation, as the Jew was under law. He is lost: be he Jew or Gentile, he is alike lost. It is therefore a question of believing in Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, who (as we saw before) has been sent of God, not as He will be shortly to judge the quick and the dead, but that the world (not the elect nation now, but the world, spite of its ruin, in His grace) may be saved through Him. This tests to the core. All thus depends on believing in Him. If one believes not, one has been already judged. It is, not merely to fail in duty, but to fight against the grace and truth come by Jesus Christ. It is to reject life eternal, and the perfect love of God, in the only-begotten Son of God whose name one disbelieves or makes light of.

It is vain to complain of lack of light. The very reverse is true. “This is the judgment that the light hath come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil.” Terrible revelation of their state! Alas! it was our state, our affections so utterly corrupt as to prefer the darkness to the light, and this for the guiltiest reason, for a bad conscience. For our deeds were evil. Assuredly the trumpet gives no uncertain sound. Have we heard its clear warning above, beneath, the din of this world? Have we submitted to the sentence of Him who knows what is in man, no less than what is in God? Or are we unbroken still in self-righteousness and self-conceit? Do we dare to dispute the solemn and plain—too plain to be mistaken—words of the Lord? Would we put off the decision till the great white throne? And what will He then judge of the unbelief which thus virtually gives Him the lie? For no man that believed these words of His now would put off till then, but surely cast his soul on Him who, if the Judge then, is Savior, and nothing but a Savior, to the lost one that now believes on His name.

But when eternal judgment does come, it is not true that then it is a question simply of man's unbelief. From the divine account we are given, we learn that the dead are judged according to their works. There is no such thing at any time as salvation according to our works; there will be for all who reject Christ judgment according to their works. They had refused the Savior, they had despised the grace of God through religiousness or irreligiousness, through opposition or indifference. They are not found written in the book of life, they are judged out of the things written in the book according to their works. They are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire, the end of all who loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. Is not their judgment just? What is the Lord's moral analysis? “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light lest his works should be convicted.” How could such an one suit the portion of the saints in light? He hates the light which has come here: would he suit it or love it better on high? He is inwardly false and dishonest, deliberately and decidedly preferring to go on in his sins, instead of submitting to their complete detection by the light that they might be blotted out and forgiven by the faith of Christ's blood. Is this truth in the inner man? Does it not rather prove that such as refuse Christ are of the devil as their father and desire to do his lusts, instead of hearing the word of God and being subject to His Son?

On the other hand, “he that practiceth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God.” For the faith that is of God's elect is never powerless but living, not only productive of results while among men, but such as savor of their divine source and sphere. None makes more of the truth or of knowing God than John; none has a deeper horror of Gnosticism. It is life, eternal life; that one should know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent; but His commandment is life everlasting, as our Lord could say of Him who gave to Himself what He should say and what He should speak. If we know these things, we are blessed if we do them. Unblessed is the forgetful hearer, who does not practice the truth nor come to the light, but is rather gone away after considering himself and straightway loses all remembrance of what he was like. Is it not too plain that his works are at best impulsive and natural? But he that practices the truth comes to the light; walking there, he seeks to walk according to the light, trying by it his inward thoughts and feelings, motives and objects, words and ways. The realized presence of God imparts its color to his works. They were manifestly wrought in God. They bear His image and superscription. Hence when all that are in the tombs hear the Lord's voice and go forth, it is for those that have practiced good to a life-resurrection, for those that have done evil to a judgment-resurrection. There was life in the one case, not in the other. He that heard the Savior's word and believed the God who sent Him had life eternal, and hence practiced good. He who rejects the Son of God has no ground but man, and can have no power but Satan's; he has refused Him who is God's wisdom and God's power. He might not like to be lost and judged but he despises the only way of salvation open to him, the crucified Son of man, the life-giving Son of God. He will not be able to refuse or despise His judgment by-and-by.

Notes on John, John 3:17-18, Notes on (3:17-18)

The great truth has been cleared: not only that man, sinful man, needed an adequate atonement as well as new birth, but that God loved the world, the guilty lost world, of Gentiles no less than Jews, and loved it so that He gave His only-begotten Son that every one who believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life. It is in the Son of God that both lines of the truth meet; for He is incarnate and crucified. Accordingly the true light shines, eternal life is given, God's love is known, redemption is accomplished, salvation is come. There is more in and by Him now than if the kingdom were set up in power for which those waited whose expectations were formed and bounded by the Old Testament. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other; and, though one could not say perhaps till that day that truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven, yet one knows assuredly that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and that righteousness is established and displayed in Him exalted on the throne and glorified in God Himself above. In the bright days of heaven upon the earth He is to judge His people and the world righteously, and will early cut off the wicked; for the quick must be judged by Him at His coming as well as the dead ere He gives up the kingdom to God.

But deeper purposes were in hand now that the Messiah is viewed as rejected by the Jews: eternal life in, and salvation by, the Son of God, who dies atoningly on the cross. “For God sent not His1 Son into the world that he should judge, the world but that the world might be saved through him.” (Ver. 17.) And as a work beyond comparison deeper and with everlasting consequences was before God, so the objects of His grace are no longer within the circumscribed limits of the land of Israel. If He is to manifest Himself now as a Savior God in His Son, it suits His love to send out the good news to the world as a whole. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. Granted that Christ thus present was rejected; but the errand of love was in the way abandoned; rather did it enter on a new ground whence it could go forth in the power of the Spirit. For Him who knew no sin God made sin for us (that is, in the cross), that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

Thus Christ as Savior, not as Judge, expresses the characteristic testimony Of God now made known to man and here declared by our Lord, in contradistinction from His predicted glory as Messiah and Son of man ruling as He will over the earth by-and-by in the age to come. This is followed up by the result for him who receives Christ now. “He that believeth in him is not judged; but2 he that believeth not hath been already judged, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” (Ver. 18.) Not only is the believer not condemned, but he is not an object of judgment. He will give account, but is never put on his trial. This is explicitly taught in John 5, where the two-fold issue is connected with the mystery of Christ's person. As He is Son of God and Son of man, so He gives life and will exercise judgment, the one for the blessing of believers as owning His glory, the other for His vindication on such as have dishonored Him. Thus, as His stooping to become man exposed Him to unbelief, it is as Son of man that He will judge His despisers, which clearly does not apply to the believer whose joy is even now and ever to honor Him as the Father. And as in this later chapter of John the believer is declared to hare eternal life, and not to come into judgment, but to have passed out of death into life, so here “he that believeth not hath been already judged, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” For John presents the Lord as declaring all decided by the test of His own person received in faith or unbelievingly rejected. Good or evil in all other respects turns on this, as He shows soon after. There is no such touchstone, not even the law of God, weighty and incisive as it is. Hence we see the fallacy of the older divines who drag in the law here as everywhere and thus make it only a question of moral condemnation; whereas the very point of instruction is that it is Christ Himself believed or disbelieved, though no doubt conduct follows accordingly.

But here it is not death for not doing God's commandments, but the unbeliever already judged by Him who sees the end from the beginning, and pronounces on all persons and things as they are before God. Only One can avail him who is dead in trespasses and sins; in nowise the law, which can simply condemn him whose walk is opposed to itself, but the Son who is life and gives life to the believer. But the unbeliever refuses the Son of God: carelessly or deliberately, in haughty pride or in cowardly clinging to other trusts, pleasures, or interests, it is only a difference of form or degree. But he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, whose name is not hidden but preached. There is the fullest declaration of what He is, and is to sinners: so that all excuse is vain and can only add sin to sin. His very name implies, yea asserts, that He is the Savior, a divine Savior, yet a Man and so for men. Nor can it be truthfully urged that there is any doubt as to God's feeling and mind; for it had just been said that God sent Him into the world to this end, whatever must be the character of His coming another day when He will reckon with those who would have none of Him. But what is it to God that wretched guilty ruined sinners should despise and reject Him who is at once the only Savior of man, and the only-begotten Son of God! When those who most need mercy least feel it, when they in their utter degradation refuse the Highest who comes down to them in the fullest love to bless, what remains but judgment for those who thus render God's grace null as to themselves, heightened as it is by the glory of Him who in love came for their sakes and by the humiliation in which He deigned to come?

Notes on John, John 3:14-16, Notes on (3:14-16)

“We saw that the ascension of the Lord is grounded on His descent from heaven, and that both flow from and belong to His person as the Son of man that is in heaven. But the Lord follows this up by setting out the mighty work He came to do for sinners, that they might have eternal life—by grace, indeed, but on the footing of divine righteousness.

“And even as Moses lifted up the serpent of brass in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that every one that believeth on1 him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his2 only-begotten Son, that every one that believeth on him should not perish, but3 have life eternal.” (Ver. 14-16.)

The new birth had been already insisted on for man to see or enter the kingdom of God. But so is the cross also a necessity, if guilty man was to receive pardon from God whilst living to Him. They are alike indispensable. Compare 1 John 4:9, 10. And Christ as He alone could be, so was sent a propitiation for our sins. The Lord here illustrates the latter truth by the well-known scene in the wilderness, where God directed Moses, in his distress for the guilty Israelites bitten by the fiery serpents and dying in all quarters, to set a serpent of brass on a pole, that whoever looked might live. It was the figure of Himself, who knew no sin, for us made sin, identified in divine dealing with the consequences of our evil in judgment on the cross. Impossible that sin could otherwise be expiated adequately. It must be by God's judging it in One capable of bearing what it deserved at His hands; and it must be in man, in the Son of man, to be available for man. Yet, had it been any other than Jesus, it had been offensive to God, and not efficacious for man; for He only was the Holy One, and in no offering was there more jealous care that it should be without blemish. “It is most holy,” says the law of the sin-offering. All other men were shapen in iniquity, and in sin conceived, in Him only of woman born is no sin, not only no sin committed, but no sin in Him. Therefore was a body prepared Him as for no one else, when the Holy Ghost came on the Virgin Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her. Therefore also that Holy Thing which was born was called the Son of God; not only the Son of God before He was sent of the Father, but, when in grace the Word thus became flesh, perfect man, yet not the less truly God. For there was none other way, if the desperate case of man was to be remedied before God. It could only be righteously through atonement; and the Son of man was the only fitting victim. For blood of bulls and goats is incapable of taking away sins, however instructive such sacrifices might be beforehand of man's need and of God's way. “Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure. Then said I, Lo I am come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.”

Thus did the man Christ Jesus, Son of God withal, yea, God over all blessed forever, deign to suffer once for sins, just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. Only so could it be, for God could not make light of sin, however surely He can and does pardon sinners; but even He could not pardon consistently with Himself or His word, or the creature's real blessing, but through blood of the cross. And therefore did the Lord say here to Nicodemus, who knew the law, if he had little known the prophets, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” Thus did He redeem out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. It is not a living Messiah reigning over His people on earth, but He rejected by them, sinners and lost as they were now proved to be; it is Jesus Christ and He crucified, in that character or title which connects Him with the one object for a sinful man: or, as He says Himself here, “that every one that believeth on him may not perish, but have life eternal.” By Him only thus presented one comes to God, all sins being judged and borne in His cross. Hence it is by believing on Him that one has life eternal. The believer looks out of himself to the Lord Jesus.

But this alone might leave the soul, though looking to Christ by faith, without liberty or peace, however truly blessed thus far. Hence the Lord reveals another truth. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that every one that believeth on him should not perish, but have life eternal.” It is no longer the object and absolute need of guilty man, be he Jew or any other. There is now revealed the sovereign love of God, which confines not itself to any limits such as the law, or man under it, had contemplated, but goes out freely and fully to the world, where He was unknown and hated; and this, not in creation or providential mercies, but in such sort as to give His Son, His only-begotten, “that every one that believeth on him may not perish, but have eternal life.” It is grace to the uttermost. It is no question here of a needs-be. There was no moral necessity that God should give His Son; it was His love, not obligation on His part, nor claim on man's. Whatever need there was in man's state was amply met in the cross of the Son of man, and therein was accomplished the atonement or propitiation for the sins of those who believe. But there is incomparably more in the Only-begotten Son given by the God of love, not to the elect nation, but to the world, Thus divine love is manifested as perfectly as His just and holy requirement in judging sin; and this in Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, the suffering but now glorified Son of man, both too displayed in and enjoyed by that life eternal which the believer has in Him.

Notes on John, John 3:13, Notes on (3:13)

We are next given to learn who it is that could speak with competent knowledge and authority of heavenly things. It is the Son of man, the same person doubtless who deigned to be born of the virgin, the Son of David, the Messiah. But as Messiah He is to judge Jehovah's people in righteousness, and to reign with a power which cannot be disputed, save to the ruin of every rebel. For the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah, and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of Jehovah; and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears, but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. As such He presented Himself to Israel, but was rejected, and, as we know, they reject Him to this day; for man, being lost, proves himself wholly blind, and of men none more so than Israel to their truest glory and best treasure, Christ the Lord. And thus we have seen it from the first in the Gospel of John, who was given to treat things as they are, and as they are in presence of grace and truth in His person who reveals the Father.

Here, accordingly, it is not a prophet revealing the future of the kingdom of Jehovah over the earth, or of the judgments which will introduce it, or of the evils which must be judged before the establishment of blessing in that day. It is more than a prophet who gives out what he receives responsibly to communicate from God to man. Jesus knows not merely what is in man on earth as none ever knew, as the “Word made flesh” alone did know, but what is in God above as only a divine person could, yet now as man also. No prophet ever did, ever could, so speak as He; none but He so knew and so testified. He, therefore, could speak of things heavenly, as well as of the earthly, not as one inspired to tell of what was before unknown, but of that which He knew and saw in the communion of the Godhead! His becoming man in no way detracted from His divine capacity or rights; it was unspeakable grace! to those for whose sakes He was come from God, and went to God, not only the truth and witness of it, as He alone could be, but about to die atoningly, as we shall see shortly in this very context, that the believer might live eternally and righteously.

“What could man, angel, or any other creature avail? It was His glory, His work. The man, Adam, whom Jehovah Elohim formed, He put in Eden, chief of all creatures around him which God had pronounced very good. But the heaven is Jehovah's throne, though neither it nor the heaven of heavens can contain Him. “And no one hath gone up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man that is1 in heaven.” Men have been, and will be, caught up to heaven; angels have been sent down from heaven. To Jesus only it belonged to go up, as He only came down. For He was a divine Î person, and He came in love; and love is ever free as well as holy. “Lo! I come to do thy will, O God.” In the volume of the book it was written of Him alone. And He who was thus pleased to be found in fashion as a man, taking the body God prepared Him, rejoiced ever to speak of Himself as the Sent One, the man Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven, to do not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. He became servant, but did not, could not, cease to be God. But He is man withal, as truly as Adam; yea, He is what Adam was not—Son of man, come of woman.

And so it is that in the form of the expression used He is stamped as having ascended to heaven, He only that descended from heaven: ἀναβέβηκεν2... ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς. For as the apostle asks, That He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up above all the heavens, that He]might fill all things. Only, as the apostle Paul tells us it in connection with His work and the counsels of God, so John presents it in our Lord's words as connected with the truth of His person— “the Son of man that is in heaven.” And an astonishing truth it is. To have said the Son of God that was in heaven would have been true; but what an infinite truth is that which is said, “the Son of man that is in heaven!” Impossible to be said if He had not been God, the Son of the Father, yet, what was of the deepest moment, said of Him as man, the rejected Messiah, the Son of man that is in heaven. The incarnation was no mere emanation of divinity; neither was it a person once divine who ceased to be so by becoming man (in itself an impossible absurdity), but One who, to glorify the Father, and in accomplishment of the purposes of grace to the glory of God, took humanity into union with Godhead in His person. Therefore it is that He could say, and of Him alone could it be said, “the Son of man that is in heaven,” even as He is the only-begotten Son that is [not merely that was3] In the bosom of the Father. He it is who met, and more than met, the challenge of Agur (Prov. 30) speaking prophetically to Ithiel and Heal. “Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in his garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's nature, if thou canst tell?” It is God, not man, who can take up the challenge; but it is God become man, yea, the Son of man. How suited as well as competent is He to unfold all things, heavenly, earthly, human; and divine! He is indeed the Truth.

Notes on John, John 3:12, Notes on (3:12)

There is a natural repugnance in man's mind to divine testimony. The judgment depends on the affections, and the affections of man are estranged from God. Privileges do not alter this, nor the responsibility which flows from the relation in which one may stand to God. He must be born again. A divine nature cleaves to God; the life which comes from Him as its source goes up to Him in desire, if not always (till redemption is known) in confidence of heart.

Yet the Lord had not in this solemn declaration gone beyond the universal necessity of man for the kingdom of God: and therefore it was inexcusable in the Jewish teacher so to have overlooked it as to feel such amazement at the Lord's assertion of it. He ought to have known from the ancient scriptures, from the psalms and prophets especially, that Israel must he renewed in order to enter and enjoy their promised portion on the earth. “Truly God is good to Israel,” as the Messiah's Kingdom will manifest; but the assurance is restricted. It is “to such as are of a clean heart.” (Psa. 73) So far will the mass of the Jews be from fitness for that kingdom, that the Spirit of Christ in the pious remnant does not hesitate to ask God's judgment and pleading of their cause against an ungodly or unmerciful nation. (Psa. 43) They were no better, but guiltier, than Gentiles. There were enemies within as well as without. “And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go about it upon the walls “thereof mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached, me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against

me; then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." (Psa. 55:6-14.) Thus to the saint's mind the city (the holy city in title, in fact most unholy) is worse than the wilderness, dreary as it may be. Not Gentiles only but Jews need to be born afresh: otherwise the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through them, as it is written.

But it is striking to notice that the chapter of Ezekiel (chap. 36.), already cited in part, which is naturally brought to illustrate these words of the apostle Paul, declares in the plainest and most unconditional terms that God will sanctify His great name which was blasphemed among the heathen, "Which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land, shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I Jehovah build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I Jehovah have spoken it, and I will do it." (Ezek. 36:23-36.)

Further, these words of the prophet illustrate "the earthly things" in our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. "If I told you the earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you the heavenly things?" (Ver. 12.) In speaking as He had of the necessity to be born afresh—born of water and of Spirit—the Lord had not gone beyond "the earthly things." The kingdom of God could not be entered or seen without that new birth. Of course it is indispensable for heaven; but the Lord goes farther and insists on it as essential even for the lower province of God's kingdom. Even the Jew must be born again, and, for millennial blessings too as well as for eternity. So true is it that they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither, because they are the seed or Abraham, are they all children.

We shall see too, when our Lord proceeds in His discourse to touch on His cross and the love of God in giving His Son, that to be born anew does not adequately describe what is given to the believer, but eternal life.

Substantially no doubt it is the same new nature which every saint has and must have; but, now that the glory and work of Christ are revealed, its full character shines out. There is yet more, as we know and the next chapter shows, the Spirit given, and the relationship of children of God enjoyed, and the results of the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ our portion even now. But I enlarge no more on this as yet. Only we here learn that the kingdom of God has its "heavenly things," no less than "the earthly things" of which the prophets spoke. Jesus the Son could have opened the heavenly things, but the condition of such as Nicodemus did not admit of it for the present. The Spirit revealed all these and other depths of God amply after the shed blood vindicated God and purged their consciences. Then were the disciples free to learn all in the power of Christ's resurrection and in the light of heaven. Such is Christian knowledge.

But even while Christ was here, He intimated distinctly the Father's kingdom as a heavenly sphere where the risen saints are to shine as the sun, contradistinguished from the Son of man's kingdom, which is clearly the world, out of which at His coming the angels shall be sent to clear away all offenses and those that practice lawlessness. (Matt. 13:41-43.) Nay, in the prayer given to the disciples we may recognize a similar distinction though not so sharply drawn out, for He bid them pray for their Father's kingdom to come, Where they and all the risen saints would be glorified; and then that His will be done as in heaven so on earth, which will only be secured at the completion of the age, when the Son of man comes in His kingdom. (Matt. 6:10.) These together constitute the kingdom of God, which comprises therefore, as the Lord there assumes, "the heavenly things" and "the earthly things." The reader will find abundant confirmation in Heb. 12:22-24, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20.

Notes on John, John 3:11, Notes on (3:11)

Thus far then Nicodemus as a Jew, as a teacher of Israel, should have known the nature as well as the necessity of the new birth. The ancient prophets were not silent about its application to Israel, even for the days when blessings shall be shed abundantly on them from God according to His promise. Not the heathen only but His people (whatever might be their present self-complacency and the pride which wraps itself up in ignorance) are described as unclean till He sprinkle clean water upon them and put His Spirit within them. Undoubtedly the Lord, as was due to His personal glory, presents the truth with incomparably greater clearness and depth, as well as with an all-embracing comprehensiveness; but what was presented ought not to have been strange to Nicodemus on his own ground. The new thing follows the cross whether in statement or in fact, as we see it implied in chapter 4.

But even here the Lord intimates a knowledge to be communicated as in fact it was first by Himself in person, then by the Holy Ghost through chosen witnesses, transcending that of the prophets and of a character, not measure only, quite different. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our testimony." (Ver. 11.) It is no vision of things out of the ordinary sphere of him who was inspired to be a prophet, nor message founded on the authority of Him who sent His servant with a "Thus saith Jehovah." Jesus only, a man among men, could none the less say because He was none the less God, We speak that which We know and bear witness of that which We have seen. He knew what was in man, needing no testimony about man (chap, 2); He knew what was in God, and alone of men could testify of Him without testimony about Him. (Chap, 3) I have known Thee, says Himself to the Father later on in this Gospel (chap. 17:23), but the world knew not the Father; least of all were the Father and the Son known by those who, in persecuting the

disciples, thought to do God's service. But, blessed be His name, if none knew the Father but the Son, there were not lacking those to whom the Son reveals Him; and so the Holy Ghost who searches all things, yea the depths of God, reveals what was previously hidden even from prophets and gives to Christians the mind, or intelligence of Christ. For a divine person knows in Himself all things in themselves; not as the prophets from One without and above who gives the commission, vision, and message. These therefore might often speak that which they knew not, and learn on searching that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported by those, that have preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. But Jesus spoke what He knew. Coming from God and being Himself God, He knew the divine nature perfectly and was here a man to reveal it to men. If none had seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has declared Him; He, alone of woman-born, had this competency, both as Son and as the image of the invisible God, in a sense not only preeminent but exclusive, as the Epistles to the Colossians and the Hebrews formally teach. And this He spoke in ineffable grace, expressing the grace and truth of God and of the Father through the heart of a man to the hearts of men. Of the glory too, familiar to Him with the Father before the world was, He testified. For what was divine love keeping back from those about to share with Him the glory in which both will be displayed to the world and to behold His glory as none else will see it? In heaven, or in its brightest glory, He was at home, and as He was about to prepare a place in the Father's house for His own, so He bears witness of what He alone had seen to those whom sovereign grace would call and fit to be with Him there.

And what a testimony is this twofold knowledge, to the person of Jesus yet in absolute relation! It is indeed the true God, but withal eternal life. It was not empirical, but intrinsic. As a divine person alone could, He knew both, man and God; and, after He has urged the indispensable need of being born anew, He speaks of God known above in nature and glory, as before it we had His knowledge of what was in man. How blessed to have such a knowledge communicated to us as now in Christ and Christianity! Would not man needy, ignorant, blind, welcome such a boon? Alas! no: not even when grace brings it down and tells all out in the tones of human speech. “And ye receive not our testimony.” It reveals God, it reveals the Father. It leaves no room for receiving glory one of another. It condemns man as he is, self-willed, and not only without heart for God but unwilling to believe what is in His heart for man expressed in every word and way of Jesus. As the Apostle tells us, The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Nor does the natural man receive them, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Notes on John, John 3:1-10, Notes on (3:1-10)

The worthlessness of believing on Christ because of evidence we have seen. But in the crowd of such there might be souls who had the sense of wants awakened which led them to Jesus personally. And in Him was life: not merely all things brought into being through Him, and signs wrought and things done by Jesus, which, if written one by one in books, would be beyond the world's power to contain, but, beyond all, life in the Son for the believer. And such is the fact which is here recorded in detail.

“But there was a man of the Pharisees, his name Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God, for none can do these signs which thou doest, unless God be with him: Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say to thee, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (Vers. 1-3.) It was a chief man from among the most orthodox in the chosen people; sufficiently in earnest to seek Jesus for truth and still valuing the world enough to fear its condemnation and scorn. He came by night to Jesus; yet did he take the ground of a persuasion he shared in common with his fellows because of the signs wrought by the Lord. He knew not that a deeper work was going on within, which drew him, not them, to Jesus. He, the teacher of Israel, recognized in Jesus One come a teacher from God, and God with Him: for any others born of woman a signal honor, for Jesus the proof that His true glory was unknown. As yet then Nicodemus was astray as to himself, as to the Jews, and as to Jesus. In short the true God was unknown.

The Lord accordingly stops him at once with the declaration that man, any one, needs to be born from the outset and origin. Not teaching but a new nature, a new source of being spiritually, is wanted in order to see the kingdom of God. No inference, however logical, is faith. It is not even a conviction of conscience. It may be a conclusion fairly drawn from sound premisses, from sensible facts of the weightiest kind before the mind; but neither God is known nor itself yet judged. The new character of life which suits the kingdom of God does not yet exist for the soul. In such a state teaching would but aggravate the danger or expose to fresh evil. The word of God had never penetrated the heart of Nicodemus. He knew not himself utterly defiled, spiritually dead in sins. What he wanted was to be quickened, not to have fresh aliment for the exercise of his mind. And Jesus, instead of commenting on his words, answered his true need, which he too would have sought himself, had he but known it.

If Nicodemus then took for granted his own capacity as he then stood to profit by the truth and serve God and inherit His kingdom, the Lord with incomparable solemnity assures him, that the new birth is indispensable to seeing the kingdom. For God is not teaching or improving human nature. He had already tried it patiently; and the trial would ere long be absolutely complete.

The kingdom of God is in question and not anything in fallen man. It was not yet established or displayed in power over the earth, as it will be at the appearing of Jesus. It was not yet preached to the Gentiles as it was after the cross. But it was come for faith in the person of Christ, the pledge that it will be set up by and by in all its extent, its “earthly” and its “heavenly things.” The kingdom of God was among them in Christ, who demonstrated its power, the enemies themselves seen or unseen being judges. Why then did not Nicodemus see it? From no defect in the object of faith or in His testimony, by general conviction and confession from no lack of signs attesting the presence and power of God. Alas! the defect is in man, and to man it is incurable; for who can change his nature? In fact, if it were possible, it could avail nothing. “Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” God only can give a new nature, and a nature suited to His kingdom. Without this none can as much as see it.

“Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into the womb of his mother and be born?” (Ver. 4.) We learn hence that the intimation was not birth from above, but again; else the difficulty expressed in reply could have had no place. The truth is, however, that even if the fabled conversion of all old man into youth again could be true, yea, if the strange case suggested by the astonished Pharisee could have been turned by miracle into fact, (as Jonah came forth alive from the great fish that

swallowed him,) it would fail to meet the requirements of the kingdom of God, as we shall see expressly in the further explanation of our Lord. For it would be human nature still, let it be renewed in its youth or repeated in its birth ever so far or so often. A clean thing cannot come out of an unclean; and such is man’s nature since the fall. Nor is aught God's way of renewal, but by giving a nature wholly new from its source; for the believer is born of God, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the living and abiding word of God.

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say to thee, except one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (Ver. 5, 6.) Words of incalculable moment to man, of deep blessing where grace gives him ear to hear, and heart to receive and keep. Yet I scarce know a scripture more widely perverted than this has been to baptism, nor one where tradition is more dangerously false, though quod semper, quodubique, quod ah omnibus be as true of this as of any interpretation of scripture that could be named. A double result would follow that not a soul could enter the kingdom of God save such as are baptized; and, secondly, as the context would prove, that, the new nature being identified with eternal life, none of the baptized could perish: a statement which all but the most grossly ignorant and prejudiced must confess to be in both its parts opposed to other and clear scriptures, and to notorious fact.

Christian baptism (and this is what it is traditionally conceived to mean, not that of John or of the disciples) was not instituted, nor did the facts exist which it symbolizes, till the Lord died and rose. How then could Nicodemus by any possibility anticipate them or understand what the Lord gives as the clearing up of his difficulty as to being born anew? Yet the Lord reproaches him as the teacher of Israel with his slowness of intelligence. That is, he should (even as teaching Jews) have known these things, which he could not know if the Lord alluded to an as yet undivulged Christian institution.

The reasoning of Hooker1 (Works, ii. 262, &a. Keble's ed. 5) as of others before and since is beside the mark, and simply proves inattention to scripture, and superficial acquaintance with the truth. It is not true that “born of water and Spirit” if literally construed means baptism. Never is that rite set out as figuring life, but death, as in Rom. 6, Col. 2, and 1 Peter 3 “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto his death? “It is never the sign of quickening, but rather of identifying those quickened with the death of Christ, that they in virtue of Him might take the place of men dead to sin but alive to God, and so reckon themselves by grace, for under this we are, not under law. Such is the apostolic doctrine. The words of our Lord do not and cannot teach otherwise, as they must if John 3:5 be applied to baptism. Take water here as figurative of the word which the Spirit uses to quicken, and all 13 clear, consistent and true. “Were it said in the scripture that we are born of the Spirit by means of water we should have some approach to what the Fathers drew from it, and what is necessary to bear the construction put on it in the Anglican and other formularies that apply it to baptism. Their dealing with it seems to me really “licentious,” “deluding” and “dangerous,” at issue with what our Lord says even in verse 5, still more with His omission of “water” in verse 6, most of all if it be possible with the place of baptism everywhere else given in scripture. Baptism may be the formal expression of washing away sins, never of communicating life, which is unequivocally false teaching.

So it is in John 13 and 15, not to speak of chapters iv. and vii. Compare for the figure Eph. 5:26, for the truth couched under it 1 Cor. 4:15, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23.

For Christ came by water and blood; He purifies and expiates. (1 John 5) He is the truth, which the word of God applies in the power of the Spirit, judging the old nature and introducing the new. It is the same person, but a life is communicated which one had not before, not of Adam, but of Christ the Second man. He is begotten of God, made a partaker of the divine nature through the greatest and precious promises, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Such is it to be born of water and of Spirit, an incomparably deeper thing than any form of truth however to be prized in its place and for the object the Lord who instituted it had in view. Baptism was formal admission; it was the confession of Christ on the ground of His death and resurrection, not of quickening which was true of all saints before Christ when there was no Christian baptism. If baptism were really the sign and means of quickening, consistency would deny life to the Old Testament saints, or they ought to have been so baptized which they were not. But this is clearly false ground. There is no reason to infer that the twelve were baptized with Christian baptism; they baptized others, but, it would seem, were not themselves; were they not then born again?

Hence too it is important to observe that he who is thus born again is said to be born of the Spirit, omitting water, in verse 6. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The word (or water emblematically) can do nothing toward quickening without the Spirit, who is the efficient agent in communicating the life of Christ. Water cleanses but of itself it is not capable of quickening; it is death to the flesh. There had been only flesh before; now as believing in Christ the man is born of God (1 John 5); and each nature retains its own characteristic. As flesh never becomes spirit, so spirit never degenerates into flesh. The natures abide distinct; and the practical business of the believer is to hold himself for dead to the one that he may live in the other by the faith of the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him.

Nor was Nicodemus to wonder that he and other Jews (not pagans merely to which they would have assented at once) needed to be born afresh. “Wonder not that I said to thee, Ye must be born anew.” (Ver. 7.) But if sovereign grace met that need, could it, would it, stop there? Certainly not. It would breathe the blessing as widely as the ravages of sin according to the choice of God. “The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest its voice, and knowest not whence it cometh, and where it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit,” (Ver. 8.) Thus “every one” leaves room for any fallen man, a Gentile no less than a Jew. Whatever might be their distinction after the flesh, the Spirit thus freely flowing can bless those who are most distant, while the nearest is nothing without Him.

It has been already remarked moreover, that in all this was no such special privilege as should have been beyond the ken of an intelligent Jew. Hence when “Nicodemus answered and said to him, How can these things be?” “Jesus answered and said to him, Art thou the teacher of Israel and knowest not these things be?” (Vers. 9,10.) Had he never read the promise to Israel in one prophet? “I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” Had he forgotten the words of another prophet? “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Isa. 44 and Ezek.

36)

There can be no mistake that Israel will require the new birth in order to receive and enjoy aright even the earthly blessings of God's kingdom by and by, and that God will of His grace impart it to them for this end. Nicodemus then need not be surprised at the universal need of the new birth, even for the Jew, proclaimed by the Lord; but as the blessing is not of flesh but of Spirit, grace will not restrain it from any on grounds that give weight to man. The Gentile will not be left out of such rich mercy, indispensable to the kingdom of God, which is of grace, not of law or flesh, as the Jew was apt to assume. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.” Is not this grace and so expressed as to open the door to any of the nations? to sense of need, resourceless need, wherever found? Yet who did, who could, draw it out from the prophets and give the principle its absolute shape, as here to Nicodemus, but the One who spoke? Others inspired of the Spirit were soon to follow; and of them all none more distinctly than the apostle Paul.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Water That Was Made Wine, The (2:1-11)

This was the beginning of the miracles, or “signs” as they are Galled in the fourth Gospel, wrought in Cana of Galilee. In it the “Lord Jesus manifested his glory,” a glory truly divine. The occasion was a marriage feast, to which He was invited, and His disciples, His mother also being there. How instructive the grace which thus lighted up with love and holiness from above an institution of God that began in the paradise of man, but apt to sink with the fall of man into levity and license! The law failed to retrieve it; the Lord alone vindicated it according to the mind of God that had been expressed before the law (Gen. 2; Matt. 19).

The Lord's bearing is a hard thing to those who idolize Mary. It is written for everlasting profit that, when the wine failed, His mother said to Him, They have no wine; and that He replied, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come (vers. 3, 4). Assuredly if any infer disrespect from these words, they are in error; but so are those who do not learn that the Son of God solemnly objects to dictation where divine glory was in question. He was sent to do the will of God His Father, not to please His mother, as here in her amiable solicitude for a family with whom she was evidently intimate, and at a time which engaged her feelings in their strait. Christ had already as a youth of twelve years testified to Joseph and Mary, after their anxiety, His consciousness of Sonship in the highest sense; now when emerging into public ministry He remonstrates with Mary, who as evidently now alone remained. Not even His mother must interfere with the glorifying of His Father, by a wish of hers however kindly meant.

And Mary understood it, saying to the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. She was still the meek bond-servant of the Lord, if others blasphemously make her the Queen of heaven and claim falsely the honor due to the Eternal Son. He, not she, is the One pre-eminently to be heard; as the Father's voice proclaimed on the holy mount, This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him. No more unworthy thought of fallen nature than to doubt His grace in Whom all the fullness dwells, or to imagine that He the one Mediator needs her intercession to stimulate or strengthen His love. He is Himself full of grace and truth; and He is able also to save to the uttermost (completely) those that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. On the contrary she is unable, either to save or so to intercede for others, and needed to pray herself, as she was a sinner like others to be saved by faith. So we find in the last record scripture gives of her in Acts 1:14: “These all [the apostles] with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer with [several] women, and Mary wine. It is the wonder of grace, yet of divine the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” What righteousness through redemption. And it is a contrast with ecclesiastical development in no long time! How soon men turned from him that called them in Christ's grace to a different gospel, which is not another, but perversion!

According to scripture, to hear His word and believe Him that sent Him, is to have eternal life and not to come into judgment, having passed from death into life. And that life is a life of obedience and love, as 1 John 5 carefully shows. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” He that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Practical obedience flows from submission to His person, and proves the reality of the heart-subjection of faith.

Christ's hour was not yet come for going down below all depths to glorify God; still less to be set on high with all things put under Him. He was here to give such witness as might please His Father in all dependence. And a worthy witness followed. For as six stone water-pots stood there according to the purification of the Jews, each holding two or three measures (probably the Jewish Bath), He said, Fill the pots with water. And this was done to the brim; whereupon He bade them, Draw out now and bear to the feast-master. Thus the servants and the feast-master became the irrefutable vouchers of the work Christ wrought; as did the bridegroom, who for the moment reaped the credit of reversing man's way, and, instead of supplying what is worse when men have freely drunk the good wine, of keeping it till the last.

But no! It was Christ Who thus made grace to shine; not the first man, but the Second, and this, manifesting His glory, yet never leaving the servant character He had taken, always refusing to allow the honey of humanity in the offering no less than the leaven. If He proved the omniscient to Nathanael, He is here the omnipotent. It was the true transubstantiation of God's word. The water was made wine, and the good wine, as all could see and taste, and bow to the manifestation of His glory. To reject Him is to men's own shame and ruin, who obstinately will not have God or His Son on any terms, even when divine glory veils its splendor with flesh and in lowly grace adapts itself to our every need with power incontestable. Such is the Lord Jesus. He is speaking still to every soul in the gospel. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven.

“The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word that we preach,” says the apostle; “because, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” To be saved from perdition through faith is not a miracle, sensible outwardly; but it is a greater wonder than the water made wonder God is showing day by day in all who believe, to the honor of His Son. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh, and is near you on the earth, the Son of man now in glory Who came to seek and to save that which was lost, Jesus the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever., Blessed are all those that put their trust in Him.

Notes on John, John 2:23-25, Notes on (2:23-25)

We arrive now at a new division of the Gospel introduced by the prefatory verses as to man and his state, which conclude chapter 2. The coming and inquiry of Nicodemus give rise to our Lord's testimony to the necessity of a new birth for the kingdom of God, the cross, eternal life, the love of God, and the world's condemnation, closing with the Baptist's testimony to the glory of His person.

“Now when he was at Jerusalem at the passover, at the feast, many believed on his name, beholding the signs which he did. But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, inasmuch as he knew all [men], and because he needed not that any should testify of man, for himself knew what was in man.” (Ver. 23-25.)

It was at the city of solemnities; it was a feast of Jehovah, nay, the most fundamental of the sacred feasts; and the Messiah was there, the object of faith, working in power, and manifesting His glory in appropriate signs. And many behooved on His name accordingly. It was man doing and feeling his best under circumstances the most favorable. Yet did not Jesus Himself trust Himself to them. Certainly it was from no lack of love or pity in Him; for whoever did or could love as He? And the reason, calmly given, is truly overwhelming:” inasmuch as he knew all men, and because he needed not that any should testify of man, for himself knew what was in man.” What a sentence! from whom! and on what grounds! We do well to weigh it gravely: who is not concerned in it? It is the ordained Judge of quick and dead who thus pronounces. Is it not all over with man?

One great fact, one truth, accounts for it; the total evil, the irremediable evil, of man as such. The ways of the Lord are in the strictest accord with the words of the Spirit by the Apostle Paul: the mind of the flesh (and this is all that is in man) is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, for neither indeed can it be. Hence they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Its doings and its sufferings are selfish and worthless Godward. Its faith as here is no better; for it is not the soul subject to God’s testimony, but mind judging on evidence satisfactory to itself. It is a conclusion that Jesus must be Messiah, not submission to, nor reception of, divine testimony. For in this case the mind sits on the throne of judgment, and pronounces for or against, according to its estimate of reasons favoring or adverse, instead of the soul setting to its seal (in the face of all appearances it may be, yea, the most real difficulties), that God is true. For what ground to expect the love of the Holy One to the vile and rebellious? Christ, received according to God's testimony, Christ, in grace to the lost, dying for the ungodly and the powerless, Christ accounts for, as He displays, all; miracles or signs not in the least. They arrest the eye; they exercise the mind; they may touch and win the affections. But nothing short of God's word judges the man, or reveals what He is in Christ to man thus judged; and this only, as we shall see, is of the Spirit, for He only, not man, has before Him the true object, the Son of God's love given in grace to a ruined and guilty world.

The truth is that our judgments flow from our affections. What we love we easily believe; what makes nothing of us we naturally resist and reject. As long as Jesus seemed to be an ameliorator of humanity, there seemed to be the readiest, warmest, welcome. Man would accredit Jesus if he thought Jesus accredited man. But how could he receive what makes nothing of himself, what condemns him morally, what keeps before him the solemn warning of eternal judgment and the lake of fire? No, he hates the testimony and the person who is the central object of it, and all connected with it and Him. When broken down before God and made willing to own one's utter and inexcusable sins and sinfulness, it is a wholly different matter; and He who was dreaded and repugnant is turned to as the only hope from God, oven Jesus the Deliverer from the wrath to come. This is indeed conversion, and grace by quickening power alone effects it.

So it is when Christian doctrine is made to suit the world by being emasculated and changed to build up what in truth it judges. Then indeed it is no longer a seed that takes root, and grows and bears fruit, but is a leaven that spreads and may assimilate largely to itself. Such is Christendom, when human will was engaged on its side, and the religion became traditional.

But here it is the holy and awful witness of Jesus to man at his best estate, when no enmity had appeared, but all looked full of bright promise. And, again, we see John beginning where the other Gospels close. It is not Messiah rejected, but Jesus the Son of God, who knows the end from the beginning, treating man as altogether vanity and sin; and this, because God is in none of his thought, but self, without real sorrow or shame about his opposition to God, without any due sense of it or consequently a serious care about it. He gathered from the evidence of the signs before him that none but Messiah could have wrought them; but such an inference did not affect his moral state either with God or with man. He was just as he had been with another object for his busy mind to work on, but his nature unjudged, God no better known, and the enemy with just the same power over him as ever. As yet, it was man and not God; for there is no work of God till the word is received as it is in truth, revealing His grace to man consciously needing it. Here was nothing of the sort, but a simple process of man's own mind and feelings, without a question of his sins or state before God, without the smallest felt need of a Savior. Jesus knew what it was worth and trusted not Himself to man, even when he thus believed on Him. It was human faith, of which we have instances not infrequently in this Gospel as elsewhere, whilst as clearly we have that divinely given faith which has eternal life; this having to do with God, as that, being of man, rises not above its source. “Beware of men,” said He to His apostles at a later day, Himself about to prove in the cross how truly from the first He Himself knew what was in man.

Notes on John, John 2:12-22, Notes on (2:12-22)

The hour of Jesus is not yet come. The marriage at Cana was but a shadow, not the very image. For the true bridals here below, as well as on high, we must yet wait. The mother of Jesus, of the true man-child, will be there when the feast arrives. What has been is but a testimony, a beginning of signs, to manifest His glory.

“After this he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and his brethren and his disciples; and there they abode not many days.” (Ver. 12.) It may be noted that Joseph does not appear anywhere since the end of Luke 2 when the Lord was twelve years old. Doubtless he had

fallen asleep meanwhile. Mary is again seen with Him. His absolute separation to the will and work of His Father in no way interferes with the earthly relations He had graciously taken. And so will it be with that which He represents.

But the marriage is only part of the display of His glory in the kingdom by-and-by; and of the judgment to be executed, He gives a token in the scene that follows, and this at the first passover noted since that of His childhood. Our evangelist is careful to mention them throughout our Lord's course (6:4; 11:55).

“And the passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple the sellers of oxen and sheep, and doves, and the moneychangers sitting; and having made a scourge of small cords he drove them all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the change of the money-changers, and overthrew their tables; and to the sellers of the doves he said, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it is written, The zeal of thine house will eat me up.” (Ver. 13-17.)

Not only is this clearing of the temple distinct from that which the synoptic Gospels relate on His last visit to Jerusalem, but it is instructive to remark that, as they only give the last, John gives only the first. It is a striking witness by a significant fact, as we have already seen doctrinally in his introduction, that he begins where they end, not in a barely literal way, but in all the depth of what Jesus says and does. The state of the temple, the selfishness which reigned there, the indifference to the true fear and honor and holiness of God while there was the utmost punctiliousness in a ritual show of their own invention, were characteristic of the ruin state of a people called to the highest earthly privilege by God's favor.

Solomon had acted at the beginning with a vigor which drove out the unworthy high priest in his day; when the kingdom was divided, Hezekiah and Josiah, sons of David, had each sought to vindicate the glory of Jehovah; Nehemiah, alas! under the protection of the Gentiles, had not been lacking, when the returned remnant so quickly manifested that the captivity on the one hand and God's mercy on the other had failed to lead them to repentance. Now the Son gives a sign as solemn for proud religious Jerusalem as the miracle of the water changed into wine was full of bright hope for despised Galilee.

He does act as the Lord with divine rights, yet as the lowly sent One and servant. Nevertheless He does not withhold the testimony to the glory of His person in the very command not to make His Father's house a house of merchandise. He was the Son of God, announced as such, even as Nathanael had already owned Him, judicially dealing not merely on moral grounds, such as might be open to any godly Israelite, but openly as the One who identified Himself with His Father's interests; and this was His house. So too the Spirit of prophecy spoke of the rejected Messiah, as the disciples remembered.

“The Jews therefore answered and said to him, What sign showest thou to us that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple (ναόν) and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews therefore said, In forty and six years was this temple built, and thou wilt raise it up in three days? But he spoke of the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from among [the] dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.” (Ver. 18-22.)

The sign that He would give was His own resurrection-power, raising not others merely but His own body, the true temple in which alone God was (for the Word was God), that of which they boasted having but a name without God, soon to be formally pronounced their house (Matt. 23) and given up to destruction. (Matt. 24) It is resurrection that defines Him Son of God in power; and when He was raised, the disciples remembered His saying, and here yet more found the strongest confirmation of their faith in both scripture and His word. It is indeed the fundamental truth both of the gospel and of our distinctive place as Christians. No wonder that the Jews were jealous of it, and that Gentiles mock or evade it. May we ever remember it, and Him who thus gives scripture all its grace.

Notes on John, John 2:1-11, Notes on (2:1-11)

The second chapter opens with a striking miracle—the water turned into wine. It is only given here. Jesus is God, the God of creation. He had shown His omniscience to Nathanael, now His omnipotence to others. It was the third day, probably the third since He had first seen Nathanael; but the passage is so significant that one does not feel disposed to question the thought that the Spirit may also have meant figuratively the type of a day yet future when glory will appear, as distinguished from the day of John the Baptist's testimony, and that of the Lord and His disciples.

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there: and Jesus also was invited and his disciples to the marriage."(Ver. l, 2) It is the figure of things on earth: there is no picture of the heavens opened here. Hence we find the mother of Jesus brought forward. It was no more than a figure however, for the wine fell short. “And the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.” (Ver.3.) The first Adam always fails, and fails most where most is wanted. But Jesus will meet all wants, though His time is not yet come. Faith however never looks to Him in vain, and Jesus says to her,” What have I to do with thee, woman?” (Ver. 4.) It is a remarkable answer, which Romanist theologians find very difficult to square with their doctrine and practice. He does not say, mother. It is no longer a question of the first Adam: not that there was disrespect, but that Mariolatry is unfounded and sinful. Jesus was here to do the will of God. “His mother saith to the servants, Whatever he shall say to you, do. Now there were there six waterpots of stone lying according to the purification of the Jews, holding each two or three measures.” (Ver. 5,6.) The Jewish system was a witness of defilement; and its ordinances could do no more than sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. This was human: Jesus was here for divine purposes—then in testimony—by and by in power. “Jesus saith to them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith to them, Draw now and carry to the master of the feast. And they carried. But when the master of the feast had tasted the water that had become wine (and he knew not whence it was, but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and saith to him, Every man at first setteth forth the good wine, and when they have drunk freely, then the worse; thou hast kept the good wine until now.” (Ver. 7-10.)

So will Jesus do on the richest scale in the day that is coming. He will reverse the sorrowful history of man. The wine will not fail when He reigns. There will be joy for God and man in happy communion together. Jesus will finish all to the glory of God the Father. In that day, too, He will be the bridegroom and the master of the feast, and the joy of that day will find its root not only in the glory of His person, but in the depth of that work of humiliation already wrought in the cross. There will be no secrets then. It will not be the servants only who will know, but all from the least to the greatest. “This beginning of miracles did Jesus at Cana of Galilee, and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on him.” (Ver. 11.) Faith grows where real. (2 Thess. 1:3.)

It will be noticed that our Gospel gives us most important particulars, unnoticed by all the others, what took place before His Galilean ministry commenced when John was cast into prison.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Unbroken Net (21:1-14)

We have seen in Luke 5 the remarkable manner in which the Lord called Simon Peter and his companions, already disciples, to be fishers of men. There was then a miracle wrought, which acted powerfully not on the mind only or the affections, but on the conscience. After a night's toil in which they caught nothing, the Master spoke, and at His word they let down the nets. This done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; but their nets were breaking, and their partners came to help them, and filled both their boats, so that they began to sink. It was the beautiful picture of the gospel work to which they were thenceforward called, where they apart from Him could do nothing, and His power wrought. But yet He allowed the weakness of human responsibility to be felt; for the nets were breaking and the boats sinking under the weight of the very blessing given.

Here at the sea of Tiberias after His resurrection we see them at Peter's instance again fishing; and this night too they took nothing. " But when morn was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach. The disciples however knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore saith to them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered him, No. And he said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith to Peter, It is the Lord. Simon Peter there fore, having heard that it was the Lord, girded his overcoat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea; and the other disciples came in the small boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net of fishes. When therefore they went out on the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus saith to them, Bring of the fishes ye have now taken. Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to the land full of great fishes a hundred and fifty-three; and though they were so many, the net was not rent. Jesus saith to them, Come, dine. But none of the disciples dared inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus cometh and taketh the bread and giveth it to them, and the fish in like manner. This is already the third time that Jesus had been manifested to the disciples, being risen from the dead " (vers. 4-14).

This was not a miracle only but a sign, as indeed is ever the case in the fourth Gospel, and in special connection with the two fore-going manifestations of the risen Lord, which give the key to what has just been cited. The first was when the Lord made Himself known to the disciples gathered on the first day of the week, His own very resurrection day, when He breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. It was His risen life communicated in the power and character of His resurrection, His blood already shed, peace now given, and themselves sent on a mission of peace. It is the type of the Christian and the church.

Eight days after was the second manifestation, when Thomas, who had been absent before but was now present, was convicted of unbelief; as the Lord took up his words of doubt and bade him reach here his finger and see His hands, and put his hand into His side, and be not faithless but believing. The slow disciple could only answer, My Lord and my God! just as the converted Jews will say at the end of this age. Indeed the Lord intimated the same thing when He said to him, " Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed [as Israel will do by-and-by]: blessed are they who have not seen and believed "; which is the proper faith of the Christian now.

The third manifestation is equally notable. " After these things Jesus was manifested again to his disciples " in Galilee of the Gentiles. It is not said to be on the first day of the week, nor eight days after; but simply after what foreshadowed His work in bringing Israel out of their unbelief. Now He sets forth Himself for their millennial work of bringing to Him from the sea of the nations, in which converted Israel will be honored by His grace. Here there is no breaking of the nets, no sinking of the boats. The net is drawn to land full of great fishes, as becomes the type of that vast ingathering. Whatever be the ruin of the Gentiles deceived by Satan at the end, there will be no failure among the blessed among the nations any more than in Israel. This is no small contrast with all that has been seen since Pentecost. And it is not without a bearing on that new day for the earth, that they found a fire of coals already there, and fish on it and bread. Those, who are used of grace for bringing in of the Gentiles on a great scale, learn that the Lord has wrought a work before them, and that they are invited to enter into the communion of His love in that previously hidden work; for eating here as elsewhere is its well-known figure. They partook of the fish ashore before what they had just caught on a larger scale.

Is not Jesus a wondrous and unwearied Savior? Think of it in all these three manifestations of Himself after He rose. What was it to the disciples who forsook Him and fled? What was it to Thomas so gloomily denying the good tidings? What will it be to a Gentile remnant, and to all the nations in the future day? And are you, my reader, to be left out of the blessing? It can only be because you harden your soul against casting yourself on Him now. If you are poor, He is rich; if you have no merit, and sins only, He is All-worthy, and died for you. Is not His death all that God values on your behalf? Believing on Him, you are justified. His work claims it, and God delights to prove that it is not in vain. Therein is His righteousness. He owes it to the cross of Christ; and it is yours if you believe. But beware of slighting the divine message. Put not His word of grace from you, nor thus judge yourselves unworthy of life eternal. God is not mocked in the end. Despise Him not now to your own ruin both now and forever. It is " the hour when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Is any case too desperate?

Notes on John, John 21:20-25, Notes on (21:20-25)

The ardent mind of Peter, kindled by the solemn intimation of the Lord, seizes the opportunity to inquire about one so closely linked with him as the beloved disciple. It is hard in this question to discern the jealousy of the active for the contemplative life, of which early and mediaeval writers say much.

“Peter1 turning round seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following (who also at the supper leaned on his breast and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee?); Peter therefore2 seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what [of] this man? Jesus saith to him, If I will that he abide till I come, what [is it] unto thee? follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple was [lit. is] not to die; yet Jesus said not to him, that he was [lit. is] not to die; but, If I will that he abide till I come, what [is it] to thee?” (Vers. 20-23.)

It was really loving interest, concerning one more closely associated with himself than his own brother Andrew by the bond of a common affection for Jesus and of Jesus. This made Peter curious to learn about John, now that his own earthly destiny was just revealed. But the gracious Lord, if He reproved in His own gentleness the prying spirit of His servant, did furnish ample matter for thought in the riddle He sets before Peter. One can readily see how shallow is the notion of Augustine and many since his day that the Lord meant no more than John's living to a protracted and placid age in contrast with Peter slain violently in old age, as with his own brother James in youth. Peter emphatically was to follow the Lord even in His death, as far as this could be. Not so John, who was to abide hanging on the will of the Lord till He came. There is evident and intentional mystery in the manner it was spoken of; and some have supposed that the destruction of Jerusalem and the judgment of the Jewish polity are here alluded to; and there is certainly more in such a thought than a merely peaceful death in advanced age, for death is in no true sense the Lord's coming but, rather the converse, our going to Him. We know at any rate that to John it was given to see the Son of man judging the churches, and to have visions not only of God's providential dealings with the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, but of the Lord's return in judgment of the apostate powers of the earth and of the man of sin, in order to the establishment of the long predicted kingdom of God and the times of the restitution of all things.

Out of the Lord's words, perverted as they speedily were, the synagogue seems to have had its fable of the wandering Jew, and Christendom its Prester John, to entertain minds which had lost the truth, either through rejecting Christ, or by turning to superstition.

But this we learn of great practical moment from verse 23, how dangerous it is to trust tradition, even the earliest, and how blessed to have the unerring standard of God's written word. The saying that went forth among the brethren in apostolic times seemed a most natural if not necessary inference from the words of our Lord. But we do not well to accept unreservedly an inferential statement, still less to be drawn into a system built on such deductions. We have the word of the Lord, and faith bows to it for its joy and rest to God's glory. Error easily insinuates itself into the first remove from what He says; as the apostle instructs us here that the Lord did not affirm that that disciple was not to die, but “If I will that he abide till I come.” Yet those who let in this primitive mistake were not enemies, were not grievous wolves or men speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. It was “among the brethren” that the tradition, unfounded and misleading, got spread. Miracles did not hinder, nor gifts, nor power, nor unity. The mistake arose from reasoning, instead of cleaving to the word of the Lord. The brethren through lack of subjection to God and of distrust in themselves gave the words a meaning, instead of simply receiving from them their true meaning. No wonder another great apostle commends us to God and to the word of His grace; for if we can feebly profit by His word without dependence on Himself, we cannot duly honor Him if we slight His word. And though it is by the Holy Spirit that we are thus kept and blest, even He is in no sort the standard of truth (while He is power in every way), but Christ as revealed in the written word.

Last of all come the personal seal and attestation of the writer. “This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.” (Vers. 24, 25.3) It was John and no other. Every inspired writer preserves none the less his own style and manner; and none more unmistakably than he who wrote the fourth Gospel. Yet what was written is but a sample, selected in divine wisdom, and with a specific plan subserving the grand scope and purpose of divine revelation. If everything which Jesus did were written out, well might the adoring evangelist suppose that the world itself would be too small for the needed books.

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But this is not all. It is not enough for the Lord to restore fully the soul of Peter and to more than reinstate in his relation to the sheep which might have seemed otherwise compromised. Grace would give him in God's due time what he had not only lost but turned to his own shame and his Master's dishonor, the confession of His name even to prison and death.

“Verily, verily, I say to thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. And this he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God.

And having said this, he saith to him, Follow me.” (Vers. 18, 19.)

In this, as in what precedes and in what follows, actions and words are veiled yet significant. There was the intention to convey important and interesting truth, but only to such as weighed all and went not beyond the just bearing of the Lord's sayings or doings. Peter was then in his prime of natural vigor. In his youth (and he was still far from being an old man) he was ready for energetic action, and disposed to use his liberty with too little distrust of himself. He had just ventured to go whither he would, into the high priest's house; and as far as doughty

words promised, one might have thought he had girded up his loins like a man to do great feats of valor, or to endure a great fight of afflictions for his betrayed and insulted Master. The issue we all know too well; and Peter had been led more and more to see and feel it, till he had now got down to the root and judged it thoroughly before God. And now also the Lord lets him know that grace would give him back what had seemed forever lost to him, the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and conformity to His death, far more in fact than Peter in his own too confident love and strength had proffered before he miserably broke down.

See how grace shuts out all ground for boasting, while it secures honor beyond what we in our most sanguine desires ever anticipated. Is not this worthy of God and suited to His saints? When Peter went forward according to his own words, he came to worse than nothing, he a most favored servant denying the Holy and Righteous One, his own most gracious Master. It was the deepest humiliation, yet was he a true saint and a loving disciple; but so it was because he entered into temptation at his own charges, instead of enduring it when tried by it according to God. Thus his fall was inevitable; for none can endure save in faith and self-judgment. To be a believer and fervently to love the Lord will not preserve in the least under such circumstances, however strange this may sound to many, who little think how often and deeply they deny the Lord practically, in great matters and small to which He attaches His name. We must be put to shame in whatever thing we are proud; and how much better is even this gain, than to be let go on in unrebuked self-complacency?

But the Lord promises Peter that, when he should be old, he should stretch forth his hands, and another gird and carry him whither he would not. Thus, when it was no longer possible to boast of his own strength or courage, as a helpless old man, Peter would enjoy from God the singular privilege, not only of death for Christ's sake which in younger days he had essayed to face and most ignominiously failed in, but of that very death which the Lord had suffered with its prolonged agony and shame. For the Lord, as we are expressly told, said as He did, signifying not death so much as “by what” sort of death Peter was to glorify God; and after saying this, He saith to him, Follow Me.

The allusion was scarcely mistakable. In those days when such a punishment was common enough for the lowest slaves and guiltiest criminals, every one understood the meaning of being lifted up, or outstretching the arms by the force of another. Again the illustrative act of calling Peter to follow Him as He walked some paces on the shore made plain its grave intent. Yet even then and thus, another carrying him whither he would not proves how little of self was to be in Peter's death on the cross, in contrast with those who, at a later day and a way lower incomparably, sought a martyr's death to win this crown. No! Peter's close on earth was to be suffering and death for Christ, who would give him to endure at the fit moment.

The lesson of its surpassing grace abides for us who love the same Savior, and have a nature no better than the disciple's. Have we been taught it? Can one learn it safely and surely, save as following Christ? “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” Peter when called should follow the Master; and so he did. May the same grace strengthen and guide us in the same path for life or death.

Notes on John, John 21:15-17, Notes on (21:15-17)

But our Gospel, while fully revealing God in Christ on earth and in these closing chapters tracing His ways in Christ risen, first, for the Christian and the assembly, next for Israel, and lastly for the Gentiles, never loses sight of grace working with the individual soul; and Peter must be thoroughly restored and publicly re-instated: so would the Lord have it. He had been already singled out specially (Mark 16:7) at a moment when such a distinction was of all moment both to himself and before his brethren, who would naturally have regarded with deep distrust the man who had so grievously and spite of full warning denied His Master. And before the eleven had the Lord standing in their midst, He had appeared to Simon. (Luke 24:34 Cor. 15:5.) But He would carry on the gracious work profoundly in Peter's heart, and let us into the secrets of this truly divine discipline.

“When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon [son] of John [or, Jonas],1 lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I dearly love thee. He saith to him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon [son] of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I dearly love thee. He saith to him, Tend my sheep. He saith to him the third time, Simon [son] of John, dost thou dearly love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Dost thou dearly love me and he said to him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I dearly love thee. Jesus saith to him, Feed my sheep [or, little sheep].” (John 21:15-17.)

The Lord goes to the root of the matter. He does not speak of Peter's denying Him, but penetrates to its cause. Peter fell through confidence in himself, at least in his love to his Master. He judged that he might go where others could not safely, and that he would stand to the confession of His name in the face of prison and death. The result we all know too well. The greatest of the twelve denied the Lord repeatedly and swore to it, notwithstanding fresh and solemn warning. But restoration is not complete though we own the fruit ever so fully. In order to thorough blessing the Lord would have us, like Peter here, to discern the hidden spring. This he had not reached yet: the Lord makes it known to His servant. There is no haste; He waits till they had broken their fast, and then He says to Simon Peter, “Simon, [son] of John, lovest thou (ἀγαπᾷς) me more than these?” He calls him by his natural name; for well He knew wherein lay the secret, which gave a handle to the enemy; and He would awaken a true sense of it in the apostle's soul. Through assurance of his own superior affection he had not merely trusted in himself, in comparison with others, but slighted the word of the Lord. Had he laid His words to heart with prayer, he had not fallen when tried, but endured the temptation and suffered. But it was not so. He was sure that he loved the Lord more than all the rest; and if they could not stand such a sifting, he would; and this confidence in his own surpassing love to Christ was precisely the cause, as the interrogation of the bystanders was the occasion, of his fall. And now the Lord lays the root bare to Peter, who had already wept over the open fruit.

Yet at first Peter does not discover the aim of the Lord. He does avoid unwise comparison with others; he simply appeals to the Lord's inward conscious knowledge: “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I dearly love (φιλῶ) thee.” Far from denying his profession of tender affection, the Lord proves His own value for it, and His confidence in Peter, for He, the good Shepherd, about to quit the world, entrusts to His servant that Which was unspeakably precious in His eyes and Most of all needed His care: “Feed my lambs.” Thus does He prove our love by answering to His love for the weakest of saints. “Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” We love, because He first

loved us; but it is not that we love Him only, but those that are His, not those that love us, naturally, but those that He loves, as divinely. “He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he also is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”

Did not Peter deeply and increasingly feel the Lord's loving trust thus reposed in him, more than even before he fell? The administration of the kingdom of the heavens, the keys (not of the church nor of heaven, but) of the kingdom had been promised to Peter, and made good in due time. Here it is more tender and intimate, though there is no ground to extend the flock here committed to him beyond those of the circumcision. (Of. Gal. 2) Did he not remember Isa. 40:11, in communion with the blessed Messiah in His work of feeding that flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs with His arm and carrying them in His bosom, while gently leading the nursing ewes?

The Lord appeals once more, but drops all reference to others. “He saith to him again a second time, Simon [son] of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I dearly love thee. He saith to him, Feed my sheep.” It is painfully instructive that even such a ripe scholar as Grotius should commit himself to an opinion so unworthy as that these marked changes of expression represent no weighty distinctions of truth.2 But Peter, though he no longer thinks disparagingly of others, cannot give up his assurance that the Lord was inwardly aware of his true affection for Himself. And the Lord now bids him tend or rule His sheep, as before feed His lambs. And Peter at a later day impresses the same on the elders among the Jewish Christians he was addressing, sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus and other districts of proconsular Asia: “Tend the flock of God which is among you, overseeing not of constraint but willingly; nor yet for filthy lucre, but readily; nor as lording it over your possessions, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock.” In the Lord's words, as in the apostle's, it will be noticed how carefully the lambs and the sheep are said to be Christ's, not the elders' nor even the apostle's. The flock is God's flock. He who treats Christians as his congregation is guilty of the same forgetfulness of divine grace and divine authority, as the congregation in regarding the minister as their minister, instead of Christ's. If any think these are slight distinctions, it is clear that they have no right apprehension of a difference which is as deep in truth as it is fraught with the most momentous consequences for good and ill in practice. Only this gives moral elevation, as it alone springs from faith; this alone delivers from self and gives the true relation and character, even Christ, whether to those that minister, or to those ministered to.

But the Lord speaks to him yet again. “He saith to him the third time, Simon [son] of John, dost thou dearly love me?” Here the probe reached the bottom. Not a word of blame or reproach; but the Lord for the third time questions him, and for the first time takes up his own word of special affection. Did not his threefold denial appear in the light of the threefold appeal, and, above all, of that word expressive of endearing love “Peter was grieved, because He said to him the third time, Dost thou dearly love Me? and he said to Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I dearly love Thee. Jesus saith to him, Feed My sheep,” or, if the reading of the Alexandrian, the Vatican, and the Paris palimpsest, &c., be preferred, My “little sheep,” a diminutive of tenderness and endearment.

The work of restoration was now fully done. Peter abandons every thought of self and can find refuge only in grace. Only He who knows all of Himself without an effort, only He could give credit to Peter's heart spite of his mouth and all appearances; yet did not He know that His poor denying servant dearly loved Him? The answer of the Lord, committing afresh what was dearest to Him on earth, the gift of the Father's love to Himself, seals Peter's restoration, not in soul only, but in his relation to the sheep of His pasture. Feed them, says the Lord. To tend or rule pastorally is not forgotten; but positive nourishment, as of the lambs at the beginning, remains to the last, the abiding task of the shepherd, the habitual need of the sheep; but it demands enduring and deep love, not to scold or govern, perhaps, but to feed, and not least of all Christ's sheep. Only the love of Christ can carry one through it.

Notes on John, John 21:7-14, Notes on (21:7-14)

The love which is of God makes the eye single, and thereby the whole body is full of light. John was quick to discern the Lord. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith to Peter, It is the Lord. Then Simon Peter, hearing that it was [lit. is] the Lord, girt his over-coat about [him] (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net of the fishes. So when they had got off to the land, they see a coal-fire laid, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken. Simon Peter [therefore]1 went up and drew the net to land2 full of great fishes, a hundred [and] fifty three: and, many as they were, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them, Come, dine. And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was [lit. is] the Lord. Jesus3 cometh and taketh the bread and giveth to them, and the fish likewise. This already [was the] third time Jesus was manifested to the disciples4 after having risen from [the] dead.” (Vers. 7-14.)

But if John was the first to perceive who He was that spoke to them, Peter with characteristic promptness is the first to, act so as to reach His presence, yet not naked but in seemly guise. He had failed miserably and profoundly and repeatedly, but not his faith; even as the Savior had prayed for him that it should not fail. Despair because of the gravest failure is no more of faith than the indifference which hears not the Savior's voice, and, never knowing His glory or His grace, never has the consciousness of its own guilt. In the Lord he thus learns experimentally to confide, after having too much trusted his own love for his Master; and Christ must be all to the heart of him who is to strengthen his brethren.

The Lord however despises none, and the other disciples follow in the small boat, dragging the net full of the fishes; for He had not given such a haul to leave it behind. Grace makes to differ, never to behave oneself unseemly. Peter carried himself suitably toward the Lord; so did they in their place; yet had they all one heart and purpose to please the Lord.

And so will it be when the abundance of the sea shall be converted to Zion. What will not be the effect of all Israel being saved? If their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? What shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? Jehovah will destroy the veil that is spread over all nations; and Israel will not only be the instrument of divine vengeance on their enemies, but of God's mercy, and blessing to all the families of the earth. “And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many

people as a dew from Jehovah, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver." (Mic. 5. 7, 8.)

It is remarked and remarkable that, when the disciples landed, they see a fire laid, and fish thereon and bread. The Lord had wrought before them and without them, though He would give them communion with the fruits of the activity of His grace. He will have got ready a Gentile remnant Himself before He employs His people to gather the great millennial catch out of the sea of Gentiles. The grace of God will work after a far more varied and vigorous sort than men think; and while He deigns to use His people, it is good for them at that very time to learn that He can and does work independently. Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! How verified both in Israel, and in the Gentile.

Yet the Lord would have His own enter into the fellowship of what He has wrought as well as enjoy their own work. "Jesus saith to them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken. Simon Peter therefore went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty-three; and, as many as there were, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them, Come dine."

The contrast with all that characterizes the actual work of His servants is very plain. The parable in Matt. 13 shows us that even up to the close of the age good and bad fish are contained in the net, and that it is the marked call of the fishermen just then to put the good into vessels as well as to cast the bad away; whilst the angels, as we know, do the converse work, when judgment comes at the Lord's appearing, of severing the wicked from among the righteous. The miraculous draft in Luke 5, descriptive of present service, shows us the nets breaking and the boats into which the fishes were put beginning to sink. Nothing of this appears here where the days of the kingdom are set forth, when the Lord is with His own on earth. There are many great fishes named but none bad; the net is expressly said to be unbroken; there is no thought of the boat sinking, and the net was dragged along instead of the boat being filled. Thus a wholly different and future state of things is pictured, after this age closes and before eternity begins. The Lord will yet and then renew His associations with His people on earth: I speak not of the Father's house on high and its heavenly relations, but of those to be blessed and a blessing on earth. It is an unquestionably scriptural prospect, and most cheering, that this very earth is to be delivered from its present corruption and thralldom into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For the revelation of His sons the earnest expectation of the creation waits, though, as we know, the whole of it groans and travails in pain till now. But it will not be so always. The Lord Himself is coming, and the day of His appearing will see creation delivered, not of course as we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit are now into the liberty of grace by faith, but the creation itself also by power shall be freed into the liberty of glory.

And the Lord on that day was giving the pledge of the future widespread blessing, when the Gentile world will afford common joy, and the occasion of the manifestation of His risen power and presence, to His people. None but He could or would act after such a sort. His grace is unmistakable. "And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus cometh and taketh the bread and giveth to them, and the fish likewise. This already [was the] third time Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after being risen from the dead." It is the day when they shall all know Him from the least of them to the greatest of them, none more needing to say, Know the Lord. "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers." (Jer. 3:17, 18.)

There would be an utter gap for this world and God's glory in it, a gap which nothing else could fill up for him who takes a large and observant view of God's dealings with the world, if there were not a period of divine blessedness here below for Israel and the nations through the grace and to the praise of the risen Lord Jesus. This does not in the least interfere with the deeper and higher things above the world to which the Christian and the church are now called. On the contrary, when the reality and the true character of the kingdom at Christ's appearing are not seen, there is a confusion of it with the proper hopes of the church, which is ruinous to the distinctive blessedness of the church on the one hand and of Israel with the Gentiles on the other.

Notes on John, John 21:1-6, Notes on (21:1-6)

It is impossible fairly to sever the manifestation of Jesus at the lake of Tiberias from the two previous scenes of which it is the complement; as indeed verse 14 warrants us to say with decision. It is therefore quite improper to speak of the chapter as an appendix, still more so to speculate on its being written at an interval of some length after the rest of the Gospel: an inference due chiefly if not altogether to a misunderstanding of the two closing verses of chapter 20, as has been already pointed out. The connection is immediate and marked with the two previous manifestations of the risen Lord. First, we have seen Him, (after making Himself known to Mary of Magdala and sending by her a most characteristic message to His disciples,) standing in their midst when gathered together without seeing Him on the first or resurrection day of the week, in their enjoyment of peace and the mission of peace in the power of the Spirit to remit and retain sins in His name. Secondly, we have seen Him eight days after meeting His disciples again when Thomas was there, representing saved Israel of the latter day who only believe by the sight of Him risen. Now we have the beautiful picture of the millennial ingathering from the sea of Gentiles, which follows the Jews returning as such to the Lord, as all prophecy leads us to expect.

"After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and he manifested [himself] thus. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus [that is, Twin], and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the [sons] of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter saith to them, I go to fish. They say to him, We also come with thee. They went forth, and entered1 into the boat, and that night took nothing. But when early morn was now breaking,2 Jesus stood on the shore: however the disciples did not know that it was [lit, is] Jesus. Jesus therefore saith to them, Children, have ye anything to eat? They answered him, No. And he said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye will find. They cast therefore, and were no longer able3 to draw it from the multitude of fishes." (Vers. 1-6.)

Peter with his usual energy proposes to go a-fishing, and six others accompany him. But the result is no better than when some of the same disciples with the same Peter essayed to catch fish before his call and theirs. Even in the days of the kingdom the power must be manifestly of the Lord, not of man nor of the saints themselves; and Peter must and would learn the lesson, if the Catholic church falsely claiming Peter refuse it in pride. It is not yet the kingdom manifested in power and glory, but in mystery for such as have ears to hear. And although grace work its wonders, the nets break, and the boats threaten to sink, even when their partners come to share in taking the great multitude of fishes.

Here Jesus is not aboard, and there is no putting out into the deep, but with the early morn just breaking He stood on the beach, and still unknown put a question which brought out their confessed lack of success. Then comes the word, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye will find. And so it was; for so casting they were now unable to draw the net for the multitude of fishes. It is the figure of the great millennial haul from among the nations, when the salvation of all Israel will prove to be incomparably blessed to the Gentiles. If their “fall” has been so fraught with good in divine grace, how much more their “fullness” (Rom. 11:12), of which the seven Israelites may be the pledge? The once rejected but now risen Christ is to be the head of the heathen, not only of the church now on high, but by-and-by of the nations on the earth, owned by previously unbelieving Israel to be their Lord and their God. Then will the Jew sing, God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him; and again, Princes shall come out of Egypt: Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God, Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord. In the figure of that day the nets do not break, nor is there any thought of putting the fishes into the boat, still less of gathering the good into vessels and casting the bad away. The weakness of man and of earthly circumstances wanes before the present power of the Lord who directs all.

Augustine may be safely regarded as the ablest and most enlightened of the early writers on this sign, which he compares with that which preceded the call of Simon Peter and the sons of Zebedee. He is right in distinguishing the take of fish which followed the resurrection from the miraculous draft before it. Nor does any other among the ancients add to the truth of his observations, Gregory the Great rather darkening the force of our scripture by his effort to make much-of Peter's part in order to help on the Papal pretensions then in course of rapid growth. The earlier miracle he regards as significant of the good and evil in the church as it is now; the later, of the good only which it is to have forever when the resurrection of the just is accomplished in the end of this age. (Serm, ocxlviii.- cclii., &c.)

Enough perhaps has been said already which anticipatively corrects so erroneous an interpretation of the sign before us. There is no thought of a fishing scene in the resurrection either of just or unjust, no truth in the employing of Jews or men for gathering in the risen righteous to their heavenly and eternal rest. The fathers saw nothing of the future restoring of the kingdom to Israel, nor of the general blessedness of all nations as such under the reign of the Lord in the age to come. The moderns are in general no less uninstructed; for though some see and allow the restoration of Israel to their land and the accomplishment of the glory promised so largely throughout the Old Testament, they somehow with strange inconsistency merge all into this age. They do not perceive that these are among the constituents of the age to come, before the eternal state, when there will be no difference between Jew and Gentile absolutely, as there is none even now for the Christian and the church.

But here is another source of this deep, long-lasting, and widespread misconception. Men and even good men fail to see the true nature of the church, as they do not believe in the special features of the millennial age. How much error would be avoided if they discerned the peculiar character and unexampled privilege of the body of Christ in union with its heavenly head, since redemption, while He sits at God's right hand! How much more, if they looked for His return with His bride, already complete and caught up to be with Him on high, to make His foes His footstool, and Judah His goodly horse in the battle which introduces Jehovah-Jesus King over all the earth-one Jehovah and His name one in that day. It is as egregious to confound with the church wherein is neither Jew nor Greek all this distinctive blessing of Israel and the nations on the earth under the reign of the Lord, as it is to merge both in the end of the age or in the eternity which, they assume, is to follow, blotting out the new age to come, which is to be characterized by the reign of the Second man, the Lord Jesus, the absence of Satan, the exaltation of the glorified saints in power on high, and the blessedness of all the families of the earth here below.

But these all stand indelibly written in the scriptures; and no wrigglings of unbelief can get rid of a truth which may be and is offensive to the pride of nature and the worldly mind, as it would prove full of help and value to Christian men often perplexed by their own misreading of revelation and their misconception consequently of what is to be sought or expected at this present time. For there is no error which does not bear its own baneful fruits; and the error in question, though not assailing fundamental truth, affects most extensively the right understanding of the past, the present, and the future, by blurring their chief characteristic differences, and so presenting an undistinguishable vague, where the word of God affords the fullest light on the various dispensations, as well as on that mystery in regard of Christ and of the church which comes in between and is superior to either.

Notes on John, John 20:30-31, Notes on (20:30-31)

Has the evangelist, as on occasion is his manner, interrupts for a moment the thread of the divine tale to say a few words on the gracious way of the Savior in the affluence of signs or significant miracles which studded His ministry here below, as well as on the purpose of blessing the Holy Ghost had in view, in selecting from that countless crowd such as were most suitable for permanent testimony to God's grace. Two objects are set out: first, and pre-eminently, the glory of the Lord's person, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; secondly, that the believer may have life in His name.

“Many other1 signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the2 disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.” (Chap. 20: 30, 31.)

No doubt this was a fitting moment here to pause and thus to speak. The unbelief of a believer, yea of an apostle, furnished the material, where the Lord had stooped to meet and receive His erring servant by the visible tokens and the tangible proofs he had insisted on in his folly, and to his hurt irreparable, if grace had not intervened as we have seen. It was a priceless favor to have seen the things the disciples saw. It is better still to believe without seeing. And grace would provide for those who in the nature of things could not see that they might

hear and live. Hence the writing of this precious book. It was to be in witness of Jesus; it was to be known and read of all men. Not that scripture ever exhausts its wondrous theme, whatever it may be; and here above all it is as infinite in the person described, as the blessing is eternal for those who believe. God graciously selects some signs out of many, in the considerate goodness which knows precisely what we can bear; for if scripture be His word, it is given to man, even to us who believe, to the end of our enjoying that blessing in His Son, indeed the deepest which He could bestow, the communication of that nature which, as it comes from God, ever goes to Him, yea yields fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

And as the supreme and crucial test now is the person of Jesus Christ come in the flesh (1 John 4:2, 3), so connected with it is the divinely given and guarded testimony to God's grace and Christ's glory, by which the family of God, weak as they are, overcome the adverse might of the world and its prince; because greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world. And those who are of God turn a deaf ear to such as are of the world and speak as of the world whom the world hears; but have they none especially to hear? Thanks be to God, they know God and hear those who are of God, His chosen witnesses, whom the Holy Ghost was to lead and did lead into all the truth, and who in due time wrote “this book,” as did others no less inspired for the work than John. On the other hand those who are not of God do not hear the apostles, preferring the thoughts of themselves or of other men to their irremediable ruin. “By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

After this brief but worthy and gracious interruption the Evangelist turns to “the third” of the great manifestations of the risen Jesus which it was his task to describe, before he closes with the respective and peculiar places the Lord would give Peter and John in their service here below. How any men of intelligence could say that our two verses which conclude chapter 20 are a formal close of the Gospel might have been viewed as inconceivable, if it was not positive fact. Grotius seems to have been the first man of mark who gave expression and currency to a supposition irreconcilable with the plain connection of the two first days of the week in chapter 20 with the scene which follows in chapter 21, and irreconcilable just in proportion to one's real understanding of the Gospel as a whole. Modern Germany took up this and other injurious notions of that learned Dutchman, not only Ewald, Lucke, Sanday, and Tholuck, but even Meyer, Neander, and Stier. It is painful to add that Alford, Scrivener, Westcott, &c. have yielded to the uncalled-for theory that John 20 originally ended the Gospel, and that chapter 21 is a later appendix from the apostle's own hand, though many go farther and deny it to him.

When we enter on the details of the concluding chapter we may be enabled to show more clearly how unfounded is this thought.

Meanwhile it suffices here to point out briefly the mistake of regarding as a true end the two verses which have been now occupying us. In fact, they are an instructive comment by the way, not without a glance at the signs wrought by the Lord all through, but with special declaration of God's aim for the glory of Christ and the blessing of the faithful suggested by the case of Thomas, yet delicately avoiding any needlessly direct allusion to one so honored of the Lord. It would indeed be as true to say that the Evangelist began more than once in chapter i. as to admit more than one ending in chapters 20, 21. Indeed if men are to reason thus from superficial appearances, it would be snore plausible to infer at least two if not three supplements to the Epistle to the Romans. Nor is authority wanting which transports the doxology from the end of chapter xvi. to that of chapter xiv. Yet it is to be doubted if the hypothesis there be so unnatural as it would be here to sever the third manifestation of the Lord in resurrection from the two which preceded it, or even to admit the former as a later addition, since it is necessary to the completeness of the picture. It is the true complement. In no way is it, as men have thought, a mere supplement, since it forms an essential part of one organic whole; just as John 2:1-22 pertains as a sequel to John 1 and never could be justly dislocated from it, as an afterthought supplied at a later date even by the same hand.

Notes on John, John 20:24-29, Notes on (20:24-29)

On the resurrection-day the apostles were not all present, for “Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” (Vers. 24, 25.)

His state of soul coincided with his absence on that day. He resisted the blessed news of the resurrection, and did not join the gathering of the disciples to share the joy of the Master's presence in their midst. Slow of heart to believe, he missed the early taste of the blessing, and abode in the darkness of his own unbelief, whilst the rest were filled with gladness. He becomes, therefore, no unmeet type of the Jew, not of the ungodly mass who receive another coming in his own name, but of the poor sorrow-stricken remnant, who cleave to the hope of the Messiah in the latter day, and will enter into rest and joy only when they see Him appearing for their deliverance. “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace to you. Then he saith to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands, and reach thy hand, and put [it] into my side, and be not unbelieving, but believing. Thomas answered and said to him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith to him, “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are those that saw not, and believed.” (Vers. 26-29.)

It is a blessed picture of the fruit of Christ's resurrection in the latter day: not the church, but “the great congregation,” brought, in infinite grace, to know and praise the Lord, when He is no longer hidden, but visibly reigning. Those before will have had the good portion, which shall not be taken from them-they saw not, yet believed. Israel will see and believe: blest indeed, but not after the same high measure of blessing. There will be no such revelation of the Father to them, no such association with the Son, no conscious link by His ascension with the heavens. The rejected One will have returned to reign in power and glory, and the heart of Israel, long withered and dark, is to be lighted up at length with the brightness of their hope accomplished in the presence of the Lord to make good every promise, when they, on their part, boast no more of their own righteousness, but take their stand on the mercy that endureth forever. They recognize the Judge of Israel that was smitten with a rod upon the cheek, and themselves given up by Him, until the birth of God's great final purpose in their favor, when He shall be great to the ends of the earth, and they as a dew of blessing from the Lord in the midst of the nations, and all their enemies shall be cut off. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him,” in bitterness of self-reproach, but with a spirit of grace and supplication poured upon them; for truly He was wounded in the house of His friends, but wounded, as they learn afterward, for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities, stricken for the transgression of Jehovah's people.

Hence we hear nothing now of not touching the Lord because of His ascension to His Father, nor of going to His brethren, and saying to them, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” On the contrary, grace will condescend to those who demanded signs and tokens ere they would believe, and they will stand overwhelmed and abashed at the fullness of visible proof when Messiah returns here below. There is peace to them, “for this man shall be the peace” in that day also, whatever the pride and power of the foe. But there will not be the same mission of peace in the power of His risen life; all their iniquities forgiven, all their diseases healed, but not the place of the church to forgive or retain sins in the name of the Lord.

Accordingly there is the characteristic exclamation and confession withal of Thomas, “My Lord and my God."1 So will Israel say in the kingdom. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.” It is the truth, and true blessing for Israel to possess and blessedly acknowledge, especially for those who had so long despised Him to their own shame and ruin; but it has not the intimacy of that fellowship into which the Christian is now called. “For truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” “We walk by faith, not by sight;” and having not seen Christ, we love Him, “in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Notes on John, John 20:19-23, Notes on (20:19-23)

The Lord's message was not in vain. The disciples gathered on that resurrection-day with the world shot out, and Jesus stood in the midst. It is the beautiful anticipative picture of the assembly, as may be seen more fully when details are entered into.

“When it was evening then on that first day of the week, and the doors were shut where the-disciples were by reason of the fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith to them, Peace to you. And having said this he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. He [or, Jesus] said to them again, Peace to you: according as the Father hath sent me forth, I also send you. And having said this he breathed into, and saith to them, Receive [the] Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whose soever ye retain, they are retained.” (Vers. 19-23.)

How many things of spiritual weight were here brought into the smallest compass and conveyed in the simplest form! That day which in due time was to receive its appropriate designation of “the Lord's day” (Rev. 1:10), as characteristic of the Christian as the sabbath of the Jew, was marked off, not only by the gathering together of the saints, but by the presence of the Lord in their midst. So it was at the beginning of the following week; and so afterward does the Holy Spirit distinguish it as the day when the breaking of the bread is observed (Acts 20:7) and the wants of the holy poor rose up in remembrance before Him and them. (1 Cor. 16:2.) It was indeed divine guidance, though it did not take the shape of a command; but none the less precious or obligatory on all who value His special presence in communion with His own and the showing forth of His death till He come. It was the day, not of creation rest nor of law imposed, but of resurrection and of the grace which associated the believer with its rich and enduring results; on which all thus blessed come together to enjoy in common that death of the Lord which is the righteous ground of these privileges and of all others.

On that day the Lord gave the assembled disciples a signal witness of the power of life in resurrection; for where they were, the doors having been shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst. Weakness attaches to the natural body, which, unless a miracle be wrought, is stopped by a wall or a closed door or a chain or a thousand other cheeks. Not so the body which is raised in power, as the Lord here silently shows them. It appears to be the object of the statement here, and again lower down, to intimate that the risen body can thus enter, not by miracle (however wonderful it may seem to us, who view and measure things by the actual condition of this life) but normally as in the power of resurrection. There is no ground here to suppose, but rather the contrary, that the doors were caused to open of themselves. So it was (Acts 5:19) when the angel led the apostles Peter and John out of prison; so again when Peter was a second time set free (Acts 12:10), and the iron gate opened of itself, not to let in the angel who needed it not, but to let Peter out. It is no question of omnipotence, but of the risen body, which has no more need of an open door than an angel. The ancients seem to have had far simpler faith as to this than most moderns who betray the growing materialism1 of the day. To talk of philosophical difficulties is puerile pretension: what does philosophy know of the resurrection? It is a question of God and His Son, not of mere causes and effects, still less of experience. The Christian believes the word and knows what God reveals. Let philosophy confess, not boast of, its nescience if dumb before creation, resurrection is to it still more confounding.

Jesus then and thus came and stood in the midst, saying to the disciples, Peace to you. This He had left as His legacy before the cross; now alive again from the dead He announces it to His own: how sweet the sound in a world at war with God! Doubly so, where earnest souls have striven ineffectually to make it for themselves with God, whatever their sighs and tears and groans, whatever their prayers, yearnings, and agony, whatever their efforts to eschew the evil and cleave to the good. For such best know that conscience and heart can find no solid peace in self-judgment or in self-denial, in contemplation of God or in labors for Him; on the contrary, the more sincere, the less have they peace. They are on a wholly wrong road. Peace for a sinful man can only be made by the blood of Christ's cross, which faith receives on His word. And so the Lord spoke it to the disciples that day, the mighty work on which it is grounded being finished and accepted of God, as His resurrection declares. “And having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”

Some have conceived that the second “Peace to you” was a sort of farewell or valete, as the first a salvete.2 As the former was far otherwise, even the deep blessing which characterizes those who are justified by faith, and ever recurring in one form or another throughout the New Testament, so the second is in connection with the mission the Lord proceeds to confer on the disciples. They first received peace for themselves; they are next charged to go forth with the gospel of grace to others. “According as the Father hath sent me forth, I also send you.” These are Christ's true legates a latere: others are but thieves and robbers whom the sheep do well not to hear. Strangers to peace themselves, as their own tongue cannot but confess, how can they tell others of a peace which poor sinners might trust with assurance?

But the Lord next proceeds to another highly significant token of new and lasting privilege. “And having said this, he breathed into and saith to them, Receive Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whose soever ye retain, they are retained.” It was He who before He took flesh had breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life; and now He breathed into the disciples the breath of a better

and everlasting life, His own life, as being both now, that is Jehovah-God and the risen second Man in one person. Never had He so done before. The right moment was come. He had been delivered for their offenses and was raised for their justification. The risen life is deliverance from the law of sin and death, as well as the bright witness of a complete remission of sins; and this not as an abstract truth for all believers, but intended to be known and enjoyed by each. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath delivered me from the law of sin and death.” What can be more intensely personal? and what more evident also that it was not only a new and divine life, but this after judgment of sin and the curse of the law had fallen on Christ, and He risen victoriously dispensing a life beyond sin, law, or judgment, and this as having borne all, and borne all away for the believer righteously? Of this His in-breathing was the sign; and He says, “Receive Holy Spirit:” not yet the Spirit sent down from the ascended Lord and Christ to baptize into one body and to give power in testimony, but the energy of His own risen life. For the Spirit ever in the closest way takes His part in every blessing; and as for the kingdom of God every one is born of water and of Spirit, and none else can see or enter that kingdom, so here with life in resurrection, to deal with souls that hear the gospel.

For this is not all. The disciples thus blessed are invested with a blessed privilege and a solemn responsibility as regards others. Those without are now viewed as sinners, the old distinction of Jews and Gentiles for the time disappearing in the true light. But if it be the judgment of the world, it is the day of grace; and the disciples have the administration, the spirit of life in Christ giving them capacity. Hence the word of the Lord is, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; whose soever ye retain, they are retained.” So repentant souls were baptized for the remission of sins, whilst a Simon Magus was pronounced in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. So the wicked person was put away from among the saints, and the same man after the judgment of his evil and his own deep grief over his sin was to be assured of love by the assembly's receiving him back, obedient yet taking the initiative in the act that it might be conscience work and not of bare authority or influence. It was the assembly's doing. “To whom ye forgive anything, I also; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [it is] for your sakes in Christ's person.” He would have nothing forced, but fellowship unbroken in discipline; not he dictating and they blindly or in dread following, as in the church world, but they forgiving and he also in a communion truly of the Spirit.

Notes on John, John 20:17-18, Notes on (20:17-18)

Mary had known Christ according to the flesh, and evidently thought that she was thus to know Him still. But it is not so. Henceforth we know none after this sort. Christ was dead and risen and about to take His place in heaven according to the counsels of God. The Christian is called to know Him as man in heaven, always the Son but now Man glorified on high. Hence the force of that which follows. Mary must learn to regard the Lord in an entirely new light, not in bodily presence here below, but for an object of faith as received up in glory. She is thus delivered from all her former associations, and is the given ensample of the Jewish remnant henceforward to become Christian.

“Jesus saith to her, Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended unto the [or,1 my] Father; but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God. Mary of Magdala cometh bringing word2 to the disciples, I have seen3 the Lord, and that he said these things to her.” (Vers. 17, 18.)

It is the more striking if we compare Matt. 28:9 with the Lord's prohibition of Mary in our Gospel. Both incidents happened very nearly about the same time. Yet the Lord permitted the other women to come and hold Him by the feet, and pay Him homage, whereas He forbade Mary of Magdala, only a very little while before, to touch Him. We know that He was divinely perfect on both occasions, as indeed always, that though man and the Son of man, it was not His to repent, for He is the truth; but we may be permitted, and I think ought to inquire why ways so different and so rapidly following one another could be each absolutely right in its own place. The difference of design in the two Gospels helps much to clear the matter. In Matthew the risen Lord resumes His relations with the Jewish remnant, and gives these women, as a sample of that remnant, to enjoy His presence on earth. For this reason too there is not only no ascension scene in the end of Matthew, but no allusion to the fact there; indeed it would mar the perfection of the picture, which shows us the Lord present with them until the consummation of the age. In John, on the other hand, Jewish feeling is immediately corrected; new relations are announced, and ascension to the Father takes the place of all expectations for the nations on the earth with the Jews as the Lord's center and witnesses. “Touch me not,” says Jesus to Mary,” for I have not yet ascended to the Father.” Henceforth the Lord is to be known characteristically by the Christian as in heaven. The Jew had looked for Him on earth, and rightly so; as by-and-by the Jew will have Him reigning over the earth, when He comes again in power and great glory. Between the broken and restored hopes of Israel, we find our place as Christians. We are baptized unto His death, and we show forth His death until He come, remembering Him in the breaking of bread; but we know Him above, no longer dead, but risen and glorified. Yea, though we had known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know Him thus no more. Indeed without boasting, in sober truth but all surpassing grace, we can say and as believers are bound to say, that we are in Him. “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” And “that day” is this day, being already come, the day of grace to the world in the gospel; the day of grace to the saints in our union with Christ. “So if any one be in Christ, it is a new creation; the old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new; and all things are of the God who reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” Such is Christianity, and more than this was implied in our Lord's dealing and words with Mary of Magdala. “Touch me not” was a saying of eminent significance, and still more when interpreted by the words that accompany it. It is not as in Col. 2:21 μὴ ἅψῃ (a single transient action), but μή μου ἅπτου, Do not go on touching me; it is a general and continuous prohibition, and this to represent the remnant taken out of their associations as Jews and put into new relations, not only with Christ in heaven, but through Him with His Father and God, as contradistinguished from those who represent the remnant allowed to lay hold of Him as a sign of His return in bodily presence for the kingdom.

But there is more. “Go unto my brethren.” He is not ashamed to call the disciples His brethren. He had prepared the way for this; He had said on Israel's rebellious rejection of their Messiah, “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Now on the accomplishment of His atoning work He acknowledges definitely this blessed fruit of it, not only sins forgiven to faith by virtue of His shed blood, but believers in the most intimate way related to Himself, the risen Man and Son of God. They are His brethren; to whom according to Psa. 22. He proceeds to make known the name, not merely of Jehovah, but of the Father. For now they were not quickened only, but quickened with Christ. They stood in Him risen from the dead, forgiven all trespasses. And they learn that thus related to Christ in His new place as in the condition of man according to divine counsels for eternity, all question of sin being closed

triumphantly on the cross, not for Him who had no need, but for the believer, who had all possible need in guilt and an evil nature and an accusing enemy and a holy, righteous Judge, they enter into His own blessed and everlasting relationship with His Father and God. “And say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God.”

It was a moment of unequaled depth: the Son risen again after having borne the judgment of our sins in His own body on the tree and glorified God in respect not of obedience in life only, but up to death for sin, on the resurrection morning, sending through one from whom He had formerly expelled seven demons to His disciples, desponding through unbelief, a message of the new and incomparable blessedness He had acquired for them by His death and resurrection. Doubtless He is the risen Messiah of the seed of David, and the mercies of David are made sure by His resurrection, as will be proved in the kingdom restored to Israel in due time. But this must be postponed in God's wisdom and yield to the far deeper purpose meanwhile coming into evidence, the calling out of God's children, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, into the knowledge and enjoyment and testimony of Himself and His Son by the Holy Ghost, which is usually styled Christianity. It could not be before, not only because He had relations after flesh and by promise with Israel until they had thoroughly despised and rejected deliberately, through unbelief but guiltily and inexcusably, their infinitely blessed King, but because only on the ground of redemption by His death could God be free to form and gather those children of His freed from their sins and quickened together with Him whether Jew or Genesis tile. Now having died He could bear much fruit; and here He announces the fact worthy of Himself and of the God who sent Him in love beyond all thought of man. “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God.”

How poor and pale are the dreams of men even in their highest aspirations, compared with the simple truth spoken by the Lord and sent to His own! Yet nothing less could satisfy His love, which must demonstrate its power, first by going down with our sins to suffer for them from God, and next by ascending into glory and giving us as far as possible His own position as sons and saints with all evil and guilt forever gone before God, purged worshippers, having no more conscience of sins; and this, not merely a hope to be made good when He comes again to receive us to Himself, but the truth of a really existing relationship announced now on the resurrection day, sent to His disciples that they might know and enjoy it to the full, as pledged in His own ascension to the presence of the Father in heaven. It is for all saints till He come again: would that all knew it as their only true place in Him! Still grace has given the truth fresh power in our day, though by messengers who have no more reason to boast than Mary of Magdala, who came then with the tidings to the disciples (ver. 18), I have seen the Lord, or as it is more commonly read that she had seen the Lord and He had spoken these things to her. But we may and ought to glory in our risen Lord, and of such a place for the believer in Him. “Of such an one will I glory,” said a greater than any of us; “yet of myself I will not glory, but in, mine infirmities.” Of a man in Christ it is well to glory: only we cannot expect those to do so who do not even conceive what it means, and who are so depraved by a jargon of Jewish and Gentile notions, commonly called systematic divinity, that they are slow indeed to learn. If we know the truth, we may have grace not only to walk in it, but to wait on such as know it, if peradventure grace and truth may at length win their way and the saints learn their true blessedness in Christ.

Notes on John, John 20:11-16, Notes on (20:11-16)

Mary did not, could not, take things so quietly, as the two disciples. What was “home” now to her? What was the world? Nothing but an empty tomb where Jesus had lain. Others might depart again to their own home.

“But Mary stood at the tomb without weeping. While then she was weeping, she stooped into the tomb, and beholdeth two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where had lain the body of Jesus. And they say to her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them, Because they took away my Lord, and I know not where they laid him. Having said this, she turned back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to him, Sir, if thou didst carry him off, tell me where thou laidest him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her, Mary. She, turning, saith to him in Hebrew,1 Rabboni, which meaneth Teacher.” (Vers. 11-16.)

The sorrow of love for Jesus, that which mourns His absence, or which feels wrong done to Him in any way, is far different from the sorrow of the world that worketh death. It soon passes into life and peace through the grace of Jesus. Mary's sorrow was not fruitless, nor was it long. Other servants of the Lord and the Lord Himself whom she saw not, looked upon

her. While she wept outside, she stooped into the tomb and beheld two angels in white. But He was not there; they were sitting one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. Yet we hear of no alarm, no amazement on her part: so absorbed was her heart with that one person, to all appearance lost to her, even His body gone so that she could not weep over it. Nor does she speak to them, but they say to her, Woman, why weepest thou? They were in the secret. She had not read as yet aright the signs of the grave. Her sorrowing heart would ere long receive better and clearer tidings still. Meanwhile she explains to them why she wept: “Because they took away my Lord, and I know not where they laid him.” She wholly overlooks the strangeness of the angelic apparition within the tomb, and takes for granted that every one must know who He was whose body was gone. But not even yet has the thought of His resurrection crossed her mind. The Lord was her Lord; she loved Him exceedingly, but to her apprehension men had taken Him and laid Him where she knew not. A soul may love the Lord, yet be dark indeed as to His risen glory.

Grace would now intervene. “On saying this she turned round and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.” How often this may be for our dull hearts! But He never acts beneath His name, and speaks that we may know Him. “Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek?” This last was a leading question. Till He is known however, there is still darkness, though there may be love. “She, thinking that he was the gardener, saith to him, Sir, if thou didst carry him off, tell me where thou laidest him, and I will take him away.” One word dispels all the difficulty and doubt, the expression, not of our love-to Him, but of His love to us. “Jesus saith to her, Mary.” The work was done, the great discovery made. He had died, He was now risen, and He appeared first to Mary of Magdala. She that had sown in tears reaps now in joy. The Lord appreciated her abiding at the tomb in sorrow, even though but an empty tomb. Her heart was now filled with joy, and, as we shall see, the joy would run over to gladden other hearts, the hearts of all that believed.

It was the good Shepherd calling His own sheep by name. She was the same to Him as ever; He stood in resurrection power; but His love was the same to her, certainly no less than when He cast seven demons out of her. Doubtless there was a sameness in the expression of her name which went straight home to her heart and recalled her from her dream about His person, once dead, but now in truth alive again for evermore. Soon she would learn that as He lived so did she also, alive to God in Jesus Christ her Lord. But for the moment to know Himself alive, Himself uttering her name with unutterable love was the fruit of divine grace that would satisfy her heart.

Notes on John, John 20:3-10, Notes on (20:3-10)

As to the accounts of the resurrection, let none believe that it is fruitless to compare them, any more than to accept the perfect accuracy of each one. Whether one attempt or despise a harmony, the result must be utterly wrong if he start with interpreting Matt. 28 of the dawn on Sunday morning instead of the dusk on sabbath evening, which last to the Jew (and Matthew above all has the Jews in view) was and is the true beginning of the first day, however Western prejudice may incline to the Gentile sense of the day. This error must vitiate all right understanding for the student as much as for the harmonist.

It has been said to be impossible that so astounding an event, coming upon various portions of the body of disciples from various quarters and in various forms, should not have been related, by four independent witnesses, in the scattered and fragmentary way in which we now find it. Certainly it would be impossible if there were no God securing perfect truth by all His chosen witnesses, and in each of their accounts. The remark is therefore mere unbelief, and quite unworthy of any intelligent Christian. “Scattered and fragmentary” is not the way of the Holy Ghost, who does not employ the four like men giving evidence in a court of justice, each of what he saw and heard. Not only is this inapplicable to Mark and Luke, but it does not fall in with the facts in John and Matthew. For He leads each of them to omit what both saw and heard, and to insert only such a selection as illustrates the scope and design of the, particular Gospel. Was not Matthew a riveted spectator of the Lord in the midst of the disciples in Jerusalem on the evening of the day He rose from the dead? Was not John with the rest at the appointed mountain in Galilee?

It is not merely true then that in the depth beneath their varied surface of narration the great central fact of the resurrection itself rests unmoved and immoveable (for this might be in merely human accounts of facts), but that every one of the four had a special object or aim in the mind of the inspiring Spirit, which is carried out unerringly in general plan and in minute detail. The objection admits the honesty of the Christian witnesses, but leaves God out of their writing, which is the essence of infidelity: the more painful, as the objector is really a believer, but with a wholly inadequate and dangerous theory of inspiration. The fact is that no man, who had the material, or knew what each evangelist had before him, would ever have written as any one of them did; and that nothing accounts for their peculiar form but God giving a testimony in perfect keeping with each Gospel, so as by them all to furnish a complete whole. Where men of God only are seen, with nothing more than such guidance of the Spirit as in ordinary preaching, or the like, what a blight such unbelief entails! Calling it inspiration only adds to the delusion. Are they God's word?

Confessedly the resurrection was that above all other things to which the apostles bore their testimony, but it is, as we have seen and might show yet more fully, neglect of the evidence to suppose that each elaborated faithfully into narrative those particular facts which came under his own eye or were reported to himself by those concerned. This is a poor and misleading a priori hypothesis. Their diversity springs not from human infirmity, but from divine wisdom.

But we turn for a few moments more to the effect of the empty tomb on those who first noticed it. And certainly one cannot speak of spiritual intelligence in Mary of Magdala; but she clung in deep affection to the Lord's person; and He was not unmindful of it. She was the first, as we shall see, to have joy in Him, and He puts honor on her. Yet, what could be less worthy of Christ than her hasty conclusion from the empty tomb! “They took away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they laid him.” She can think of Him only as under the power of death. She judges by the sight of her eyes; and to her mind as yet man has the upper hand. His assurance of resurrection had left no trace as if on the barren sand. Who can glory in man thus overwhelmed before the undiscerned yet glorious power of God which had already raised Him from among the dead? Nevertheless her heart was true to Him, and she shows it, if only now by her visit to such a scene while it was yet dark, and by her extreme agitation when she saw the stone taken away, and the body gone, from the tomb. What can she do but run with the news to break it to congenial hearts?

“Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and were coming unto the tomb. And the two were running together, and the other disciple ran forward more quickly than Peter, and came first unto the tomb, and stooping down seeth as they lay the linen clothes; nevertheless he went not in. Simon Peter therefore cometh following him, and entered into the tomb, and beholdeth the linen clothes lying, and the napkin which was upon his head, not lying with the linen clothes but folded up in a place apart. Then entered therefore also the other disciple that came first unto the tomb, and he saw and believed; for as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise from [the] dead. The disciples therefore went away again unto their own [home].” (Vers. 3-10.)

It was not John only who went forth at the tidings of Mary. Love, roused by words which sounded strange to their ears, led Peter to run along with John, with no less desire if not so fast. He had slumbered, when he ought to have watched and prayed; and, when the crisis came, he had denied his Master with no small aggravation after His solemn warning. But he was not a Judas. He loved the Lord who Himself knew that he loved Him; and therefore, notwithstanding his deep and shameful sin, his heart was moved by the news so unaccountable to him of the disappearance of the body from the tomb. So the two disciples (who were for other reasons often seen together) strove which should reach the spot soonest. Not the most distant hope of what the fact was had as yet crossed their minds; yet were they as far as possible from indifference to any circumstance which concerned even His body. That it was no longer where it had been laid, especially with such a safeguard against conceivable hazards, is enough to stir both deeply; and they are on the scene forthwith, John outrunning Peter. And as he came first to the tomb, so did he stoop down and see as they lay1 the linen clothes; yet went he not in. Peter, though less agile, went farther when he reached the place, for he went into the tomb, and inspected the linen clothes as they lay, and the napkin which was on his head, not lying with them but wrapped up in one place by itself. So reports Luke (24:12.), though not in such detail as John does, who describes not only the twofold examination on his own part, but an added feature in Peter's intent gaze, observing the peculiarity of the napkin wrapt up by

itself: the clear presumptive proof that the body had not been taken away by enemies any more than by friends; for why should either leave the linen swathes behind? Who but one arising from sleep would dispose of the habiliments in this calm and orderly fashion? It must be His own doing as He rose from among the dead, and laid aside what was unsuited to as well as needless for His new estate. For here we may contrast the very different way in which Lazarus appeared when raised by the Lord, indicative of the different character of the resurrection. Still there was no depth in the conviction Peter could not but form; for he returned home [the true rendering] wondering at what had come to pass. Wonder is in no way the expression of the intelligence which faith gives; it implies rather the distinct lack of it. It does seem surprising that such men as Bengel and Stier should follow Erasmus and Grotius in the idea that John merely went as far as Mary's idea in verse 2.

“Then entered therefore also the other disciple that came first unto the tomb, and he saw and believed.” It was faith, but founded on evidence, not on the written word. Mary's inference was upset by the indications John as well as Peter observed. His was a sound conclusion, based on a reasonable judgment of the facts observed; but this in itself is only a human deduction, however right in itself, instead of being the subjection of the heart to the testimony of God. And it is John himself who, here as elsewhere, teaches us to draw this most momentous distinction. But Peter seems, though amazed, to have taken in the import of what he observed as well as John. They both went beyond Mary of Magdala and inferred that He must have risen; not that either Joseph and Nicodemus on the one hand, nor that the Jews or Romans on the other, had taken away the Lord's body. On ground of the apparent facts, they rightly accounted for the disappearance of His body. But in neither was there that character of faith in His resurrection which springs from laying hold of God's word. The former was human, the latter divine, because in this alone is God believed which gives Him His true place and puts us in ours. Thus is the soul purged by virtue of the word, which is no less needful than cleansing by blood; and hence repentance ever accompanies faith. We could not be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, did we not know experimentally the washing of water by the word, as well as cleansing from our sins by Christ's blood.

Now it is not too much to say that, as far as the truth of resurrection, soon to be the characteristic, testimony of the apostles, John or Peter was not yet taught it of God. They did not as yet with the fact connect God's testimony in the law, the Psalms, or the prophets, nor even the plain and recent words of our Lord Jesus. So little is there of truth in Lampe's judgment that from this moment in the very darkness of the tomb the mind of John was enlightened with the saving faith of the resurrection of Jesus as with a certain new ray of the risen “Sun of Righteousness.” There is nothing in divine things beautiful which is not true; and this is not only not true, but the reversal of the truth inculcated by John himself in his inspired comment on the fact. They both believed in Christ, on the ground not of facts only, but of God's word; they neither of them believed in His resurrection beyond the seen facts that so it must be. “For as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise from [the] dead.”

We have had a fair sample of Protestant (I do not say Reformation) theology which shows their loose and human idea of faith. Romanist, and perhaps I might add Catholic, views are no better. Hence the Tridentine depreciation of faith; hence the effort to bring in love and obedience and holiness in order to justification. They feel that there must be a moral element, and their reducing faith to an intellectual reception of propositions excludes it; so that they are driven to add other things to faith in order to satisfy themselves. All this turns on the great fundamental error that the thoroughgoing Papist makes faith in the church the resting-place of his soul and the rule of faith, not the scriptures. If they carried out the error to its results, no Romanist could be saved, for he believes not God's word on God's authority, but scripture and tradition on the church's word. By his own principle he excludes faith in God, and could not truly believe unto life at all. Only through grace men may be better than their principle, as many, alas! are worse when the principle is of God. Believing scripture as God's word is of vital moment.

Facts are of high interest and real importance; and as the Israelite could point to them as the basis of his religion, to the call of Abram by God, and the deliverance of the chosen people from Egypt and through the desert and into Canaan, so can the Christian to the incomparably deeper and more enduring ones of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, with the consequent presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. But faith to have moral value, to deal with the conscience, to purify and draw out the heart, is not the pure and simple acceptance of facts on reasonable grounds, but the heart's welcoming God's testimony in His word. This tests the soul beyond all else, as spiritual intelligence consists in the growing up to Christ in an increasing perception and enjoyment of all that God's word has revealed, which separates the saint practically to Himself and His will in judgment of self and the world. He has put off the old man and put on the new, being renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him that created him. To “see and believe” therefore is wholly short of what the operation of God gives; as traditional faith or evidence answers to it now in Christendom. It is human, and leaves the conscience unpurged and the heart without communion. It may be found in him who is in no way born of God (compare John 2:23-25), but also in the believer as here: if so, it is not what the Spirit seals and it in no way delivers from present things. And this it seems to be the divine object to let us know in the account before us. Faith, to be of value and have power, rests not on sight or inference, but on scripture. And as the disciples show the most treacherous memory as to the words of the Lord till He was raised up from the dead (John 2:22), so were they insensible to the force and application of the written word: after that they believed both, they entered into abiding and enlarging blessing from above. This, as Peter tells us in his first epistle (chap. 1:6), is characteristically the faith of a Christian, who, having not seen Christ, loves Him; and on whom, though not now seeing Him but believing, he exults with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The faith that is founded on evidences may strengthen against Deism, Pantheism or Atheism, but it never gave remission of sins, never led one to cry Abba Father, never filled the heart with His grace and glory who is the object of God's everlasting satisfaction and delight.

Here also we have the further and marked testimony of its powerlessness; for we are told (ver. 10), “The disciples therefore went away again unto their own [home].” The fact was known on grounds indisputable, to their minds, but not yet appreciated in God's sight as revealed in His word, and hence they return to their old unbroken associations.

Notes on John, John 20:1-2, Notes on (20:1-2)

As no eye beheld what was deepest in the cross of Christ, so only God looked on the Lord rising from among the dead. This was as it should be. Darkness veiled Him giving Himself for us in atonement. Man saw not that infinite work in His death; yet was it not only to glorify God

thereby, but that our sins might be borne away righteously. We have seen the activity of the world, and especially of the Jew, in crucifying Him; high and low, religious and profane, all played their part; even an apostle denied Him, as another betrayed Him to the murderous priests and elders. But Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all; Jehovah bruised and put Him to grief; Jehovah made His soul an offering for sin; and as this was Godward, so was it invisible to human eyes, and God alone could rightly bear witness, by whom He would, of the eternal redemption thus obtained, which left divine love free to act even in a lost and ungodly world.

So with the resurrection of Christ. He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; God raised up Jesus whom the Jews slew and hanged on a tree; He had laid down His life that He might take it again, in three days raising the temple of His body which they destroyed. But if no man was given to see the act of His rising from the dead, it was to be testified in all the world, as well as His atoning death. Preach the gospel, said He risen, to every creature. And assuredly he who withholds His resurrection maims the glad tidings of its triumphant proof and character, and compromises the believer's liberty and introduction into the new creation, as he immensely clouds the Lord's glory; even as the denial of resurrection virtually charges God's witnesses with falsehood and makes faith vain. So the apostle insists in 1 Cor. 15. Had death held the Savior fast, all were lost; had it been only His spirit winning its way into the presence of God, it were at most a half-deliverance. His resurrection is in truth a complete deliverance, of which the Holy Spirit is to us the seal.

Hence we find it is the grand foundation truth of the gospel. To be a witness of His resurrection was the main requirement for an apostle (Acts 1); and that God had raised up Jesus whom the Jews had crucified was the truth most pressed by Peter. (Acts 2) So it was urged by him in Solomon's porch subsequently (Acts 3) and before the Jewish council once and again. (Acts 4; 5) Just so it was in preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 10); and by Paul yet more than by Peter. (Acts 13) This was what especially grieved the Sadducean chiefs (Acts 4); this is what rouses the undying scorn or opposition of unbelief all the world over. And no wonder; for if the resurrection be the spring of joy and ground of assured salvation to the believer, if it be the secret of his holy walk as the expression of the life he has in Christ risen, and the power of a living hope, it is also the measure of the real estate of man as dead in sins, and it is the present, fixed, and constant pledge that judgment hangs over the habitable earth, for God has raised from among the dead as its appointed Judge the Man whom the world slew. The resurrection therefore is as repulsive to man, as it is apt to be slighted by the fleshly mind even of Christians who seek earthly things.

As the resurrection is thus manifestly a truth of capital moment, the Spirit of God has taken care that the testimony to it should be as precise as it is full. Hence Matthew, who from the design of his Gospel omits the ascension, does not fail to bring out the proof of Christ's resurrection most clearly; and so does Mark; and. Luke with more detail than either shows us the. Lord in resurrection with all His loving interests in His own, a man as truly as ever, with flesh and bones, and capable of eating with them, but risen. John as usual presents the conscious Son of God, the Word mane flesh, but now in resurrection. Here the proofs are characteristically inward and personal, where the others, as fittingly present what was outward but no less necessary.

As a bulwark against philosophic skepticism the resurrection stands firm and impregnable. For it resists and refutes unanswerably the sophistry which ignores God and reduces the idea of causes to an invariable antecedence of constantly observed phenomena as in sequence: a theory quietly assumed and diligently instilled so as to set aside the very possibility of divine intervention whether in grace or judgment, in miracles or prophecy, or any relationship beyond nature with God. With God did I say? Why, according to this system logically carried out, He is and must be unknown; and if unknown, who can tell if He exist? or if all do not end in a mere deification of nature? Now the resurrection of Christ rests, as has been often shown, on far fuller evidence and surer and better grounds than any event in history, and this because it was sifted at the time by friends and foes as nothing else ever was, and because God Himself gave a multiplicity of testimony proportioned to its incalculable moment not to us merely but to His own glory; and as a fact without argumentation it overthrows of itself and instantly every opposition to the truth of science or knowledge falsely so called. For it would be the depth of absurdity to suppose that the death of Jesus was the cause of His resurrection. What then was its cause? Of what antecedent was it the sequence? If anything points to the power of God, it is resurrection no less than creation.

The truth is that the effort to reduce cause and effect to a mere antecedent and consequent springs from the desire to get rid of God altogether; for cause really implies will, design and power in activity, though we must distinguish between the causa causans and the causae causatae. These causes are in nature by God's constitution, but He lives, wills, acts; and the resurrection of Christ stands in the midst of this world's history to judge all unbelief, viewed now as a simple fact and fully proved. We may see its consequences as far as our chapter presents them later on. The Lord had distinctly and often spoken of His death and resurrection during His life. He had died and was buried; and here we learn that no power or precaution prevailed against His word. The grave had lost its inmate; and this was all Mary's heart took in-the loss of the dead body of the Lord. Deplorable forgetfulness, but of a heart absorbed in that one sad treasure here below, and it was gone!

Thus even here the proof was in the wisdom of God gradual, and the growth of the apostles themselves slow in the truth. There was afforded the most evident demonstration that, as the power in itself was of Him only and immediately, above the entire course of nature and human experience, so those who were afterward its most competent, strenuous and suffering witnesses only yielded to its certainty by such degrees as let us see that no men were more surprised than the apostles. Even the enemies of the Lord had an undefined dread or uneasiness, which led to Pilate's allowance of, a military guard with the seal of the great stone to make the sepulcher sure; not a disciple, so far as we know, looked for His rising.

Nevertheless Christ did rise the third day according to the scriptures. In this very thing, the teaching of God's word, were the disciples weak; not the uninstructed Magdalene only, but all; as we shall see, senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken quick to forget the plain words in which the Lord Himself repeatedly announced not only His death but His resurrection on the third day.

Accordingly the opening verses have for their object to show us how the truth first began to dawn on any heart. Not only was there no collusion in feigning the resurrection of their Master, there was not so much as a hopeful anticipation in a single heart of which one can speak. The gloom of the cross had shrouded every heart; the fear of man pressed on the men yet more than on the women. Even where the fact should have been patent, she who saw the fact misunderstood its import and was more distressed than ever.

“Now on the first [day] of the week Mary of Magdala cometh early while it was yet dark unto the tomb and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. She runneth therefore and cometh unto Simon Peter and unto the other disciple whom Jesus dearly loved, and saith to them, They

have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.” (Vers. 1, 2.)

Mary of Magdala seems to be alone on the first day; certainly, if other women were with or near her, as other testimonies may imply (not to speak of the plural form here “we know,” which may be merely general), she alone attracts the notice of the Spirit of God in portraying a heart, first attracted irresistibly to a scene so overwhelming and withal sacred by her love to Him whose body had been laid in the tomb; then at length met and blessed by the Lord when the best resources among the saints had failed, as will come before us in due time.

Before His death Mary, the sister of Lazarus, had anointed the Lord, His head and His feet, out of the fullness of her affection which lavished what she had most precious on Him, just at that time when she instinctively felt danger impending, and hears, in answer to heartless indifference only thence hurrying on to the deadliest ungodliness, the vindication of His love which gave a meaning to her act beyond her thoughts-O how satisfying to her heart till with Himself! It was a deep and true affection met by the affection of Jesus not perfect only but divine.

And here too it was not in vain that Mary of Magdala was drawn thus early, dark as it was, to the grave, the empty grave, of Jesus. She had been there, though not alone, after sabbath had closed when it was growing dark (not “dawning,” though the word applies to either) toward the first day of the week, for this is the true meaning of Matt. 28, with which compare Mark 16; as Luke 23:54 shows they had been on the preceding evening when Friday was closing and sabbath was drawing on.

It is remarkable that this Mary runs to tell the fact of the stone's removal, and what she inferred as to the Lord's body, not to John only, but to Peter also. The latter had notoriously and grievously dishonored the Lord just before His death; but doubtless his repentance was well known to the saints at least. Still there is the record of her unhesitating appeal. Mary's heart judged who among the disciples would most heartily answer to the anxious inquiry which filled her own soul. And assuredly it was not lack of love but of self-judgment which had exposed that ardent disciple to deny his Master: on the contrary it was confidence in his own love for Him with utter ignorance of himself, and without due dependence on God, in the face of a hostile world with the shadow of death before his eyes, And the Master in the next chapter manifests His own grace toward His servant to the utmost, even while laying bare the sinful root which had betrayed him to such shameful failure. In fact Mary was far more justified in reckoning on the sympathy of Peter and John in that which troubled her, than in the ignorance which concluded that men had carried off the Lord's body on the resurrection-day. Even the warmest love cannot without the word conceive a right thought of Him who died for us. Her notion was wholly unworthy of Christ or of God's care for Him; but unbelief in the saint is no better than in the sinner, and the very strength of her love to the Lord only brings out the more into evidence how faith is needed in order to rightly understand in divine things.

Bible Treasury: Volume N11, Jesus the Son of God (1:29-43)

The great truth that underlies the Gospel of John is the Godhead of that Man who was thus walking on the earth. I do not mean merely in its explicit statement of Him, but in that which implies it constantly, as is ever more wonderful to him that attentively weighs the word of God. Thus His divine glory comes out in the most indirect ways and unexpected forms; hence souls grow in strength by that infinite display of love—Jesus nowhere more truly God than when a man. He was indeed a man: but this was little or nothing in itself, unless He were God. Then what a truth and what a love! What humiliation on His part! What infinite blessing to man, at least to the souls who believe! The Word was made flesh, but He was the true God; and hence it is that we find, whenever He speaks or acts, by wherever the Spirit of God traces Him, Godhead is there behind the veil.

John the Baptist's testimony here has quite a different character in itself and another effect on the soul from what we find in the other Gospels. Where else does he treat of Him as the Lamb of God? The Messiah, the coming King, the perfect Servant engaged in the work of God, the woman's Seed and Son of man—these we do find elsewhere; but here we have Him as the Lamb of God in a far more comprehensive relation than with the old and favored people. He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Thus it is that He is presented in a universality of blessing through His work that could not be in any one but a divine person. Certain it is that He is shown here habitually in this character. “This is the Son of God.”

Hence it is that in the Gospel of John it is not a question of the dispensations that disappear or succeed one another, but of what is vital and unchanging because divine. Hence, too, therefore, it is when dispensations have passed away that the full meaning of such a word as this is realized. It is not particularly now, nor in the age that follows, but in the eternal state, that it will be manifest that He is the Lamb of God who taketh away (not our sins as believers but) sin in its totality. We know how it is usually quoted for a sense altogether different. It is not really to meet that which we are found in and forgiven by faith in His blood, but when the world shall be clean rid of it all. Sin will be banished wholly from the universe. What a testimony to His glory, who by His work effects it all! I refer to this prevalent error the more plainly and pointedly, because souls may be suffering under the influence of this too common confusion in things which so materially differ. It is not a question of the saint on earth in whom the Spirit of God dwells. The error helps on the delusion of Satan, not alas! outside, but in Christendom. There is the subtlest snare for man. It is Babylon.

What is Babylon? Is it not the cage of every unclean bird and beast? What havoc is not there, particularly of the truth? God has been most of all dishonored there. It may be, as in the present case, by only one letter, but that makes all the difference between truth and error. All Christendom then says or sings, Christ is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. How blinding is worldly religion!

Can we not now register our growth in the truth by the words we used to say ignorantly, but dare not repeat now at all? They are positively false. Indeed I know scarcely a more injurious error than this if logically carried out. Christ is “the Lamb of God which takes away the sin,” not the sins, “of the world.” One is a blessed truth, the other is a mistake with the gravest consequences. It is to enfeeble or destroy the peace of the believer, and to pillow unbelievers with hopes that work ruin to themselves, with dishonor to God and His Christ.

Nor do I believe that any bodies in Christendom have contributed to this error so much as those who boast of their liturgies. Remission of sins for faith is an integral part of the gospel, which supposes that the sins of unbelievers, far from being taken away or forgiven, will be the more sternly judged because of unbelief in Christ.

But this verse, misinterpreted as we have seen, has helped on the errors of Christendom from sub-apostolic days. It was among the delusions which gave impulse to the departure that undermined the gospel of God; nor am I aware of a single Protestant Confession which has cleared itself from perpetuating this error, though they differ widely enough otherwise.

The dissenters too, who stand for extemporaneous prayer, are no better. If you went into a place where there is no prayer-book, you would find the self-same doctrine, and the same misuse of this very Scripture. So engrained is the error that, if you stated the truth, they would affirm that it was a distinction without a difference. Thus everywhere the truth of God is entirely set aside for tradition, which is man's thought, and subversive always of God's truth.

The only party that succeeds in a compromise is Satan's synagogue. Where souls in the forms of prayer are habitually fed with such an error as this, it is vain for the pulpit to assert the truth opposed. The heart prefers error to truth, for the truth exalts God and humbles man. And Satan is striving to lower the person of Christ, to Whom that word testifies. Hence it is, no matter what you take up, though it were a “Life of Christ,” the uniform tendency is to dishonor Him, and in the same proportion to blot out the real difference between believers and unbelievers in relation to Him. There may be every kind of reverent language and pious desires, but it will never suffice for God without the truth, that is, Christ. Error puts all down on the same level, but this gives, in vain, everything to the world, as it takes away every distinctive blessing from the believer. They humanize Christ and they deify man as he is.

How full and refreshing the testimony of God—Christ as His Lamb taking away the sin of the world in due time; the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost (vers. 29, 33)! They are the two works of the Lord Jesus, in the words of John the Baptist—His great earthly and His great heavenly work. We must not confound the bearing of our sins in His own body on the tree with taking away the sin of the world, as He will, for the new heavens and the new earth. When it is a question of sin-bearing, it is “our” sins (1 Peter 2); when it is a question of taking away, it is the world's sin. This is the ultimate effect of His work. The Spirit looks onward by John in the full sense of what Christ was eventually to accomplish, an immense work in connection with His divine glory. He “appeared for the putting away of sin” by the sacrifice of Himself. Heb. 9 speaks of His purpose to put sin away. It is not the time when it was to be done, but the end for which He appeared. The work was effected on the cross; but the full results of the cross are not yet manifested.

John bare record with another declaration—that he knew Him not. It was not to be in anything human. Of course the heavenly work needed a divine person. It is even more distinct, for who could give the Spirit thus? None but God could take away the sin of the world; and John knew Him not, though he came baptizing in view of His manifestation to Israel. So also now there is an equally great heavenly work which He wrought at Pentecost, the effect of which still goes on. He Himself never was to be baptized by the Holy Ghost, which signifies the bringing entirely out of one position into another.

Quite another thing is said of Him. “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.” We are said to receive the Holy Spirit of God, and to be “sealed unto the day of redemption.” A believer is sealed now by the Spirit; an unbeliever at all times needs to be quickened. Were the unbeliever sealed, it would be woe to him; it would fix him (if it could be) in his state of ruin. “In whom after that ye believed ye were sealed.” It is not a question of what the interval may be. It might be long or short. But no man is sealed the very instant he believes. First, there is the Spirit of God bringing him to judge himself and his sins before God. Thus is the soul born of God; he believes the gospel and finds peace. Men were cleansed by the word, or born of the Spirit, before the gospel. In reality it is the word by the quickening energy of the Spirit revealing Christ that effects this. The word brings home God's judgment of sins now, instead of by and by. Hence it is mischievous to date a soul's conversion or quickening from the day when it receives peace or is made happy.

It is of the deepest consequence to bring souls to repentance, as much really as to bring them into peace. People talk often of having peace with God long before they know what it means. They may have joy before. There may be a bright revelation to the soul through Christ which they are apt to call peace; but for solid peace the soul must have found its all in the work of Christ, entering by faith into God's mind about itself and Him. Consequently it can rest only in that full redemption of the Lord Jesus. Then the Holy Ghost seals. There can be no sealing until Christ and His work are thus rested on. The two things are distinct-to be born of the Spirit of God, and to be sealed on the ground of Christ's redemption. When the soul has submitted to the righteousness of God, the Spirit seals it.

But our Gospel is bringing us into the truth of Christ's person, as applied to whatever the Holy Ghost traces it here. He was not baptized by the Spirit, but He baptized others by the Holy Spirit. “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit,” etc. There was an entirely special glory in our Lord's case. The Spirit was as the dove, not, as on the day of Pentecost, the rushing wind, or the tongue of fire.

Yet was Jesus man, and joined those who confessed their sins and were baptized with water. But at the very moment the heavens opened and the Father's voice was heard, and the Holy Ghost descended on Him, but no baptism of the Spirit for Him, no power needed to bring Him out of the position in which He was to a new and better one. It was as on a man that the Holy Ghost came down, on Christ without blood; no sacrifice did He need, no offering for sin, for in Him was none. Yet it is the believer that most of all confesses, what he is and what he has done, and the Holy Ghost not only descends, not only abides, as on Christ, but now baptizes believers into one body. It is divine power that puts us in entirely new associations in and with Christ. But the body is not the only great truth of God. It would be wrong to state that the baptism of the Holy Ghost effects it alone. The unity in John is very different from that of Paul. It is never the unity of the body, but that which is of Christ in us. Being thus formed by the Spirit of God, it has the character of deeper intimacy, and is rather family unity, giving communion of mind, feeling, and purpose. We have had the work of Christ on earth in respect to sin; before the work of redemption there could not be baptism of the Holy Ghost. The work must be laid as a basis which would glorify God, and is to take away the world's sin. Now this work is done, and we can be thus baptized.

But many are quite incredulous. They hold that the Old Testament saints were just as much thus baptized; only we have better knowledge and can judge of everything, and so on. This is not the only error. They are doctrines that flow from a low estimate, if not of Christ, certainly

of His work, and consequently there is no thorough judgment of sin or the world. Doubtless some would be disposed to talk of “peculiar views.” How little have such souls been exercised by the word of God? We used, when denominationalists, to have peculiar views; we are getting rid of them now through the Lord's mercy.

The testimony of His work now follows the declaration of His person. So the two disciples heard John speak, and followed Jesus. But we fail to see the force of this, unless we see who it was that gave the testimony. According to the Lord Jesus Himself, of all that are born of women, none was greater than His messenger, John the Baptist. Yet the effect of it is that the disciples leave him for Jesus. “Behold the Lamb of God” had sunk into their hearts. Now we see this blessed result: they followed Jesus.

Here comes out the glory of the person of Christ. If He had not been God, what a slight it would have been to have given up John the Baptist! John was the greatest of God's servants; but he says, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” God was there in “the man Christ Jesus.” This truth abides still, and we see it open out a little, when “Andrew findeth Simon, and he brought him to Jesus” (ver. 42).

Now I want to show that there is another truth of the highest possible importance taught in all this. God is not merely saving souls, but gathering to Jesus. Do we want to know what He is gathering for and what to? It is to Jesus. One was there, God, that was not only from the beginning, but who looked right on to the end. There may be other things to intervene, but once we find this immense landmark, what a change! Jesus is not merely a Savior but a center, and this is what the Spirit here brings before us. There is nothing else to give us both firmness and humility. It communicates a deep sense of what God has at first done, and is still doing: for we are simply recovering what God has laid down in His word. It is what has long since slipped out of mind in Christendom.

This further truth I would now press on those that are here. It is not enough to have salvation, still less to have life in Him, and forgiveness through His blood. God also gives us Christ as His one central Object for gathering together. His love to us, His glory, would not be satisfied with conferring blessings on us. He makes Christ to be the one adequate and abiding center for the saints on earth. If He had not been God, it would have been a derogation from His own honor. But as He is God equally with the Father, to own Him thus is the Father's joy. In all things the blessed Servant of God, that Man alone was God, and in Him we find the true center.

But the knowledge of Christ as the Lamb of God precedes this, as we see here. Then God puts this desire into our hearts. The Destroyer of the works of the devil, the Deliverer from sin, attracts our hearts and we go forth to Him (Compare Hebrews 13:13). No person or polity, doctrine or creed, is worthy of such a place. It is due to Christ from all that are His. It is not a question of a center by and by in heaven. Scripture shows us the value of Him now as the divinely-given center on earth. So in Matthew 18:20, He says, “Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them.” What a joy to have Him thus! We shall ever be around Him in heaven; but why defraud Him and our own souls of the privilege, not to say bounden duty, of the same principle now, and on earth? It is His holy and unquestionable will about us; and we dishonor Him if we do not gather to Him here below.

Let me refer you to other scriptures that prove the importance of it, as Matthew 12:30. “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad.” The believer is called to take his stand for and with Christ, and to make Him his one and continual center for gathering souls to. It goes far beyond the fact that one believes; “for he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth.” The first is for myself, the second is for my work; and in both respects, Christ is all. He is my Lord and Savior, He is also my center, and, in whatever way seen, He is, in all His divine perfection, the needed and the given One; and, as His own, God works that we should be gathered to Him and gather. There may be seductions and trials, and these not on one side merely, but on all sides. There may be fair appearances, efforts after union if not unity, and success may be claimed where Christ is not the center. There may be sorrow and shame where He is thus acknowledged, sometimes wrong done and sometimes a right thing in a wrong way. Mire are not to be moved on the one hand, nor to be insensible on the other. For where God's center is owned in faith it is in general a question of grace and patience, though possibly at times a question of judgment, but all these things turn in the long run to Christ's glory, and then what joy for those who wait in faith!

Thus Christ as the center for saints on earth becomes of the deepest practical moment. There may be all kinds of centers, but, whatever they be, they are rivals. Every one but Himself is repudiated by God's word, and really it would be an unworthy center for His people were we to substitute for Himself anything in the Bible—say the highest truth—His body, the church. For that very reason you would have, not only a spurious center, which has wrought infinite mischief, as we see in Catholicism, Romanism, etc.; but besides, the very narrowest of all narrow parties; you would merely have those that understand the church of God! A similar result would follow if the Lord's coming became the central object and test for gathering to. We have been speaking today of the Lord's coming, and the very souls who need most the loving gracious care of Christ are the very persons who would then be rigidly shut out, for how little is their intelligence in this or anything else!

Where Christ is held to truly as the center, it will be found that the affections freely flow towards all that He loves. If you have the true center, can it be doubted that you will find yourself with the true circumference? It is His name by faith in it which alone gathers according to God, and those who answer to it are welcome to Him, and should be to us. Hence also it appears to me quite a mistake to set forth the church or its principles as the remedy for the present distractions of God's children, but to set souls right with Christ. I have never met a Christian who simply and fully entered into the liberty of Christ without also finding out the value of Christ as the true center for saints. Let them only know Christ better and His redemption, and then follows the heart's decision to cleave to Him in every way. On the other hand, I have known many, familiarly learning the church, the Lord's coming, and other grand truths, who nevertheless remain in their old human associations. If we all owned the same person, work, and center in Christ, we should all circle in harmony around Him.

But it is, alas! far from the fact; and men cleave each to their systems, which thus, whatever they may argue, become a rivalry of Christ. Nor should one wish to hurry any soul. Those who hear and refuse Christ as a center should be left with the Lord. I have known those who seemed even spiritually-minded to turn out quite unsound in faith, so that, if you had only known, you would have thanked God for keeping such away. If then you are content with Christ as the center, gather you with Him, and He will approve it when He comes again.

But if you are not gathering with Him, what forfeits? Oh, what scattering! oh, what an utter collapse of zeal and labor! Can you deny that His word warned you? Which is the case with you? To what center are you really gathering? Have you the “open door” and Christ inside, Christ in the midst? Are you looking and laboring in the Spirit to that center? He is worthy, He alone.

But there is another passage to be noticed briefly, in Mark 9:40, “He that is not against us, is on our part.” Here it is a question of largeness of heart in what is wrought, and not of the paramount claims of Christ personally. Hence it is no longer “me” but “us” and “on our part.” “And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us, is on our part.” The danger is here of narrowness in service, not of speaking against the Son of man and the Holy Spirit. The faithful should appreciate true service wherever it is, but can only gather with Christ. We have to bear this in mind. There is such a thing as work done in the name of the Lord Jesus, which is not done within the circle that is formed round the true center. And what have we to do? Meddling as little as possible we should heartily own whatever is done in His name, but cleave to Himself as our security as well as our joy and boast.

You may see often a servant of Christ in a false position yet blessed to others largely. Do you envy it? Or would you depreciate the work done? The Lord answers to the faith in His name without the least endorsing what even we regard with deep regret. Be content yourself to keep His word and not deny His name, Do not forget the distinction between the sovereignty of Christ's grace and the Christian's fidelity to His person. I can understand an unhappy man always murmuring; but those brought into the richest blessing may well rejoice like Paul in Phil. 1. But do not confound largeness with laxity. Of all things under the sun there is, in a saint, nothing worse than looseness; but the more right we are by grace, the more we can afford to be gracious. Cleaving to Christ then, let us watch against the narrowness that is only occupied with our own things. If in Matthew we have Christ against Satan, in Mark, on the other hand, we have the place we should give to a servant, even if not with us. The Lord Jesus did not, could not, say as regards Himself what He says about His service. Compare Luke 9:5 for the one and Luke 11:23 for the other. The Gospel of Luke is pre-eminently full of great moral principles.

It is not then that we pretend to have what God does not give to all His children. But we want them to see all that Christ is to His own even on earth, as well as for them in their sins. We seek no party, and I dare say a big party is but a bigger evil. But there is only one thing which truly preserves from every snare to the glory of God, and that is Christ. Let Him then be the object of our souls. May we be kept by the Spirit in all subjection unto His blessed name.

Nor is it only that we have the divine center in Christ, in order to be thus kept from building up something that has to be taken down when He comes, but we are in the midst of dangers, and snares, and evil. How are we to be kept from these? By Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever. The same divine person provides for all the difficulties of every day. He is the light of life as well as the center for our zeal and labor. Every word of God is precious and profitable, as every scripture is inspired of Him; but we need to read Christ in it to reap the full value: and for this we may count on the Spirit of God who is here to glorify Christ.

I do not believe that the word of God, apart from Christ, ever does suffice for His purpose or our blessing. The word written is meant to associate with Christ, and not to dispense with Him. God has given us His word. So He says to Philip, “Follow me” (ver.43). He is “the way,” as well as “the truth,” and “the life.” How blessedly we have Himself set out in God's word! If a person is in difficulty and a situation opens out for him, he might think it providential, but he is required to do certain things he knows to be wrong. Is he then to follow Christ or evil? The voice of Jesus is heard, “Follow Me.” Thus in our whole path by His grace we have the same Christ that engages our affections and service. Is Christ, then your object? He is the HOLY, the TRUE; and those that hear His voice will cleave to Him. Christ who is the constant spring of blessing, is the safeguard of every saint in this world of vain show.

The Lord then, is “the way” as He expressly says of Himself in John 14, as truly as He is the attractive center; and we need Him quite as much for our way now on earth. Are we competent to pass safely through this wilderness where there is no way? Only by cleaving to Christ as “the way.” It is a great thing to work to Him, as well as from Him, and for Him; but there is no adequate, no absolute, preservation from slips and deviations on our part, or from the misleadings of others, let them be ever so wise in the main, save by following Jesus. He only is the way. We have to “beware of men"; we do well to try by the word what saints say and do, but we may, we ought to, unreservedly follow this divine and divinely given way—our Lord Jesus. It was not needed in the paradise of man unfallen; it will not be in the paradise of God, where all will be according to His will and glory in unfailing goodness, and no seducer intrude more, no weakness or lack of vigilance expose on our part. But whether we look at what is without, or bear in mind what our nature is within—we do deeply need a sure path through the world, away above its motives and maxims and habits and objects. And here we have the One God delights in, even Christ, not only as the Lamb of God, and the center, by grace and truth, for the saints, but as the way to follow through all snares and difficulties and dangers. Who that knows would fear to follow Him? May we learn to know Him better as the only way! “If any man serve me, let him follow me: and where I am there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.”

W. K.

Christian Truth: Volume 14, Lamb of God, The (1:29)

John 1:29

The great truth that underlies the Gospel of John is the Godhead of that Man who was walking on the earth. I do not mean merely in its explicit statement of Him, but in that which implies it constantly, and is ever more wonderful to him that attentively weighs the Word of God. Thus His divine glory comes out in the most indirect ways and unexpected forms; hence souls grow in strength by that infinite display of love—Jesus nowhere more truly God than when a man.

He was indeed a man; but this was little or nothing in itself, unless He were God. Then what a truth and what a love! What humiliation on His part! What infinite blessing to man, at least to the souls who believe! The Word became flesh, but He was the true God; and hence it is that we find, whenever He speaks or acts, by whatever the Spirit of God traces Him, Godhead is there behind the veil.

John the Baptist's testimony here has quite a different character in itself and another effect on the soul from what we find in the other gospels. Where else does He treat of Him as the Lamb of God? The Messiah, the coming King, the perfect Servant engaged in the work of God, the woman's Seed and Son of man-these we do find elsewhere. But here we have Him as the Lamb of God in a far more comprehensive relation than with the old and favored people. He is the Lamb of God who "taketh away the sin of the world." Thus it is that He is presented in a universality of blessing through His work that could not be in any one but a divine person. Certain it is that He is shown here habitually in this character. "This is the Son of God."

Hence it is that in the Gospel of John it is not a question of the dispensations that disappear or succeed one another, but of what is vital and unchanging because divine. Hence too, therefore, it is when dispensations have passed away that the full meaning of such a word as this is realized. It is not particularly now, nor in the age that follows, but in the eternal state, that it will be manifest that He is the Lamb of God who "taketh away" (not our sins as believers but) sin in its totality. We know how it is usually quoted for a sense altogether different. The expression does not really refer to that which we are found in and have been forgiven by faith in His blood, but to when the world shall be fully cleared of it all. Sin will be banished wholly from the universe. What a testimony to His glory, who by His work effects it all! I refer to this prevalent error the more plainly and pointedly, because souls may be suffering under the influence of this too common confusion in things which so materially differ. It is not a question of the saint on earth in whom the Spirit of God dwells. The error helps on the delusion of Satan, not alas! outside, but in Christendom. There is the subtlest snare for man. It is Babylon.

What is Babylon? Is it not the cage of every unclean bird and beast? What havoc is not there, particularly of the truth? God has been most of all dishonored there. It may be, as in the present case, by only one letter; but that makes all the difference between truth and error. Christendom says or sings, Christ is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. How blinding is worldly religion! I know scarcely a more injurious error than this if logically carried out. Christ is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin," not the sins, "of the world." One is a blessed truth, the other is a mistake with the gravest consequences. It is to enfeeble or destroy the peace of the believer, and to pillow unbelievers with hopes that work ruin to themselves, with dishonor to God and His Christ.

How full and refreshing the testimony of God-Christ as His Lamb taking away the sin of the world in due time-the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost (vv. 29, 33)! They are the two works of the Lord Jesus, in the words of John the Baptist-His great earthly and His great heavenly work. We must not confound the bearing of our sins in His own body on the tree with taking away the sin of the world, as He will, for the new heavens and the new earth. When it is a question of sin bearing, it is "our" sins (1 Pet. 2); when it is a question of taking away, it is the world's sin. This is the ultimate effect of His work. The Spirit looks onward by John in the full sense of what Christ was eventually to accomplish, an immense work in connection with His divine glory. He "appeared to put away sin" by the sacrifice of Himself. Heb. 9 speaks of His purpose to put away sin. It is not the time when it was to be done, but the end for which He appeared. The work was effected on the cross, but the full results of the cross are not yet manifested.

Notes on John, John 1:29-34, Notes on (1:29-34)

From verse 19 to 28 John the Baptist does not rise beyond what was Jewish and dispensational. The next paragraph brings before us the testimony which he rendered when he saw Jesus approaching. And here we have Christ's work viewed in all the extent of power which might be expected in the Gospel devoted to showing out the glory of His person.

“On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” (Ver. 29.) There was no image more familiar to a Jew's mind than that of the lamb. It was the daily sacrifice of Israel, morning and evening. Besides, the paschal lamb was the essence of the fundamental feast of the year; even as its first institution was co-eval with the departure of the sons of Israel from the house of bondage. We can understand therefore what thoughts and feelings must have crowded on the heart of those who looked for a Savior now, when Jesus was thus attested by His forerunner. “Behold the Lamb (ἀμνὸς) of God.” In the book of Revelation He is frequently viewed as the Lamb, but there with a pointedly different (ἀρνίον) word, the holy earth-rejected Sufferer in contrast with the ravening wild beasts civil or religious, instruments of Satan's power in the world. Here the idea seems to center in sacrifice. “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”

John does not say “that will take,” still less “that has taken;” nor do I think the notion tenable that He was then taking sin away. It is, as frequently in John and elsewhere, the abstract form of speech, and the meaning should be understood in its fullest extent.

The testimony looks onward to the effects of the death of Christ as a whole, but these were not to appear all at once. The first great result was the Gospel, the message of remission of sins to every believer. Instead of the sin of the world only being before God, the blood of the Lamb was, and God could therefore meet the world in grace, not in judgment. Not only was love come in Christ's person as during His life, but now the blood was shed whereby God could cleanse the foulest; and the gospel is God's proclamation to every creature of His readiness to receive all, and of His perfectly cleansing all who do receive Christ. In fact only the church receives Him; but the testimony is sent forth to every creature. When Christ comes in His kingdom, there will be a further result; for all creation will then be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and Israel will at length look upon the Messiah whom they pierced in their blind unbelief. The blessing resulting from the sacrifice of Christ will then be far and wide extended, but not complete. Only the new heavens and new earth (and this not in the limited scope of the Jewish prophets, but in the full meaning which the Christian apostles give the words) will behold the ultimate fulfillment, and then indeed it will be seen how truly Jesus was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. For then, and not till then, will sin have disappeared absolutely, and all its consequences. The wicked having been judged and cast forever into the lake of fire, as well as Satan and his angels, righteousness will then be the footing of God's relationship with the world, not sinlessness as at first, or dealings in Christ in view of sin as now.

Observe however that the Baptist does not say the “sins” of the world. What a fatality of error haunts men when they venture to handle the truth of God after a human sort! It is not only in sermons or books that one finds this common and grave blunder. The solemn liturgies of Romanism and Protestantism are alike wrong here. They alter and unconsciously falsify the word of God when directly referring to this

scripture. In speaking of believers both the apostles Paul and Peter show that the Lord bore away their sins upon the cross. Without this indeed there could be neither peace secured for the conscience nor a righteous basis for worshipping God, according to the efficacy of the work of Christ. The Christian is exhorted to come boldly into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, which has, at the same time, put his sins away and brought himself nigh; but this is only true of the believer. In total contrast is the state and condition of the unbeliever, of every man in nature. He is far off, in guilt, in darkness, in death. The language of the liturgies confounds all this according indeed to the practice of their worship, for the world is treated as the church, and the church as the world. Were Christ the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world, all men would stand absolved before God, and might well therefore boldly approach and worship; but it is not so. The blood is shed for the sin of the world, so that the evangelist can go forth and preach the gospel and assure all who believe of pardon from God; but all who refuse must die in their sins, and only the more terribly be judged because they refused the message of grace.

But God never forgets the personal dignity of the Lord Jesus here. Hence John the Baptist adds, “He it is of whom I said, After me cometh a man who taketh precedence of [or is preferred before] me, for he was before me.1 And I knew him not, but that he might be manifested to Israel, therefore came I baptizing with water.” (Ver. 30, 31.) There is no reference here to His Messianic judgment as in other Gospels, which on the other hand are silent as regards such a testimony as this to His glory. Undoubtedly also John did call souls in Israel to repent in view of the kingdom, as at hand; but here the one object is the manifestation of Jesus to Israel. It is the absorbing topic of the Gospel indeed. The previous unacquaintance of the Baptist with Jesus made his testimony so much the more solemn and emphatically of God; and whatever the inward conviction he had as He came for baptism, it did not hinder the external sign nor the witness he bears to His person and His work as he had borne before it.

Hence we read, “And John bore witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, he said to me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, he it is that baptizeth with [the] Holy Spirit. And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.” (Ver. 32-34.)

Such was the suited sign for the Savior. Ravens might have been employed in God's wisdom to feed the famished prophet at another dark day; but not such was the appearance of the Spirit descending from heaven to abide on Jesus. The dove only could be the proper form, emblematic of the spotless purity of Him on whom He came. Yet did He come upon Him as man, but Jesus was man without sin; as truly man as any other, but how different from all before or after! He was the second Man in bright contrast with the first. And He is the last Adam; in vain does unbelief look for a higher development, overlooking Him in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Observe, the Spirit came before His death. If Christ died, He died for others. If He suffered and became a sacrifice, it was not for Himself. Jesus needed no blood in order that He might subsequently be anointed with the holy oil. He was Himself the Holy One of God in that very nature which in every other case had dishonored God.

But if the Spirit abode on Him as man, this is He that baptizes with the Holy Spirit. None could so baptize but God. It were blasphemy to say otherwise. It is the fullest prerogative of a divine person so to act, and hence John the Baptist utterly disclaimed it, and in every Gospel points to Jesus only as the Baptizer by the Holy Ghost, as he had come baptizing with water. It is the mighty work of Jesus from heaven, as He was the Lamb of God on the cross.

Thus, though the immediate aim of John's mission with baptism attached to it was for the manifestation of Jesus to Israel, he testifies to Him as the Lamb of God in relation to the world, as eternal at whatever time He came (and surely it was the right moment, “the fullness of time,” as the great apostle assures us, Gal. 4:4), not merely as the object of the Holy Ghost's descent to abide on Him, but as baptizing with the Holy Ghost. “And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.” (Ver. 34.) Such was His personal relationship: not the Son of man who must be lifted up if we are to have eternal life, but the Lamb of God and the Son of God. On the other hand it is not here the Father declared by, or revealing Himself in, His only-begotten Son, but God in view of the broad fact of the world's sin, and Jesus His Lamb to take the sin away. So the baptism of the Holy Ghost is not quickening, but that power of the Spirit which acts on the life already possessed by the believer, separates from all that is of flesh and world, and sets in communion with God's nature and glory as revealed in Christ. He was as man on earth not Only Son of God but always conscious of it; we becoming so by faith in Him are rendered conscious of our relationship through the Holy Ghost given to us. Nevertheless even Him, as the Gospels show, the descent of the Spirit who anointed Him placed in a new position here below. All here is public announcement and reaches the world.

Notes on John, John 1:14-18, Notes on (1:14-18)

From the revelation of the Word in His own intrinsic nature, we now turn to His actual manifestation as man here below. The incarnation is brought before us, the full revelation of God to man and in man. “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, glory as of an only begotten with a father), full of grace and truth.” Here it is not what the Word was, but what He became. He was God, He became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. (Ver. 14.)

It was no transient vision, however momentous, as on the holy mount. It was a contemplation of His glory vouchsafed to His witnesses, not of an earthly conqueror, nor Messianic even, but glory as of an only begotten with a father. No sword girds His thigh, no riding to victory, no terrible things in righteousness: the incarnate Word dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Such is He that was from the beginning, and thus was He known. He was the King undoubtedly, but not so portrayed here. He is infinitely more than King, even God, but God on earth, a man dwelling among men, full of grace and truth. So only could God be displayed, unless in judgment which had left no hope but only destroyed to the bitter end at once and unreservedly. For infinitely different purposes had He come, as this passage itself declares in due season, perfectly knowing and feeling the universal evil of man. He dwelt among us full of grace and truth. So He manifests God, who is love. But grace is more; it is love in the midst of evil, rising above it, going down under it, overcoming it with good; and such was Jesus, full of truth withal, for otherwise grace was no more grace, but a base imitation and most ruinous both for God and to man. Not such was Jesus, but full of grace and truth, and in this order too: for grace brings in the truth and enables souls to receive truth and to bear it, themselves as sinners judged by it; He and He only was full of grace and truth. To make it known, to make God Himself thus known, He came; for, as grace is the activity of divine love in the midst of evil, so truth is the revelation of all things as they really are, from God Himself and His ways and counsels down to

man, and every thought and feeling as well as word and work of man, yea, of every invisible agency for good or evil throughout all time, yea, throughout all eternity. So He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Nor did God fail to render testimony to Him thus. “John witnesseth about him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spoke, he that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me.” (Ver. 15.) Most strikingly is John introduced with his testimony to each or the great divisions of the chapter. Before it was to the abstract revelation of the light. Here it is to his actual presentation to the world, and as it is historical, so we have what John cries, not merely a description as before. He says “this was he of whom I spoke.” The coming of Jesus after John was no derogation from His glory, but for the contrary. No greater prophet had arisen than John the Baptist among those born of women. But Jesus is God. If He was pleased therefore to come after John in time, He was proved incomparably before him in title; nay, He was really before him, but this only because He was divine.

The last verse appears to be a parenthesis, however full of instruction. But the direct line of truth runs, “full of grace and truth; and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” (Ver. 16.) An astonishing truth! He is the gift and the giver—full of grace and truth, and of His fullness have all we received. Such is the portion of the least believer. The strongest is only the strongest, because he better appreciates Him. For there is no blessing outside Him and consequently no lack for the soul that possesses Jesus. If the Colossian saints, if any others seek to add any other thing to Jesus, it is a real loss, not gain. It is but to add what detracts from Jesus.

The expression “grace for grace” has perplexed many, but without much reason, for an analogous phrase occurs, even in profane authors not unfrequently, which ought to satisfy any enquirer that it simply means grace upon grace, one succeeding to another without stint or failure—superabundance of grace, and not a mere literal notion of grace in us answering to grace in Him. It will be noticed further, that scripture speaks of grace (or upon) grace, not truth upon truth, which last would be wholly unsuitable, for the truth is one, and cannot be so spoken of. The same apostle wrote even to the babes, not because they did not know the truth, but because they do know it, and that no lie is of the truth. The unction, which they have received from Him, teaches them as to all things, and is true, and is not a lie. But as grace brings the truth, so the truth exercises in grace. How blessed that of His fullness have all we received and grace for grace!

Wholly different was seen at Sinai, for the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (Ver. 17.) Not that the law is sin. Far be the thought. It is holy; and the commandment holy and just and good. But it is altogether impotent to deliver man or to reveal God. It has neither life to give, nor object to make known. It requires from man what he ought to render both to God and to his fellows; but in vain is it required from man already a sinner before the law was given, for sin entered the world through Adam no less surely than the law was given by Moses. Man fell and was lost, none could bring eternal life but Jesus Christ the Lord. And this was wholly unavailable to man without His death in expiation of sin. Here however we have not yet reached the work of Christ, nor the message of grace that goes out to the world grounded on it in the gospel, but His person in the world, and to this the testimony is “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” There and there only was the divine love superior to man's evil; there and there only was everything revealed and in its due relation to God. Truly Jesus is a divine Savior.

But there is yet more than this. God Himself must be known, not merely fullness of blessing come in Christ or souls be brought into the blessing by redemption. Yet man as such is incapable of knowing God. How is this difficulty to be solved? “No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father—he hath declared [him].” (Ver. 18.) Thus only can God be known as He is, for Christ is the truth—the revealer and revelation of God, as of everything in God's sight. Nowhere does scripture say with rationalists and, I regret to add, with theologians, that God is the truth. Not so: God is the I am, the self-subsisting One; He is love, He is light. But Christ is the truth objectively, as the Spirit is in power, working in man. And Christ has declared God, as One, who as the Son is in the bosom of the Father, not who was as if He had left it, as He left the glory and is now gone back into glory as man. He never left the Father's bosom. It is His constant place, and a peculiar mode of acquaintance with God. Hence we by the Holy Ghost are in grace privileged to know God, even as the Son declared Him, who perfectly, infinitely, enjoyed love in that relationship from everlasting and to everlasting. Into what a circle of divine association does He not introduce us! It is not the Light of men, nor yet the Word acting or becoming flesh, but the only-begotten Son who is in the Father's bosom declaring God according to His own competency of nature and the fullness of His own intimacy with the Father. Even John Baptist as having his origin in the earth was of the earth and spoke of it. Jesus alone of men could be said to come out of heaven and above all, testifying what He had seen and heard. It was His to declare God, and this in His own proper relationship.

The Spirit of God, Spirit of God, The: Part 5 (1:29-33)

In Gal. 5:17, correctly translated, we read “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.” Our version runs, “So that ye cannot do the things that ye would"; but this is quite wrong. What the word of God, properly rendered, says is good and true, “That ye do not the things that ye would.” The Holy Ghost is given to the believer, and the action of the Spirit is directly contrary to the flesh, as the flesh is contrary to the Spirit. “Lo, I come,” said Christ—who indeed was the only one that could say it unwaveringly— “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God “; but we are responsible, being set apart for the purpose—sanctified unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that we are merely to obey and that the blood of Christ repairs our disobedience. The meaning is that we are sanctified to the same kind of obedience as Christ, whose blood gives us confidence that our sins are by grace forgiven.

The allusion in 1 Peter 1:2 is to what took place at mount Sinai, when blood was sprinkled on the people, and they said, “All that the Lord hath said will we do.” But they did not. They were disobedient; and the blood witnessed that they must die the death because of their disobedience. We start with the precious blood of Christ, while at the same time we are called to obey as Christ did; and what comes in to meet our delinquencies is confession of our sins, or the washing of water by the word. This is the meaning of the washing of the disciples' feet by the Lord Jesus before He went to heaven. It was to show His own here the work He is gone to heaven to do for them. Peter at first refused to let his feet he washed; and then, when corrected, asked that his whole body should be washed; but he was wrong in both respects. He did not know, if one be already washed with the washing of regeneration, that no more is wanted for the removal of subsequent faults than to have his feet washed. In other words, the particular evil that may be contracted in walking through the world requires to be removed. “He

that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet.” If at first wholly washed, as every believer is, he needs only partial cleansing, in other words the washing of his feet, when he subsequently does wrong. Peter did not lose the benefit of being born of water and the Spirit when he afterward sinned grievously. If not a true saint he would have gone and hanged himself, like Judas. Therefore the very thing the Lord prayed for was that his faith should not fail. Judas, in the despair of his heart, went and perished miserably. Peter did not, although he committed a great sin, because the Lord prayed for him, and afterward indeed took particular notice of him— “Tell the disciples and Peter” — the only one mentioned, and why? Because he was the one that most needed it. How gracious is the Lord! How full of tender mercy! He is the spring, the unfailing giver of all grace. Once in Him all your sins are gone, and yourself brought nigh as alive to God. This is the true place of every believer. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For 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; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

You observe two reasons are given why there is no condemnation. The first is, that Christ gives a life which God cannot condemn; whilst the second is, that God has already condemned (not merely the sins, but) the sin that gave them birth. The whole of our evil is already condemned in the cross of Christ—the wondrous Christ of God. These are the two grounds why there is no condemnation. And the effect is that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Not in any Jew, but in every Christian; for every Christian loves God and loves his neighbor, and these are the two great moral aims of the law. How can a Christian not love God, who first loved him? And does not the Christian love his neighbor? Does he not go forth every day of his life to serve not only his neighbor and friend, but even his enemy? This is what the Christian is called to; and this is what every real Christian does, although not so fully as he ought, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Just so far as a Christian walks in the Spirit is the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him. It is a remarkable fact that the people who were under the law never kept it, and that those who are not under the law are the only people that do keep it, and this because of the delivering power that God has brought in through Christ.

Let me here recall to your notice the constant danger of a soul that has been awakened, to mix up the work of the Spirit with that of Christ. It is always on the look out for fruits. As you are, you had better say nothing about fruits yet. If you seek to find fruits before you enter into peace with God, you never can find peace. No man ever found peace with God by looking within himself; and God never meant any to find peace save by turning to Christ. Do you not hear Him saying, “Having made peace by the blood of His cross?” This is not within but without you. It is something wrought for you by Christ, and Christ alone: and the quickening of the Spirit is not to furnish ground for peace within you, but to prove that you are nothing but a poor guilty sinner, thus forcing you out of yourself to rest on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The tendency of the anxious soul is to look within, for confirmatory marks of the Spirit. But so long as he does not rest on the work of Christ, he never can have peace.

For saints there is another danger. When you have peace, beware of separating, as is too often done, the Spirit from Christ. Men say you need the Spirit of God to sanctify you. Rather you need the Spirit of God constantly to direct your eyes toward Christ. There are these two dangers then: one for a man who is just awakened; the other for him who has found peace with God. The saint cannot go in safety unless he has the Spirit of God fixing the eyes of his heart on the Lord Jesus. This is the point the apostle refers to at the close of chap. 3 in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

But I would say a few words on a preceding verse. “Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"; and I will show you how difficult it is—not in reality, but in appearance—either to understand the Scriptures, or to give them even a right outward form. People often think that if you have “spirit,” or any other word in a verse more than once, it must always bear the same meaning. Here this is not the case. “The Lord is that spirit.” How should “spirit” be printed? I answer unhesitatingly, with a small “s.” “Now the Lord is that spirit.” The “Spirit” would be downright heterodoxy. Who would tolerate such a notion as that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Ghost? One can understand how in the “Shepherd of Hermas” (a most offensive little treatise, and really heretical, which in the second or third century used to be read in public worship) there occurs a confusion and worse between the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost; but this no where is or can be in Scripture.

The fact is, that the meaning of the verse is connected with what was quoted before. The apostle was contrasting the old covenant with the new, and he says, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Christ, under the letter of the old, quickens; the letter of the old without Christ does not. “Now,” says he, “the Lord is the spirit,” i.e., of the old. The letter cannot quicken, but the spirit does. It is the Lord that is meant by the Passover, Red Sea, Manna, etc., as also by the burnt, meat, peace, and sin offerings; and so one might go through all the letter of the law. “The Lord is the spirit “; and this is the reason why I should print “spirit” with a small letter, though it is not so in my book. It may be different in your Bibles. But if not, you must remember the copyists were not inspired, any more than the printers, translators, or critical editors. The question is the bearing of the truth of God; and I affirm that the doctrine which confounds the Lord Jesus with the Spirit is not true. Is it not impossible, therefore, to print “spirit” in that verse with a capital “S” consistently with truth? For this would identify the second person of the Trinity with the third, which is wholly untrue.

But the moment you come to the next clause, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is,” you must have a capital “S,” because the Holy Ghost is meant. The Lord has gone on high, but the Holy Ghost is sent down below; and He it is who now seals the believer, bringing him into liberty in Christ. Thus what the apostle first lays down as a principle is that the spirit of the old forms of the law always pointed to the Lord Jesus. “The Lord is the spirit.” Then besides this, the Spirit of the Lord is now come down from heaven to anoint the believer, and seal him in virtue of redemption.

Not a few passages might be quoted bearing on the same point. I might go through almost the whole of the epistle with the same result, each having its own special bearing, and all perfectly-harmonious; but this is scarce necessary.

What I want is to lay before your souls the truth of God as to this the great Christian privilege. Have you not only Christ for your life, but the consciousness that your body is the temple of God? I know there are many who would think this a most extraordinary thing to claim. Let me tell you that— “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his"; he does not belong to the Lord as a Christian unless he be sealed. He may be quickened, born of God, and converted. But the proper power, the true distinctive mark, of a Christian is that he is sealed with the Spirit; and the sealing of the Spirit comes in answer to the redemption of Christ Jesus.

Wake up then, wake up, beloved children of God, to your great privileges! Those who are ignorant of the gospel may call you presumptuous. In truth you can never worship or serve God as you ought, if you do not enjoy your proper privileges. You need to do so in order to be at home with God, to gain confidence in His love, and glorify Him. The spring of all power to perform duty depends on the simplicity with which your soul enters into your relationship with Christ. Even in common life relationship affects as it should govern all our actions. The duty of a servant is quite different from that of a master; and a similar rule holds good in all our social relationships. There is a walk, and a worship too, belonging to the children of God, and to none else. You cannot mix men of the world with those that are of God without dishonoring Him. Indeed the effect of such a union is ruin practically to the souls of both; because, as the child of God cannot raise up the worldly to his own level, he must come down to the level more or less of the worldly man; and this is why in many of the liturgies they mingle both in an offensive alliance that suits neither, with language of a wholly inconsistent kind. A Christian is not getting forward with God who tries to please both world and church; if he follows God's way, all will go well with him. We are members of the family of God—heirs of God with Jesus Christ. Even on earth the family life is the highest type of bliss for man. And God has a family, in whose well-being He takes special delight. Suppose a person were to go into a household, and, pretending himself a friend of the children, should put it into their heads that possibly the chief of the house was not their father, you would say, “What a villain he is, to try and spoil all the peace of that family!” And if this would be bad in your families, to play a like part is a great deal worse in God's family. It is as insulting to God as it is injurious to His children; and though people may do what they like with God for a while, the day is coming when they will have to own their folly and sin.

I beseech you, therefore, to be faithful to the Lord. Let me urge on you, in the name of the Lord Jesus to search and see whether these things are so. If you are not children of God, the door is open, the way is clear, the Savior is waiting. If you simply come as poor sinners, the Lord will in no wise cast you out. But come as sinners in the sense of your sheer need, in the confidence of His grace. Do not come as if there were a doubt that had to be cleared whether you could succeed or not; and the Savior will meet and serve you at once. When the Syro-Phoenician woman came, she spoke as a Jew. She cried, “Son of David.” What right had she to say, “Son of David, have mercy on me"? No more right than a Frenchman has to repair to an English consul and ask his assistance; let him go to the French consul. The Son of David was for Jews. When the two blind men so appealed in Matt. 9, had they to wait for an answer of peace, when they confessed their faith? When two more at the end made the same call near Jericho, did the gracious One rebuke, or reply in grace? The woman of Canaan was wrong—somewhat as worldly people when they say, “Our Father, who art in heaven"; for He is not their Father at all, but will judge them by the Lord Jesus. But if a person comes and says, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” will He then say them nay? The Lord would not at first answer the woman's prayer, because she went on mistaken ground. And when the disciples would have done with the case, ashamed of her crying after them, He had to correct their impatience with His maintenance of God's order: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then she said, “Lord, help me!” When she dropt to this, the Lord answered her, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. The moment she hears it, the truth flashes on her soul that she was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but a dog. She sinks to the lowest place, and says, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” She took the place of truth, and got the blessing of grace. The lack of this keeps many souls from obtaining the blessing. They are unconsciously in a false position. They assume to be worshippers when they should not. If they confessed themselves poor sinners needing to be saved, they would find the Savior at once. If you can and do say, Abba, Father, he assured you have the Holy Ghost; and if not progressing in the Christian race, see and judge what hinders you, and if you are not grieving the Holy Ghost; search the word of God, and follow Christ! Amen.

W. K.

(Concluded from page 103)

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The Spirit of God, Spirit of God, The: Part 4 (1:29-33)

But there is another blessed work that John refers to here in the verses we have read, and what is that? “The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” Yet the Lord Jesus never baptized with the Holy Ghost till He went to heaven. It is from heaven that He does so, and this is clearly brought before us in the Acts of the Apostles, to which you can now refer. You may see it for yourselves clearly promised for the last time in chap. 1:4, 5, “And being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which [saith he] ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Do not suppose that this was confined to the apostles, or to those who were Christ's immediate disciples. The apostles were prominently before His mind, but not exclusively.

Accordingly in the next chapter we find that, when they were all with one accord in one place, suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, which filled all the house. Just as the wind did then fill the house, so the Holy Ghost came to constitute them God's house. Cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them. There was the personal as well as the general presence of the Spirit of God. He did not appear like a dove, but like cloven tongues of fire. He came like a dove on the Lord Jesus; for the Lord Jesus had no sin: not a taint of evil was in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a perfect man—, not even knowing sin; and, that this might be, He was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

If He had been born in a natural way, He must have had sin; but the power of the Highest counteracted this, so that He should be born of woman, yet “A body hast thou prepared me” without sin. This wonderful truth was set forth in the peace offering, where the flour was mingled with oil, without leaven, which represents the corruption of our nature. But there was no leaven in the meat-offering. Oil, the constant symbol of the Holy Ghost, was mingled with the flour to make the cake, and, when the cake was made, oil was poured upon it. This was admirably fulfilled in our Lord Jesus. First, the Holy Ghost came upon the virgin, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her; and next, when He was about thirty years of age, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him without blood, because He was without sin. And God the Holy Ghost comes down on us.

But see how strikingly our case resembles, and yet is differentiated from, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are of a sinful nature, but born of the Spirit. There is by the word of God the action of the Holy Ghost: we are born of water and of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost does not come on us until we rest on Christ's redemption. The problem was, How could the Holy Ghost come and dwell in what was unclean? Now the efficacy of the blood of Christ is to make us perfectly clean in the sight of God. This is what redemption does. The precious blood of Christ “cleanseth us,” it is said in Scripture, “from all sin.” Do you believe it? Do you really bow to what God declares, that “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin"? We see the reason why the Holy Ghost was never before given to a sinful man. I do not say He never operated on such; on the contrary He did so in every believer since Abel. But He never was given, never sealed a believer, till the blood of Christ left him without spot or stain. There is the Spirit of God quickening the soul when a man is a sinner; and there is the Spirit of God now sealing him, when he, a believer, rests on the work of Christ. So our Lord Jesus told the disciples that they were to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. They were already quickened, being for years true believers, but they were not yet baptized in the Holy Ghost. But now He goes up to heaven to send down the Holy Ghost; and this is most distinctly shown in the second chapter of Acts, vers. 32, 33, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

The Holy Ghost was given to Christ twice—for Himself while He was upon the earth, for us when He went to heaven: and this is the reason why the Holy Ghost never leaves the church, because He is given to the church in virtue of Christ, and not because of our good behavior. The Holy Ghost is given to Him, and it is through Him and because of Him that the Holy Ghost always abides. If the Holy Ghost were to leave the church, it would be as good as saying that Christ was no longer worthy of the Holy Ghost abiding. God could not say so; and this is what makes the Holy Ghost so precious. And so the Lord told them in the fourteenth chapter of John, “He shall abide with you forever” (ver. 16).

To be sure there are people who do not believe this. I do not know whether it is the case now, but some forty years ago it used to be a regular practice for known evangelical men to put forth a little document every year calling for united prayer that the Holy Spirit should be shed forth again on the church—that we should have a fresh effusion of the Spirit of God. Is not this a very serious thing? Suppose that people were to begin to pray at the end of the year that Christ should die again! Everybody would look aghast, thinking it a denial of the faith. But is it less really preposterous, is it not equally unbelieving, to pray for the Holy Ghost to be given again? He is shed, and being shed, He abides forever.

Do you tell me, that the Spirit is to be shed again in this world's history? I grant it; but this will be for Israel, and for the Gentiles when Israel believes, as it is beautifully shown in the High Priest going into the sanctuary and coming out. Perhaps you recollect that the hells which were on the vestments of the High Priest gave forth a sound when he went into the most holy place, and when he came out. The hells ringing when he went in would answer to the gift of the Spirit of God to us, the church, when our Lord went up on high; and the bells ringing when he came out, to the fresh testimony of the Holy Spirit when Israel shall be brought in. But there is no such doctrine as the Holy Ghost shed repeatedly for the church. When He was sent down, He was given to abide with us forever. I am aware of all the darkness in the middle ages—of the revived superstition and the fresh and abounding rationalism in the present age; nevertheless, the Holy Ghost abides. Yet I do say that the Holy Ghost abides, because Christ said it, after He obtained eternal redemption, as it was because of this that He went up into heaven itself. It was not a temporary redemption, like that of the Jews, who were taken out of Egypt, but might be carried off to Babylon. It is otherwise with the church of God. The Lord Jesus brought in eternal redemption, and the consequence is that the Holy Ghost comes down and abides forever.

So far our Lord's case differs, on Whom the Spirit came down like a dove, because there was a perfect absence of evil; no question of the smallest sin or taint, or anything to indicate corruption in our Lord. This could not be said about us, and therefore did the Holy Ghost descend in the form which He assumed for the disciples, “like as of fire.” Fire always marks the judgment of God. The Holy Ghost could not have come upon the disciples if there had not been God's judgment dealing with their sin in the work of Christ. But there was more than this. There appeared cloven tongues, because it was to be a question of testimony. Not so in Christ's case; for He is the One testified of. We are called to be witnesses of Him. We know but are not the truth; He only and emphatically is the truth to be witnessed to. Cloven tongues formed a beautiful emblem of the power of the Holy Ghost put forth in making believers witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ. Cloven tongues—no longer one language as of Canaan, but more, every tongue of every nation under heaven—point not to Jew only but to Gentile, so that the expressiveness of the symbol seems unmistakable.

Such then is the fact: let us now enter a little into the doctrine. Notice, first, that the Spirit of God, and we are speaking of the gift of the Spirit, is never mentioned until a man has already believed. Always bear this in mind. The new birth makes a man a believer; the gift of the Spirit comes when he is a believer. The gift of the Spirit brings him into liberty—not into life. The truth of Christ brings him life, and the Spirit of God takes His part in quickening; but the Holy Ghost is given to him already a believer; and this seals him in perfect liberty. For this reason you will observe that in the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans we have the sinner looking to Christ and His blood, and not one word about the Holy Ghost yet, because the idea is to present Christ, not to distract him with what works within him. The Spirit does work in order that he may look to the true object, but the Holy Ghost is never an object of faith, which Christ is. When a man has received the gospel, when he rests upon the blood of Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given. This is the first mention of the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Romans. We come to no less than the fifth chapter before there is any allusion to the working of the Holy Ghost in the believer; and then we hear of the love of God shed abroad in the believer's heart by the Holy Ghost.

“Perfect love casteth out fear.” But it is God's. Whenever we turn upon our own love, or take any satisfaction from it, it is a poor sign of state or faith. Real love always has a high ideal of the object that is loved, but never of itself. God's love in Jesus is a perfect love, and casteth out fear. There is no perfect love except the love of God in our case, not ours to God, but His to us. His is perfect love, and only so; and this alone casts out fear. I know that He loves me so perfectly that He not only gave His Son to come down and bear my sins on the cross, but that I should be as He is in heaven. There are two ways in which Christ shows perfect love: first, by coming down to bear all my sins and stripes; secondly, by going up to heaven to give me His glory. Meanwhile He sheds on me the Spirit, that God may dwell in me and I in God. Such is the perfect love of God. Christ was carrying out God's mind, God's affections, God's great purposes; and all this is exactly what the Holy Ghost bears witness to. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Passing over some most instructive chapters in the Epistle to the Romans we come to the eighth, where we are told— “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” We need not read the next clause, because it ought not to be there; and one may safely venture to predict that, when the new version of the Scriptures comes out, none will find it there. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” This is the first reason assigned why there is no condemnation—sin and death are no longer a law to the believer, because the Spirit of life in Christ risen has liberated him. He has a new life; and the Holy Ghost has been given to him. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” The allusion is to what the Lord did on the day that He rose from the dead. He told Mary Magdalene to go and tell His disciples, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” This was His message. He put the disciples, as far as could be, in precisely the same relationship with God as Himself. He could give them (not Godhead, but) the place He had as the risen man before God. Up to that time He had to hear sin, and death in rejection and atonement were always before Him. Now everything evil was behind Him, and glory in heaven before Him. Now He says, this is your position as well as Mine: “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” And that message brought the disciples together, “the doors being shut for fear of the Jews,” and the Lord entered the closed doors just as easily as if they had been open.

You will notice that the first thing He did—after giving them the comforting announcement of peace, peace for them, and peace for others—was to breathe upon them. And what breath was that? His resurrection breath — life in resurrection power — “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” It was the resurrection life of Christ breathed into the souls of the disciples. I do not say that it was a thing that could be felt physically, or seen, of course. Such is not the nature of the spiritual life. The wind may be a figure of it, but it is not a material thing palpable in an outward way. Yet it is a reality—a present reality—much more so than the old life, which itself is quite impalpable. The wisest who cry up the present time are no wiser on this point Than the sages of former times. Yet life is not more momentous than wonderful; and how solemn to think that, when it leaves the body, all efforts to restore it fail! You may galvanize a dead body and make the limbs move, but electricity is not life. Even in natural life you come to a barrier that no science can penetrate—no microscope can discern, no tests can analyze; but there it is, an inexplicable secret to man—a thing that shows the finger of God, where all the discoveries of science only bring out more clearly the fact that man cannot solve its enigma.

If such is the case with natural life, how much more so is it with the spiritual—that life that comes from Christ and enjoys Him forever! With this law the Christian has to do, as the Jew with the ministry of death and condemnation written on stones: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Death, of course, was the end of the first man. The resurrection of Christ is the believer's power of entrance into the new condition where there is no change, or sin whatever. You may tell me the Christian may sin, and quote passages from Scripture to prove that; but they do not mean that the new life has sinned. It is because a man has not kept the old life in order. The old man is like a wild beast, which you have to keep like a wild beast under lock and key. We are responsible to do so. Nothing can be more shameless than to hear a man who has broken out into sin say, “Oh, it was not I that sinned, it was the weakness of the flesh.” If you live in the Spirit, you are bound to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts. It is unchristian-like for any man to excuse his wickedness by talking about the flesh. No doubt it is the fact; but he is bound to keep the flesh under, and there is power in the Holy Ghost given him to deal with the old man.

(Continued from page 89)

(To be continued)

[W. K.]

The Spirit of God, Spirit of God, The: Part 3 (1:29-33)

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saving, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John 1:29-33).

Two works of our Lord are referred to here—what may be called His great earthly work, and His great heavenly work. On earth His work is—and what can be so great?—to take away the sin of the world; not only the sins of us who believe, but the sin of the world.

Did you ever, by the way, know one that quoted the phrase correctly? Have you ever seen it employed aright in any liturgy that ever was framed? I do not recollect it so much as even once, although familiar with rather many of such compilations. Evidently, the truth intended is not before hearts, nor even understood, but confounded with something different; and hence men cite the words falsely. This shows the all-importance for the truth of cleaving to the only unerring standard, the written word of God. Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; but the Holy Ghost in this connection carefully abstains from saying “sins.” It is constantly assumed, when persons read the passage, that Christ has taken away the “sins” of the world. Now this would be another thing altogether, and confounds the text with 1 Peter 2:24.

When John the Baptist gave his testimony, in pointing Him out to his disciples, saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” he did not mean that He was then effecting it, nor yet that, when He died on the cross, the sin of the world would as yet come to an end. Then and there no doubt He laid the basis for taking it away. The only work which could ever take away the sin of the world was the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God. Yet the sin of the world is not yet gone. If sin were taken away out of the world, no wickedness could be known or exist any where longer. There would not be an atom of evil left.

When, then, will the sin, that the Lamb died to take away from the world, be clean and forever banished from it? In the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. It will not vanish away till then. As believers, your sins are undoubtedly forgiven, but this is another thing. Your sins are now blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus if you believe on Him, “whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness to us” (Heb. 10:15-17). Hence we read: “You now hath he reconciled” (Col. 1:21); but He has not yet reconciled “all things” (ver. 20). He has shed His blood for the purpose, and that blood is beyond doubt a perfectly efficacious sacrifice, whereby all things are surely to be reconciled to God; but they are not reconciled till He comes again. There is still suffering, sorrow, and death; there is corruption and violence, unblushing idolatry, and heartless infidelity; there is still every kind of human iniquity and rebellion against God going on in the world as much as ever. Yet the work which, as a righteous ground before God, will remove all this evil out of the world, is done; and God has accepted it but not yet applied it to the world, though He is so doing to believers. When the Lord takes the world-kingdom, it will be richly applied and for a long while, but not in absolute and everlasting fullness, till “the new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Then there will be left remaining no more sin nor effect of sin in the world. It will be completely gone. Then will it be proved how true it is that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

I am aware that people lay stress upon the fact that John said, “which taketh away,” as if it were then going on; but this is a very ignorant way of using Scripture. For instance, one goes into a druggist's shop and gets there a bottle of laudanum labeled “Poison.” This does not mean that the poison is working now. If the druggist says it is laudanum which kills a man, he does not mean that it is then doing its work, but simply that, when it is applied to a man, it will kill him. People confound what is called the absolute or ethical present with the actual present. One is sorry to be obliged to use high-sounding words about this matter; but it is difficult to convey what is wanted in simpler language, and it is important that it should be conveyed accurately. Even learned and devoted men —and you know very well that I do not wish at all to question their ability—have sadly mistaken in this matter.

But a man may be a great scholar, and not wise in Scripture. Not a few of the greatest scholars have been rather heterodox. Great learning does not necessarily give even good sense. Further, a man may have both learning and good sense, and yet not be spiritual. If you had ever such ability and attainments, you would still require the teaching of the Spirit. Assuredly this is what one constantly finds, if much used to commentaries and writings upon the Scripture, as some Christians have been in their time. You would find it dull work to pore over their discussions, if you had reason to examine the folios and quartos that have passed through the press; you would prove how very little Biblical learning has to do with the real intelligence of the word of God. Learned as many of the writers of these commentaries were—and some of them were also able men indeed—yet somehow or other, when they took up the Scriptures, they failed to apply Christ as the one key to unlock all. They rarely seem to speak out of the possession of the truth; and this is the only way to understand the Bible. You can never understand it unless you have Christ and Christ's work, and its present result in power for the soul, clearly before you, in order out of this to interpret the word of God, which then to a large extent becomes an explanation in God's own language of what you have already got. You have already life in the Son of God if you are a believer; you have by His blood the forgiveness of your sins; you have by faith entered the family of God as His children, and have been sealed by the Spirit till the day of redemption.

Let me bring the matter home to you. I had great difficulty in finding a few verses of a Paraphrase which we might sing to-night in a certain connection with my subject. Be assured that I do not wish to find fault—the very reverse. But then I could not agree to sing what was not true. I should have liked to have found something scriptural to celebrate about the Spirit; but I could not. I found a prayer to seal us by His Spirit. But how could one sing that, any more than, when I put my coat upon my back, I could ask a man to put it there? If you are sealed, it is a fact, and it is a fact that abides. It is not an uncertainty. It is not something that requires to be repeated. There is no such thing as being again sealed by the Spirit.

It is not a partial blessing, or constantly in need of renewal, just as you have to take food every few hours. This is not the case with the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is a privilege once given which continues, however important it is that we should not grieve Him but be dependent on His action and be filled with Him. Clearly then he who wrote the. Paraphrase referred to was not aware of this; and the consequence is that he was in no little uncertainty when he came to the Spirit's operations. I see in the 60th Paraphrase, and no doubt it is the same all through, “Oh, may Thy Spirit seal our souls.”

I could not sing this, nor could I ask you to sing it; because, if I believe the Scriptures, He has sealed my soul, and He has sealed yours if you are now children of God in the liberty of Christ. If you are not in liberty, you need to be sealed. It is the sealing of the Spirit that brings not life but liberty into the soul. You recollect the apostle's words— “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Now, in a previous verse of the same chapter he says “The letter killeth” (referring to the law), “but the spirit giveth life.” Thus, if one take up the Old Testament and abide in the mere letter, no spiritual blessing is gained. If one take, for instance, the various offerings and merely think of a Jew bringing his bullock or sheep, or perhaps a pair of birds, to the altar, what is there in this to quicken the soul? Nothing. The consequence then was that the Jews who simply brought their birds or beasts to the altar lived and died Jews, and never went to heaven at all. But any of us drawing from these symbols that there is Another who must settle his case with God, that there was to be an unblemished One to take up the cause of the sinner atoningly, and that this sacrifice is none other than Christ's, passes at once from dead offerings to the Lord made sin on the cross. There is the spirit that quickens.

When a man is quickened, he does not always receive liberty. I have known a soul (who, I cannot doubt, being quickened, has gone for thirty or forty years without being sealed at all) to remain still in great bondage of spirit, a lady who passes too much of her time in capricious judgments, too harsh here, too light there; the end of all which is that she finds the word a two-edged sword, which, while it has an edge against other people. has also one against herself. Constantly doubting whether such or such a person is saved, she goes from one thing or person to another, but always comes back to herself, and never yet has seen for her own soul that God rolled everything upon Christ, never yet for her own need been able to rest on Him as the Lamb. The consequence is that she is not what Scripture calls “saved.” It is not that she doubts He is the Son of God, but she constantly hesitates about her own interest in Him when it comes to the point. She is like a person who would say, “I am not content with the High Priest confessing the sins of the people. If I could only hear Him mentioning my name and my sins, it would give me true comfort; but I only hear about sins in general, which I cannot believe to be a confession for me.” This is not the faith of the gospel really. The word of God's good news says, “Whosoever,” for He knew a great deal better than to indulge souls in such delusions.

Supposing for a moment, that there was such a thing as naming anybody, do you not know that there may be hundreds of the same name? Thus a person would on this principle be always in doubt whether his own sins were really confessed: so that, if one were to be indulged in a desire so selfish, neither he nor others could ever get solid peace at all. Graciously therefore does God say “Whosoever.” Surely any of you that have had questions about your soul are covered by the words “whosoever believeth.” Again, “If any man thirst.” Just see the blessed ways God has taken to open the door and to bring sinners in. He loves to save. It is the delight of God to reconcile to Himself. It is glory to the name of Jesus when a poor sinner comes and casts himself upon His precious blood. He is the Lamb of God, and the very fact that He is so is the best possible ground for a soul to come now, no matter who he may be or what he may have done.

It is not true that Christ has taken away—still less that he was then taking away—the sins of the world; for if this were done, not a single soul would be sent to hell. Everybody would be saved if all the sins were taken away. If faith were still necessary in order to apply it, the believer would be comparatively uncertain, or in danger of self-righteousness; for all his difference from a lost soul must then lie in what is personal: God's grace would be the same absolutely for all. But this contradicts Scripture.

The consequence of this mistake is the more serious, because it leads to other and if possible worse mistakes. In the Roman Mass Book they say “The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Christ, according to their doctrine, has taken away everybody's sins; but nobody gets to heaven unless, besides that, he is faithful to the church, and does what the priest tells him unless he obeys not only the commands of God, but also those of the church, availing himself duly of the seven Sacraments. And so there is a hope that, being thus faithful to the church, he may get to heaven at last. Is it not a very poor kind of salvation? Is it God's?

It is God alone that can save; none but a divine person. The church needs to be saved, and therefore cannot save. The whole notion is radically false, and while opening the door to the delusion that everybody's sins are gone, it brings everybody's sins upon them after all, because if after being baptized they sin again, Christ does no good to them, and the whole work has to be done over again. Such is the doctrine of the Council of Trent, yea of East as well as West. Indeed it has so affected other bodies that there is scarcely any Protestant body in Christendom that has not been more or less injured by this dangerous departure from the word of God. This shows the importance of even one letter. The “sin” of the world is right— “sins” would not be true. It is never said that our sins are gone except to the believer. Where it is written that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, it is the believer's sins that are referred to. There is no such thing as His bearing the sins of every person in the world; but if you come out of the world, if you confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, you find your sins are gone. Christ has done the work. God gives you to know by His word and Spirit that you are forgiven. This is the doctrine of Scripture, so that there is the fullest comfort—without reserve, and without hesitation—in virtue of the mighty work of the Lord Jesus. But the full effect of His earthly work will only be when every trace of sin is gone in the eternal scene of righteousness and glory.

We come now to His heavenly work. What can it be? Many are not aware that Christ has done a great heavenly work. I do not speak of His priesthood, nor even of His advocacy before the Father. He is a Priest to give us sympathy in our suffering, and He is an Advocate to give us restoration when we have sinned. For alas! you know believers may sin, and do sin; and the Lord Jesus is Advocate with the Father; as John says— “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” [W. K.1

The Spirit of God, Spirit of God, The: Part 2 (1:29-33)

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But there is another blessed work that John refers to here in the verses we have read, and what is that? “The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” Yet the Lord Jesus never baptized with the Holy Ghost till He went to heaven. It is from heaven that He does so, and this is clearly brought before us in the Acts of the Apostles, to which you can now refer. You may see it for yourselves clearly promised for the last time in chapter 1:4, 5, “And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Do not suppose that this was confined to the apostles, or to those who were Christ's immediate disciples. The apostles were prominently before His mind, but not exclusively.

Accordingly in the next chapter we find that, when they were all with one accord in one place, suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, which filled all the house. Just as the wind did then fill the house, so the Holy Ghost came to constitute them God's house. Cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them. There was the personal as well as the general presence of the Spirit of God. He did not appear like a dove, but like cloven tongues of fire. He came like a dove on the Lord Jesus; for the Lord Jesus had no sin: not a taint of evil was in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a perfect man, not even knowing sin; and, that this might be, He was conceived of the

Holy Ghost. If He had been born in a natural way, He must have had sin; but the power of the Highest counteracted this, so that He should be born of woman, yet, “A body hast Thou prepared Me” without sin. This wonderful truth was set forth in the peace offering, where the flour was mingled with oil, without leaven, which represents the corruption of our nature. But there was no leaven in the meat-offering. Oil, the constant symbol of the Holy Ghost, was mingled with the flour to make the cake, and, when the cake was made, oil was poured upon it. This was admirably fulfilled in our Lord Jesus. First, the Holy Ghost came upon the virgin, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her; and next, when He was about thirty years of age, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him without blood, because He was without sin. And God the Holy Ghost comes down on us.

But see how strikingly our case resembles, and yet is differentiated from, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are of a sinful nature, but born of the Spirit. There is by the Word of God the action of the Holy Ghost: we are born of water and of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost does not come on us until we rest on Christ's redemption. The problem was, How could the Holy Ghost come and dwell in what was unclean? Now the efficacy of the blood of Christ is to make us perfectly clean in the sight of God. This is what redemption does. The precious blood of Christ “cleanseth us,” it is said in Scripture, “from all sin.” Do you believe it? Do you really bow to what God declares, that “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin?” We see the reason why the Holy Ghost was never before given to a sinful man. I do not say He never operated on such; on the contrary He did so in every believer since Abel. But He never was given, never sealed a believer, till the blood of Christ left him without spot or stain. There is the Spirit of God quickening the soul when a man is a sinner; and there is the Spirit of God now sealing him, when he, a believer, rests on the work of Christ. So our Lord Jesus told the disciples that they were to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. They were already quickened, being for years true believers, but they were not yet baptized in the Holy Ghost. But now He goes up to heaven to send down the Holy Ghost; and this is most distinctly shown in the second chapter of Acts, ver. 32, 33, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

The Holy Ghost was given to Christ twice—for Himself while He was upon the earth, for us when He went to heaven: and this is the reason why the Holy Ghost never leaves the church, because He is given to the church in virtue of Christ, and not because of our good behavior. The Holy Ghost is given to Him, and it is through Him and because of Him that the Holy Ghost always abides. If the Holy Ghost were to leave the church, it would be as good as saying that Christ was no longer worthy of the Holy Ghost abiding. God could not say so; and this is what makes the Holy Ghost so precious. And so the Lord told them in the fourteenth chapter of John, “He shall abide with you forever” (16).

To be sure there are people who do not believe this. I do not know whether it is the case now, but some forty years ago it used to be a regular practice for known evangelical men to put forth a little document every year calling for united prayer that the Holy Spirit should be shed forth again on the church—that we should have a fresh effusion of the Spirit of God. Is not this a very serious thing? Suppose that people were to begin to pray at the end of the year that Christ should die again! Everybody would look aghast, thinking it a denial of the faith. But is it less really preposterous, is it not equally unbelieving, to pray for the Holy Ghost to be given again? He is shed, and being shed, He abides forever.

Do you tell me, that the Spirit is to be shed again in this world's history? I grant it; but this will be for Israel, and for the Gentiles when Israel believes, as it is beautifully shown in the High Priest going into the sanctuary and coming out. Perhaps you recollect that the bells which were on the vestments of the High Priest gave forth a sound when he went into the most holy place, and when he came out. The bells ringing when he went in would answer to the gift of the Spirit of God to us, the church, when our Lord went up on high; and the bells ringing when he came out, to the fresh testimony of the Holy Spirit when Israel shall be brought in. But there is no such doctrine as the Holy Ghost shed repeatedly for the church. When He was sent down, He was given to abide with us forever. I am aware of all the darkness in the middle ages—of the revived superstition and the fresh and abounding rationalism in the present age; nevertheless, the Holy Ghost abides. Yet I do say that the Holy Ghost abides, because Christ said it, after He obtained eternal redemption, as it was because of this that He went up into heaven itself. It was not a temporary redemption, like that of the Jews, who were taken out of Egypt, but might be carried off to Babylon. It is otherwise with the church of God. The Lord Jesus brought in eternal redemption, and the consequence is that the Holy Ghost comes down and abides forever.

So far our Lord's case differs, on Whom the Spirit came down like a dove, because there was a perfect absence of evil; no question of the smallest sin or taint, or anything to indicate corruption in our Lord. This could not be said about us, and therefore did the Holy Ghost descend in the form which He assumed for the disciples, “like as of fire.” Fire always marks the judgment of God. The Holy Ghost could not have come upon the disciples if there had not been God's judgment dealing with their sin in the work of Christ. But there was more than this—there appeared cloven tongues, because it was to be a question of testimony. Not so in Christ's case; for He is the One testified of. We are called to be witnesses of Him. We know but are not the truth; He only and emphatically is the truth to be witnessed to. Cloven tongues formed a beautiful emblem of the power of the Holy Ghost put forth in making believers witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ. Cloven tongues—no longer one language as of Canaan, but more, every tongue of every nation under heaven—point not to Jew only but to Gentile, so that the expressiveness of the symbol seems unmistakable.

Such then is the fact: let us now enter a little into the doctrine. Notice, first, that the Spirit of God, and we are speaking of the gift of the Spirit, is never mentioned until a man has already believed. Always bear this in mind. The new birth makes a man a believer; the gift of the Spirit comes when he is a believer. The gift of the Spirit brings him into liberty—not into life. The truth of Christ brings him life, and the Spirit of God takes His part in quickening; but the Holy Ghost is given to him already a believer; and this seals him in perfect liberty. For this reason you will observe that in the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans we have the sinner looking to Christ and His blood, and not one word about the Holy Ghost yet, because the idea is to present Christ, not to distract him with what works within him. The Spirit does work in order that he may look to the true object, but the Holy Ghost is never an object of faith, which Christ is. When a man has received the gospel, when he rests upon the blood of Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given. This is the first mention of the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Romans. We come to no less than the fifth chapter before there is any allusion to the working of the Holy Ghost in the believer; and then we hear of the love of God shed abroad in the believer's heart by the Holy Ghost.

“Perfect love casteth out fear.” But it is God's. Whenever we turn upon our own love, or take any satisfaction from it, it is a poor sign of state or faith. Real love always has a high ideal of the object that is loved, but never of itself. God's love in Jesus is a perfect love, and casteth out

fear. There is no perfect love except the love of God in our case, not ours to God, but His to us. His is perfect love, and only so; and this alone casts out fear. I know that He loves me so perfectly that He not only gave His Son to come down and bear my sins on the cross, but that I should be as He is in heaven. There are two ways in which Christ shows perfect love: first, by coming down to bear all my sins and stripes; secondly, by going up to heaven to give me His glory. Meanwhile He sheds on me the Spirit, that God may dwell in me and I in God. Such is the perfect love of God. Christ was carrying out God's mind, God's affections, God's great purposes; and all this is exactly what the Holy Ghost bears witness to. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Passing over some most instructive chapters in the Epistle to the Romans we come to the eighth, where we are told— “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” We need not read the next clause, because it ought not to be there; and one may safely venture to predict that, when the new version of the Scriptures comes out, none will find it there. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” This is the first reason assigned why there is no condemnation—sin and death are no longer a law to the believer, because the Spirit of life in Christ risen has liberated him He has a new life; and the Holy Ghost has been given to him. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” The allusion is to what the Lord did on the day that He rose from the dead. He told Mary Magdalene to go and tell His disciples— “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” This was His message. He put the disciples, as far as could be, in precisely the same relationship with God as Himself He could give them (not Godhead, but) the place He had as the risen man before God. Up to that time He had to bear sin, and death in rejection and atonement were always before Him. Now everything evil was behind Him, and glory in heaven before Him. Now He says, this is your position as well as Mine “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” And that message brought the disciples together, “the doors being shut for fear of the Jews,” and the Lord entered the closed doors just as easily as if they had been open. You will notice that the first thing He did—after giving them the comforting announcement of peace, peace for them, and peace for others—was to breathe upon them. And what breath was that? His resurrection breath—life in resurrection power— “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” It was the resurrection life of Christ breathed into the souls of the disciples. I do not say that it was a thing that could be felt physically, or seen, of course. Such is not the nature of the spiritual life. The wind may be a figure of it, but it is not a material thing palpable in an outward way. Yet it is a reality—a present reality—much more so than the old life, which itself is quite impalpable. The wisest who cry up the present time are no wiser on this point than the sages of former times. Yet life is not more momentous than wonderful; and bow solemn to think that, when it leaves the body, all efforts to restore it fail! You may galvanize a dead body and make the limbs move, but electricity is not life. Even in natural life you come to a barrier that no science can penetrate—no microscope can discern, no tests can analyze; but there it is, an inexplicable secret to man—a thing that shows the finger of God, where all the discoveries of science only bring out more clearly the fact that man cannot solve its enigma.

If such is the case with natural life, how much more so is it with the spiritual—that life that comes from Christ and enjoys Him forever! With this law the Christian has to do, as the Jew with the ministry of death and condemnation—written on stones: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Death, of course, was the end of the first man. The resurrection of Christ is the believer's power of entrance into the new condition where there is no change, or sin whatever. You may tell me the Christian may sin, and quote passages from Scripture to prove that; but they do not mean that the new life has sinned. It is because a man has not kept the old life in order. The old man is like a wild beast, which you have to keep like a wild beast under lock and key. We are responsible to do so. Nothing can be more shameless than to hear a man who has broken out into sin say— “Oh, it was not I that sinned, it was the weakness of the flesh.” If you live in the Spirit, you are bound to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts. It is unchristian-like for any man to excuse his wickedness by talking about the flesh. No doubt it is the fact; but he is bound to keep the flesh under, and there is power in the Holy Ghost given him to deal with the old man.

In Gal. 5:17, correctly translated, we read— “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.” Our version runs, “So that ye cannot do the things that ye would;” but this is quite wrong. What the word of God, properly rendered, says is good and true— “That ye do not the things that ye would.” The Holy Ghost is given to the believer, and the action of the Spirit is directly contrary to the flesh, as the flesh is contrary to the Spirit. “Lo, I come,” said Christ—who indeed was the only one that could say it unwaveringly— “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God;” but we are responsible, being set apart for the purpose—sanctified unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that we are merely to obey and that the blood of Christ repairs our disobedience. The meaning is that we are sanctified to the same kind of obedience as Christ, whose blood gives us confidence that our sins are by grace forgiven.

The allusion in 1 Peter 1:2 is to what took place at Mount Sinai, when blood was sprinkled on the people, and they said, “All that the Lord hath said will we do.” But they did not. They were disobedient; and the blood witnessed that they must die the death because of their disobedience. We start with the precious blood of Christ, while at the same time we are called to obey as Christ did; and what comes in to meet our delinquencies is confession of our sins, or the washing of water by the word. This is the meaning of the washing of the disciples' feet by the Lord Jesus before He went to heaven. It was to show His own here the work He is gone to heaven to do for them. Peter at first refused to let his feet be washed, and then, when corrected asked that his whole body should be washed; but he was wrong in both respects. He did not know, if one be already washed with the washing of regeneration, that no more is wanted for the removal of subsequent faults than to have his feet washed. In other words the particular evil that may be contracted in walking through the world requires to be removed. “He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet.” If at first wholly washed, as every believer is, he needs only partial cleansing, in other words the washing of his feet, when he subsequently does wrong. Peter did not lose the benefit of being born of water and the Spirit when he afterward sinned grievously. If not a true saint he would have gone and hanged himself, like Judas. Therefore the very thing the Lord prayed for was that his faith should not fail. Judas, in the despair of his heart went and perished miserably. Peter did not, although he committed a great sin, because the Lord prayed for him, and afterward indeed took particular notice of him— “Tell the disciples and Peter” —the only one mentioned, and why? Because he was the one that most needed it. How gracious is the Lord! How full of tender mercy! He is the spring, the unfailing giver of all grace. Once in Him all your sins are gone, and yourself brought nigh as alive to God. This is the true place of every believer. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For 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; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

You observe two reasons are given why there is no condemnation. The first is, that Christ gives a life which God cannot condemn; whilst the second is, that God has already condemned (not merely the sins but) the sin that gave them birth. The whole of our evil is already condemned in the cross of Christ—the wondrous Christ of God. These are the two grounds why there is no condemnation. And the effect is that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Not in any Jew, but in every Christian; for every Christian loves God and loves his neighbor, and these are the two great moral aims of the law. How can a Christian not love God, who first loved him? And does not the Christian love his neighbor? Does he not go forth every day of his life to serve not only his neighbor and friend, but even his enemy? This is what the Christian is called to; and this is what every real Christian does, although not so fully as he ought, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Just so far as a Christian walks in the Spirit is the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him. It is a remarkable fact that the people who were under the law never kept it, and that those who are not under the law are the only people that do keep it, and this because of the delivering power that God has brought in through Christ.

Let me here recall to your notice the constant danger of a soul that has been awakened, to mix up the work of the Spirit with that of Christ. It is always on the look out for fruits. As you are, you had better say nothing about fruits yet. If you seek to find fruits before you enter into peace with God, you never can find peace. No man ever found peace with God by looking within himself; and God never meant any to find peace save by turning to Christ. Do you not hear Him saying— “Having made peace by the blood of His cross?” This is not within but without you. It is something wrought for you by Christ, and Christ alone: and the quickening of the Spirit is not to furnish ground for peace within you, but to prove that you are nothing but a poor guilty sinner, thus forcing you out of yourself to rest on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The tendency of the anxious soul is to look within, for confirmatory marks of the Spirit. But so long as he does not rest on the work of Christ, he never can have peace.

For saints there is another danger. When you have peace, beware of separating, as is too often done, the Spirit from Christ. Men say you need the Spirit of God to sanctify you. Rather you need the Spirit of God constantly to direct your eyes toward Christ. There are these two dangers then: one for a man who is just awakened; the other for him who has found peace with God. The saint cannot go in safety unless he has the Spirit of God fixing the eyes of his heart on the Lord Jesus. This is the point the apostle refers to at the close of chap. 3 in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

But I would say a few words on a preceding verse. “Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;” and I will show you how difficult it is—not in reality, but in appearance—either to understand the Scriptures, or to give them even a right outward form. People often think that if you have “spirit,” or any other word in a verse more than once, it must always bear the same meaning. Here this is not the case. “The Lord is that spirit.” How should “spirit” be printed? I answer unhesitatingly, with a small “s.” “Now the Lord is that spirit.” The “Spirit” would be downright heterodoxy. Who would tolerate such a notion as that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Ghost? One can understand how in the “Shepherd of Hermas” (a most offensive little treatise, and really heretical, which in the second or third century used to be read in public worship) there occurs a confusion and worse between the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost; but this no where is or can be in Scripture.

The fact is, that the meaning of the verse is connected with what was quoted before. The apostle was contrasting the old covenant with the new, and he says, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Christ, under the letter of the old, quickens; the letter of the old without Christ does not. “Now,” says he, “the Lord is the spirit,” i.e., of the old. The letter cannot quicken, but the spirit does. It is the Lord that is meant by the Passover, Red Sea, Manna, &c., as also by the burnt, meat, peace, and sin offerings; and so one might go through all the letter of the law. “The Lord is the spirit “; and this, is the reason why I should print “spirit” with a small letter, though it is not so in my book. It may be different in your Bibles. But if not, you must remember the copyists were not inspired, any more than the printers, translators, or critical editors. The question is the bearing of the truth of God; and I affirm that the doctrine which confounds the Lord Jesus with the Spirit is not true. Is it not impossible, therefore, to print “spirit” in that verse with a capital “S” consistently with truth? For this would identify the second person of the Trinity with the third which is wholly untrue.

But the moment you come to the next clause “Where the Spirit of the Lord is,” you must have a capital “S,” because the Holy Ghost is meant. The Lord has gone on high, but the Holy Ghost is sent down below; and He it is who now seals the believer, bringing him into liberty in Christ. Thus what the apostle first lays down as a principle is that the spirit of the old forms of the law always pointed to the Lord Jesus. “The Lord is the spirit.” Then besides this, the Spirit of the Lord is now come down from heaven to anoint the believer, and seal him in virtue of redemption.

Not a few passages might be quoted bearing on the same point. I might go through almost the whole of the epistle with the same result, each having its own special bearing, and all perfectly harmonious; but this is scarce necessary.

What I want is to lay before your souls the truth of God as to this the great Christian privilege. Have you not only Christ for your life, but the consciousness that your body is the temple of God? I know there are many who would think this a most extraordinary thing to claim. Let me tell you that— “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ He is none of His;” he does not belong to the Lord as a Christian unless he be sealed. He may be quickened, born of God, and converted. But the proper power, the true distinctive mark, of a Christian is that he is sealed with the Spirit; and the sealing of the Spirit comes in answer to the redemption of Christ Jesus.

Wake up then, wake up, beloved children of God, to your great privileges! Those who are ignorant of the gospel may call you presumptuous. In truth you can never worship or serve God as you ought, if you do not enjoy your proper privileges. You need to do so in order to be at home with God, to gain confidence in His love, and glorify Him. The spring of all power to perform duty depends on the simplicity with which your soul enters into your relationship with Christ. Even in common life relationship affects as it should govern all our actions. The duty of a servant is quite different from that of a master; and a similar rule holds good in all our social relationships. There is a walk, and a worship too, belonging to the children of God, and to none else. You cannot mix men of the world with those that are of God without dishonoring Him. Indeed the effect of such a union is ruin practically to the souls of both; because, as the child of God cannot raise up the worldly to his own level, he must come down to the level more or less of the worldly man; and this is why in many of the liturgies they mingle both in an offensive alliance that suits neither, with language of a wholly inconsistent kind. A Christian is not getting forward with God. who tries to please both world and church; if he follows God's way, all will go well with him. We are members of the family of God-heirs of God with Jesus Christ. Even on earth the family life is the highest type of bliss for man. And God has a family, in whose wellbeing He takes special delight.

Suppose a person were to go into a household, and, pretending himself a friend of the children, should put it into their heads that possibly the chief of the house was not their father, you would say, “What a villain he is, to try and spoil all the peace of that family!” And if this would be bad in your families, to play a like part is a great deal worse in God's family. It is as insulting to God as it is injurious to His children; and though people may do what they like with God for a while, the day is coming when they will have to own their folly and sin.

I beseech you, therefore, to be faithful to the Lord. Let me urge on you, in the name of the Lord Jesus to search and see whether these things are so. If you are not children of God, the door is open, the way is clear, the Savior is waiting. If you simply come as poor sinners, the Lord will in no wise cast you out. But come as sinners in the sense of your sheer need, in the confidence of His grace. Do not come as if there were a doubt that had to be cleared whether you could succeed or not; and the Savior will meet and serve you at once. When the Syro-Phoenician woman came, she spoke as a Jew. She cried, “Son of David.” What right had she to say “Son of David, have mercy on me”? No more right than a Frenchman has to repair to an English Consul and ask his assistance; let him go to the French Consul. The Son of David was for Jews. When the two blind men so appealed in Matt. 9, had they to wait for an answer of peace, when they confessed their faith? When two more at the end made the same call near Jericho, did the gracious One rebuke or reply in grace? The woman of Canaan was wrong—somewhat as worldly people when they say, “Our Father, who art in heaven;” for He is not their Father at all, but will judge them by the Lord Jesus. But if a person comes and says, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” will He then say them nay? The Lord would not at first answer the woman's prayer, because she went on mistaken ground. And when the disciples would have done with the case, ashamed of her crying after them, He had to correct their impatience with His maintenance of God's order: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then she said, “Lord, help me!” When she dropt to this, the Lord answered her, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.” The moment she hears it, the truth flashes on her soul that she was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but a dog. She sinks to the lowest place, and says, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” She took the place of truth, and got the blessing of grace. The lack of this keeps many souls from obtaining the blessing. They are unconsciously in a false position. They assume to be worshippers when they should not. If they confessed themselves poor sinners needing to be saved, they would find the Savior at once. If you can and do say, Abba, Father, be assured you have the Holy Ghost; and if not progressing in the Christian race, see and judge what hinders you, and if you are not grieving the Holy Ghost; search the word of God, and follow Christ! Amen.

The Spirit of God, Spirit of God, The: Part 1 (1:29-33)

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” John 1:29-33.

Two works of our Lord Jesus are referred to here—what may be called His great earthly work, and His great heavenly work. On earth His work is—and what can be so great?—to take away the sin of the world; not only the sins of us who believe, but the sin of the world.

Did you ever, by the way, know one that quoted the phrase correctly? Have you ever seen it employed aright in any liturgy that ever was framed? I do not recollect it so much as even once, although familiar with rather many of such compilations. Evidently the truth intended is not before hearts, nor even understood, but confounded with something different; and hence men cite the words falsely. This shows the all-importance for the truth of cleaving to the only unerring standard, the written word of God. Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; but the Holy Ghost in this connection carefully abstains from saying “sins.” It is constantly assumed, when persons read the passage, that Christ has taken away the “sins” of the world. Now this would be another thing altogether, and confound the text with 1 Peter 2:24.

When John the Baptist gave his testimony, in pointing Him out to his disciples, saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” he did not mean that He was then effecting it, nor yet that, when He died on the cross, the sin of the world would as yet come to an end. Then and there no doubt He laid the basis for taking it away. The only work which could ever take away the sin of the world was the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God. Yet the sin of the world is not yet gone. If sin were taken away out of the world, no wickedness could be known or exist any where longer. There would not be an atom of evil left.

When, then, will the sin that the Lamb died to take away from the world, be clean and forever banished from it? In the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. It will not vanish away till then. As believers, your sins are undoubtedly forgiven, but this is another thing. Your sins are now blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus if you believe on Him, “whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness to us” (Hebrews 10:15-17). Hence we read: “You now hath he reconciled” (Col. 1:21); but He has not yet reconciled “all things” (20). He has shed His blood for the purpose, and that blood is beyond doubt a perfectly efficacious sacrifice, whereby all things are surely to be reconciled to God; but they are not reconciled till He comes again. There is still suffering, sorrow, and death; there is corruption and violence, unblushing idolatry, and heartless infidelity; there is still every kind of human iniquity and rebellion against God going on in the world as much as ever. Yet the work which, as a righteous ground before God, will remove all this evil out of the world, is done; and God has accepted it but not yet applied it to the world, though He is so doing to believers. When the Lord takes the world-kingdom, it will be richly applied and for a long while, but not in absolute and everlasting fullness, till “the new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Then there will be left remaining no more sin nor effect of sin in the world. It will be completely gone. Then will it be proved how true it is that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

I am aware that people lay some stress upon the fact that John said, “which taketh away,” as if it were then going on; but this is a very ignorant way of using Scripture. For instance, one goes into a druggist's shop and gets there a bottle of laudanum labeled “Poison.” This does not mean that the poison is working now. If the druggist says it is laudanum which kills a man, he does not mean that it is then doing its work, but simply that, when it is applied to a man, it will kill him. People confound what is called the absolute or ethical present with the actual present. One is sorry to be obliged to use high-sounding words about this matter; but it is difficult to convey what is wanted in simpler

language, and it is important that it should be conveyed accurately. Even learned and devoted men—and you know very well that I do not wish at all to question their ability—have sadly mistaken in this matter.

But a man may be a great scholar, and not wise in Scripture. Not a few of the greatest scholars have been rather heterodox. Great learning does not necessarily give even good sense. Further, a man may have both learning and good sense, and yet not be spiritual. If you had ever such ability and attainments, you would still require the teaching of the Spirit. Assuredly this is what one constantly finds, if much used to commentaries and writings upon the Scripture, as some Christians have been in their time. You would find it dull work to pore over their discussions, if you had reason to examine the folios and quartos that have passed through the press; you would prove how very little Biblical learning has to do with the real intelligence of the word of God. Learned as many of the writers of these commentaries were—and some of them were also able men indeed—yet somehow or other, when they took up the Scriptures, they failed to apply Christ as the one key to unlock all. They rarely seem to speak out of the possession of the truth; and this is the only way to understand the Bible. You can never understand it unless you have Christ and Christ's work, and its present result in power for the soul, clearly before you, in order out of this to interpret the word of God, which then to a large extent becomes an explanation in God's own language of what you have already got. You have already life in the Son of God if you are a believer; you have by His blood the forgiveness of your sins; you have by faith entered the family of God as His children, and have been sealed by the Spirit till the day of redemption.

Let me bring the matter home to you. I had great difficulty in finding a few verses of a Paraphrase which we might sing to-night in a certain connection with my subject. Be assured that I do not wish to find fault—the very reverse. But then I could not agree to sing what was not true. I should have liked to have found something scriptural to celebrate about the Spirit; but I could not. I found a prayer to seal us by His Spirit. But how could one sing that, any more than, when I had my coat upon my back, I could ask a man to put it there? If you are sealed, it is a fact, and it is a fact that abides. It is not an uncertainty. It is not something that requires to be repeated. There is no such thing as being again sealed by the Spirit. It is not a partial blessing, or constantly in need of renewal, just as you have to take food every few hours. This is not the case with the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is a privilege once given which continues, however important it is that we should not grieve Him but be dependent on His action and be filled with Him. Clearly then he who wrote the Paraphrase referred to was not aware of this; and the consequence is that he was in no little uncertainty when he came to the Spirit's operations. I see in the 60th Paraphrase, and no doubt it is the same all through—

I could not sing this, nor could I ask you to sing it; because, if I believe the Scriptures, He has sealed my soul, and He has sealed yours if you are now children of God in the liberty of Christ. If you are not in liberty, you need to be sealed. It is the sealing of the Spirit that brings not life but liberty into the soul. You recollect the apostle's words— “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Now, in a previous verse of the same chapter he says “The letter killeth” (referring to the law), “but the spirit giveth life.” Thus, if one take up the Old Testament and abide in the mere letter, no spiritual blessing is gained. If one take, for instance, the various offerings and merely think of a Jew bringing his bullock or sheep, or perhaps a pair of birds, to the altar, what is there in this to quicken the soul? Nothing. The consequence then was that the Jews who simply brought their birds or beasts to the altar lived and died Jews, and never went to heaven at all. But any one of us drawing from these symbols that there is Another who must settle his case with God, that there was to be an unblemished One to take up the cause of the sinner atoningly, and that this sacrifice is none other than Christ's, passes at once from dead offerings to the Lord made sin on the cross. There is the spirit that quickens.

When a man is quickened, he does not always receive liberty. I have known a soul (who, I cannot doubt, being quickened, has gone for thirty or forty years without being sealed at all) to remain still in great bondage of spirit, a lady who passes too much of her time in capricious judgments, too harsh here, too light there; the end of all which is that she finds the word a two-edged sword, which, while it has an edge against other people, has also one against herself. Constantly doubting whether such or such a person is saved, she goes from one thing or person to-another, but always comes back to herself, and never yet has seen for her own soul that God rolled everything upon Christ, never yet for her own need been able to rest on Him as the Lamb. The consequence is that she is not what Scripture calls “saved.” It is not that she doubts He is the Son of God, but she constantly hesitates about her own interest in Him when it comes to the point. She is like a person who would say, “I am not content with the High Priest confessing the sins of the people. If I could only hear Him mentioning my name and my sins, it would give me true comfort; but I only hear about sins in general, which I cannot believe to be a confession for me.” This is not the faith of the gospel really. The word of God's good news says, “Whosoever;” for He know a great deal better than to indulge souls in such delusions.

Supposing for a moment, that there was such a thing as naming anybody, do you not know that there may be hundreds of the same name? Thus a person would on this principle be always in doubt whether his own sins were really confessed; so that, if one were to be indulged in a desire so selfish, neither he nor others could ever get solid peace at all. Graciously therefore does God say “Whosoever.” Surely any of you that have had questions about your soul are covered by the words “whosoever believeth.” Again, “If any man thirst.” Just see the blessed ways God has taken to open the door and to bring sinners in. He loves to save. It is the delight of God to reconcile to Himself. It is glory to the name of Jesus when a poor sinner comes and casts himself upon His precious blood. He is the Lamb of God, and the very fact that He is so is the best possible ground for a soul to come now, no matter who he may be or what he may have done.

It is not true that Christ has taken away—still less that He was then taking away—the sins of the world; for if this were done, not a single soul would be sent to hell. Everybody would be saved if all the sins were taken away. If faith were still necessary in order to apply it, the believer would be comparatively uncertain, or in danger of self-righteousness; for all his difference from a lost soul must then lie in what is personal: God's grace would be the same absolutely for all. But this contradicts Scripture.

The consequence of this mistake is the more serious, because it leads to other and if possible worse mistakes. In the Roman Mass Book they say “The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Christ, according to their doctrine, has taken away everybody's sins; but nobody gets to heaven unless, besides that, he is faithful to the church, and does what the priest tells him—unless he obeys not only the commands of God, but also those of the church, availing himself duly of the seven Sacraments. And so there is a hope that, being thus found faithful to the church, he may get to heaven at last. Is it not a very poor kind of salvation? Is it God's?

(To be continued, D.V.)

The Fullness of Christ, Fullness of Christ (Duplicate), The (1:29-51)

The glory of Christ is the central truth of the Bible. Any one could see His humiliation; Pilate and Herod and the unbelieving Jews, the Roman soldiers, all the multitude did. But the sight of His humiliation was nothing to His glory; and when His glory was discerned, it was the humiliation of the Lord Jesus that filled the heart with shame and with abasement. This always deepens in presence of the love which made One so high to stoop so low; and whatever humiliation was seen in the days of our Lord was only the type of a deeper humiliation. “Himself bare our sorrows and took our sicknesses,” says the Evangelist Matthew, looking upon His earthly ministry and it was true. The quotation, which is from Isaiah, does not refer to the atonement, I admit; but His path was one that led straight to the atonement. The bearing of our sorrows and sicknesses is quite a different thing from the bearing of our sins; but it was the same Person in grace. Jehovah Messiah was of course a Divine person, but, partaking of blood and flesh, He took the place of man in weakness. He drew from God the Father as a dependent man for every need that came before Him. It mattered not what it was: a sick body, a disordered soul, a mind filled with all that Satan can infuse of fear and terror and all that is most hateful to God and man; nay, death itself— nothing stood in His way. Whatever He needed, He drew down from God to meet each case, but He always bore the sorrow on His heart. He never was like those we may see any day who get rid of an importunate beggar with a sixpence; He never did so; but He bent under the weight of every sickness and sorrow He relieved. This is perfection. It was the perfection of His life as a man here below, even in doing miracles. Signs and wonders might be wrought by people that have no communion with God, and no compassion for man. He wrought them with grace peculiar to Himself.

The Lord Jesus was always in an unbroken bond of perfect relationship with God and of perfect compassion and pity towards man. Yet He well knew that all this was but preliminary to the great work that lay before Him. And what was that? His death as the Lamb of God a work not yet seen in all its effects, and never to be seen till not only the kingdom—which is a grand display—be established on the earth, but full perfection be reached: the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. No longer will even government be needed-righteousness will dwell in peace, when evil and wretchedness are gone. There will be the fruit not only of grace, but of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therein is a great ground of confidence for a poor soul that is anxious about its sins. I do not say that the Lord Jesus has taken sin out of the world yet. This is not quite true; but He is the One who is to do it. There is but One, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Without saying that it is done, there is the Person; and if you ask me where is the work through which that infinite power is to be effected, on which it rests, and in virtue of which it will be done, I answer unhesitatingly, the cross. Love could not banish sin. Power could not banish sin according to God. It might do so, but where love and righteousness? Had the Lord Jesus appeared merely to put away all evil from before Him, where must we have been? Where could sinful souls find refuge? If I am to stand and lift up my head in the presence of God I must do it on the ground of His righteousness. And this is exactly what the Lord Jesus provided on the cross. On the one hand, there was God, in His love and holy nature, in His righteousness and majesty; on the other, there was man in all his sin and ruin; and the Lord Jesus comes between both. He goes not from man to God; but He comes from God to man. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The Lord Jesus did not produce one atom of love in the heart of God that was not there before; by atoning work on the cross He removed all hindrance for every soul that bows down and owns his sins, but for none other. No one will receive the blessing of grace without faith and repentance. In vain you talk about faith without repentance; and it would be no blessing to man or glory to God without it. There must be the work of the Spirit in our hearts to produce self-judgment with confidence in God through that which the Lord Jesus had borne for the sake of sinners. Is the heart unaffected? Is conscience harder than a millstone? How could such a soul give praise to God in heaven?

God is not merely working for heaven, He is raising a testimony for Christ in human hearts on the earth before they go to heaven. The best robe for the prodigal does not represent heaven. When heaven comes, there will be no elder son out in the field—no murmuring is heard there—less insult if possible to the Father. Nobody in heaven will act thus. It is here and now, alas! that it is done. But there is where people very often stop. They think the only thing that is now true in the gospel is the Father coming out to kiss the son, the Father taking away his rags, investing him with the best robe, and putting a ring and shoes on him. I would to God that even this was better known. There are many who would lessen the guilt of sin and wrong Christ still. Men are not ashamed of it, and do not see it is deep dishonor to Christ, defrauding Him of His just wages. That which God delights in is to make men righteously happy now and in this world; and this, not in the smallest degree because of any merits on the sinner's part, but entirely as the fruit of God's grace in His own Son and His redemption work. But then the heart must bow to it; and this not only by the faith that receives it from God, but by the repentance that judges self, not one's evil works only, but the flesh.

Now the feast is given; the calling of the friends and neighbors together is what follows; but it follows here not merely in heaven. When in the heavenly city, there will be the tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits, and every month. But what the parable of the prodigal son shows us is a feast begun on earth—God's joy (for it was not merely the prodigal's joy) in having back His erring son safe and sound. Beloved friends, what meaning has that to you? Are you, first of all, in the delivered condition of the prodigal? and, secondly, are you entering into the joy and love of God, which goes out and shares your joy? This is what God looks for now in this world. In heaven, no doubt, we shall have it in perfection; but the Christian man is the man who enters into the love of God and joy of God while on the earth. He is not merely a forgiven man. He is not merely a man who is forborne with. That was the case before the death of Christ on the cross. When God was dealing in Old Testament times with His people He forbore to press the debt, and they were then, as men are now in their natural state, liable to punishment. But then the work of Christ was not done, and God thought it most suitable not to exact the debt. He passed over the sins. There was a praetermission of sins; now there is a remission of sins. Not only does the Lord not judge the sins-they are completely gone. Just as if you had to do with a wise, indulgent creditor who knew that you were greatly tried, but who thought proper to pity you, whatever might have brought about your straitened circumstances. He was merciful to you, and did not press the debt. But is that all the gospel? The gospel goes farther, and says that your sins on believing are completely gone. Remember this is only the first step—the threshold of the gospel and this is what brings me to the next truth which I wish to present to you.

He that is the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. There is the work which immediately follows. It is He who baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and it is of importance to see that. He has gone up to heaven, but His interest in His people is none the less if possible He is in a better position to show it. All power, all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on

earth. And what is He doing now? Many things, of which one is here singled out by the Holy Ghost—His baptizing with the Holy Ghost. What does this mean? Baptism always means closing one condition in which you have been, and introducing you into an entirely different one. Such is the meaning of baptism in every case. It is always a closing of the past, and the introduction into a new position. It may only be a position, and it may only be external. A man might be baptized and none the better for it as far as regards his soul. This has been the case with thousands—nay, millions. But when a man is baptized even with water only, a solemn responsibility is placed upon him. A baptized person stands in a new and grave position. He is no longer a mere heathen. He is no longer a mere Jew.

(To be continued)

The Fullness of Christ, Fullness of Christ, The: Part 3 (1:29-51)

WE need a center for our hearts. There is an energy in the heart of man, which otherwise denies God or deifies the creature. Man was made by God to rule; an angel was not. You never hear of an angel sitting on the throne or governing. On the contrary, the saints are to judge the angels. So that nothing can be more certain than that man was made to rule. For that reason, with others, we in our weakness require a center to work to: for want of this people injure themselves or dishonor God. If a man has a consciousness of being unfit for it, he sets up another man and trusts to him. It is the same amongst scholars. They set up schools of opinion, of philosophy, of sciences, of languages, according to their tastes or their habits, and they make the school of their choice the practical center, to which they are gathering. All their energies, their labors, are for the promotion of that central aim towards which they work. We also require one—the simplest Christian as much as the greatest; the greatest because he might otherwise set himself up, and the simplest because he feels the want of it. God gives us one, and this is taught in a very remarkable way here.

The first man we read of who officially had disciples was John the Baptist: I do not at all mean that he was wrong. Far from it; but still he is the only mere man in the New Testament, whose disciples God distinctly sanctioned. John had his disciples, and it is evident that he was a man singularly honored (Matt. 11:10, 11). “Again, the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples [having testified to the Lord the day before]; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! and the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” Surely this is very striking. Now there was a Divine center on earth; and John the Baptist, who had disciples strongly attached, so speaks of Jesus that his own disciples leave him to follow Jesus. How rarely we find that. It is not what men like. Even the good are too often jealous if men leave them, but John the Baptist showed the power of God. He manifested a simplicity of faith most seasonable.

No wonder the people took John for a prophet; for God was before Him. What is it that marks the prophet? The man that sees God's mind and makes it known. Other people may make known the truth, may preach the gospel; but the man that puts your conscience in the presence of God is the prophet. So the woman of Samaria, when her conscience was awakened to her sin, said, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” It is the consciousness of God given to the soul that is the true test of a prophet. And so it was here. John the Baptist so speaks of our Lord that his own disciples turn from him to Jesus. He was right, and they were right. He was right to bear his heart's testimony to the Lord Jesus; and it is remarkable enough that it was not a long effusion that he spoke, but a few words that told. “Behold the Lamb of God!” In the delight of his soul John rendered that testimony to Christ, and the moment that his disciples heard it, they followed Jesus. They heard John, they followed Jesus, and the Lord invited them to remain with Him that day.

Now there is exactly where you find the needed center. One of the two that heard John and followed Jesus was Andrew, who first goes and finds his brother Simon Peter, and tells him, “We have found the Messiah,” and he brought him to Jesus. Jesus is the true center for men on earth.

Not merely a Savior is meant, but also a center to work to. What am I doing, now that I am washed in the blood of Christ, and, what is more, associated with Him in heaven? Am I serving the world? I do not question the duty of carrying on my occupation in a Christian manner. This is all right, and in its own place most important. It is a bad job for any man who has not something to do: such a one is generally in the way. But the Christian that has an occupation by which he lives is called to stick to it, and do it thoroughly. It is my opinion, a Christian man ought to do his work a great deal better than any other; nay, it would be a real shame to him if he did not, because his carelessness could not but bring a stigma on the name of Jesus. Only senseless men run down a man for cleaving to his honest occupation. Let us heed the apostle Paul, that if a man will not work, he ought not to eat.

But in this case, where Christ and the soul are concerned, it is another thing altogether. Have I now a divine center that fills my heart? What I want is not to make money or a name, nor yet that I should accomplish this purpose or that. Farther, it is not the mere service of my country or of my sovereign, or anything of the kind (although, of course, I am bound to honor the Queen); but there is made known, another center to which we work, infinitely higher and more commanding, which does not really end when you have done your work, but which abides beyond all time. The one thing that God wants is, that whatever you do should be to Christ, with a happy heart; no murmuring here, no complaining, nor striking for more wages. The one who helps you to meet and overcome all these aberrations, who puts your heart at rest, is Jesus. There was a time, no doubt, when men set up what they called a city for Jesus—a commonwealth for His name. But this was a kind of religious monomania, for after all the city was only for themselves. There was no reality in it for Christ. It was a mere outburst of fanatical folly. But I am speaking now of simplicity and assiduity in the sight of God, of guidance by His word and Spirit.

Faith is not just to be limited to believing in Jesus for salvation, or subjection to Him as to this duty or that duty. It is more. It is a cleaving to a Living Person as a center that commands my soul in all the work I am set to do. The disciples went to Jesus, and one of them goes and finds another and brings him to Jesus. How was this? Had Christ been only a man, they never would have left John the Baptist. Why should they? They were John the Baptist's disciples, and of all men born of women there had not been a greater than John. Why did they leave him? Because they found the Messiah—One surely to be preferred before him—the Eternal One.

Are you conscious that in all your religious life you refer to the Lord Jesus—that He is really and truly your center? Most people you know go by where they were born or bred, christened or converted, by their country, by their connection, or something of that sort. But these disciples

did not. They for the first time in their lives recognized a Man of divine glory and authority Who had absolute claims on their affection and allegiance. I leave that to work in every breast here. Be sure whatever you do, more particularly in religious things, that you have no superior authority to Jesus. Look alone to Him then, whatever dark questions may perplex you, and He will give you light.

That is not all. We are going through a wilderness. We have to pass through a world where there are manifold and subtle snares. We want, therefore, not only a center to work to, but a path to follow. Where shall we find the true path for our souls? Not surely when we get to heaven. There we shall need no way, because all is good and bright there. But where all is wrong, when you are surrounded by enemies of every kind, you want an unerring way. Where shall such a path be found? I answer, in the Savior. The Lord, therefore, in the next place brings out that truth. “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.” He Himself is the path, the only true way for the Christian. Whatever comes—whatever difficulties or trials—search and see what the will of the Lord is; and the moment you are subject to His will, you follow Him. He was always doing the will of God, as He reveals the will of God in His word. To obey His word in faith is to follow Himself.

There is another blessing. We are in a world where there are false paths of all kinds, and men are ensnared by them. Some have their tastes here, some have there their predilections or their prejudices. One requires, therefore, to have an object before the soul to keep it right; and what do we find to be the declared object in the end of the chapter? The Son of Man. Remark that He is not spoken of as the Son of God. Just before He is. But He Who is the Son of God is also the Son of Man, and it is as Son of Man that He is brought before us here. “Hereafter (rather, henceforth) ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” Thus the highest angels of God waited upon the humbled Man—the One who came down so low that, while all saints follow Him, none really approaches. Such is the object for the Christian, no matter what he does. If I look at the foundation of my soul, the Lamb of God is this. If I think of the power that lifts to heaven, the Spirit He gives is the power. If I seek for a center to work to, Christ is that center. If I want a path to follow through the intricacies of the world, He and He alone is the One to follow. If I look for an object for my soul, He is the only one God gives me.

Do not treat even Scripture poetry as mere poetry. I grant that even from the poetic point of view nothing is like it, and that all Shakespeare or Milton ever wrote so grandly is poor indeed compared with what is therein. Take even Milton, who had the benefit of using Scripture expressly. He puts all wrong where, if I listen to him, the devil is reigning in a very fine palace. What a vain dream! Satan has never reigned in hell. The devil will be the most miserable object in hell through all eternity. This is not reigning. So evident is it that the effect of the Miltonic picture is to disorder men's minds about the truth. The devil is reigning in this world now and here, not in hell. What is still more important is the erroneous impressions he gives of God and especially of His Son. For Christ is ever the test whether one is taught of God, or only glories in man. I press this for the purpose of securing the truth to settle our souls—to give us true objects as seen in the light of God—to make us firm and constant in His grace and truth, His light shining down upon our every step through this wilderness world. May God in His rich mercy grant that these remarks may help to lead some weary wayfarer out of the darkness of the enemy into the marvelous light of God. Amen.

The Fullness of Christ, Fullness of Christ, The: Part 2 (1:29)

HE that is the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the same is He who baptizes with the Holy Ghost; and it is of importance to see it all. He has gone up to heaven, but His interest in His people is none the less; if possible, He is in a better position to show it. All power, all authority, has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. And what is He doing now? Many things, of which one is here singled out by inspiration, His baptizing with the Holy Spirit.

What is this? Baptism regularly means closing one condition in which you have been, and introducing you into an entirely different one. Such is the meaning of baptism in every case. It represents a closing of the past, and the introduction into a new position. It may only be a given place, and so only an external one. A man might be baptized, and none the better for it as far as regards his soul. This has been the case with thousands—nay, millions. But when a man is baptized even with water only, a solemn responsibility is placed upon him. A baptized person stands in a new and grave position. He is no longer a mere heathen. He is no longer simply a Jew. He confesses the name of the Lord Jesus. For we are supposing that the man adopts it—that he stands to it—that he does not apostatize openly: I am not at all raising any of the controversial questions of the time. I am only speaking of the thing itself, baptism; and I assert that it is not so small a matter as some people imagine, any more than the regular and indispensable means of life, as so many others dream. Christ gives life, not baptism: so to say is false and superstitious. But it does at any rate change one's status; and the baptized person, by the very fact of being baptized as much as says, I own Him Who died and rose again; I own Him Who is the only Savior of sinners; I own Him Who has already accomplished redemption.

Now the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the power that brings us into heavenly privilege, and still goes on in its effect. It is not a question of outward profession, of which baptism with water is the sign. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a new and divine work. But what does it bring to us? Not merely the remission of sins, which baptism with water represents. The baptism of the Holy Spirit associates livingly with Christ at the right hand of God. For this reason the Spirit comes from heaven. Our Lord, even after He rose from the dead, baptized not then with the Holy Ghost. He said before He went up to heaven— “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” To whom did He say this? To the disciples. They were not unbelievers: there were only believers then present. But they needed to have wrought another work in them that had not been wrought in one however favored in the whole world. Never since the world began had there been baptism with the Holy Ghost. It is a work that followed Christ's ascension to heaven, uniting us with Himself and one with another.

I call your attention to this, because all great vital truths are founded on facts. They are not ideas only. They are not mere reasonings hammered out of the intellect of man. They are the drawing out of the person of Christ the grand truths that follow from all the great facts about the Lord Jesus. Thus, as you have the work of atonement depending upon His death, and the liberty and brightness of the Christian's life upon His resurrection, so His ascension has to usher in a fresh blessing. I do not say it is the only blessing, but a very great one—that now the Lord Jesus from the right hand of God sends down the Holy Ghost to associate livingly with Himself every soul that believes the gospel. The Son of Man indeed was sealed in His own moral perfectness (John 6:27), as was meet; we, only in virtue of His redemption, Who is gone on high and has sent down the Holy Spirit to seal us.

And what is the result of that? A heavenly character is impressed upon every Christian. “As is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” We are not earthly men. We were, and indeed worse than that—we were lost men. A Jew at the very best is only an earthly man as such; but a Christian is characteristically not so. He has to learn what is spiritually discerned. He rests upon a Person. Grace to him flows down from that one Man, the head of the new family—the Man Who is in heaven, and Whom all heaven worships; for all the angels of God worship Him. And further, wondrous to say, Christians are not merely born anew and forgiven, not merely justified and children of God, but they are associated with Christ. They are united to Him at the right hand of God.

Suppose the greatest lord in this land were to select some person in this room to be his wife. What would be the result of that relationship? If a young girl became the object of his affections and were married to him, what would be the consequence of that union? Why, for her at once a total change. She enters into all his dignity, and receives a new name from him. There is a new relationship; and if he has possessions without bound, he shares them, as we know, with her. All that is exactly what is true of the Christian. The union of the Christian with Christ is founded on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus: he is by the power of the Spirit even now united to Christ at the right hand of God.

And so it is that we find the apostle opening out the consequence in chapter 15 of First Corinthians— “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly” (48, 49). Is it not very striking that the apostle wrote thus to the disorderly Corinthians? Every tyro has a slap at the Corinthians. They were indeed very faulty; but there are few saints now who are not really far below the Corinthians. Yet these were the persons to whom the Holy Ghost addressed these words. Had they been predicated of the choicest saints on earth, one might have said “Oh, yes, these are heavenly men.” It does not, however, rest on personal merit. It is not a question of superior intelligence or of higher endowments spiritually. Of course, there ought to be intelligence, and there ought to be practical spirituality; but we must never forget that the maiden's exaltation to be a duchess, or a princess if you will, does not at all depend upon her deserving it, nor because she had a sweeter character or a prettier face than other people. Perhaps it was not so at all. A far more important thing decides: it depends on the Duke, or Prince; and he was pleased to choose her.

This, I affirm, is what is pre-eminently true of our blessed Savior. We know that all is accomplished according to the sovereign grace of God, and that He looks watchfully that they who are called by His grace should comport themselves suitably to it. It is a question of conforming them according to Christ; and if they do not carry themselves according to the Lord Jesus, you know the Lord has His way of dealing with them. Why did some of the Corinthians die? Why were many of them troubled? Why were many sick? They had walked as men, as Greeks. But were they then heavenly? To be sure they were; and this is the very thing that made their conduct so bad. The more we see of the grace of the Lord, the greater ground for self-condemnation, if we behave ourselves unworthily of the Lord Jesus.

But the first thing is, let us leave room for the grace of Christ. Let us without hesitation rest upon the word of God—the word of His grace, inviting us, encouraging us, removing obstacles out of the way, bringing the full tide of blessing into our souls. Then when we have got the blessing, let us sit in judgment upon our souls, the Holy Ghost being in us a spirit of power, of love, and of sobriety, and bringing us into a new association with Christ at the right hand of God, which stamps us as heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the Heavenly. How perfect the description! All see that we do not yet bear the image of the Heavenly. We bear the image of Adam still. Who, then, are heavenly? The title is conferred upon us, although we have got very little to show for it in present appearance. But still there it is: Christ has made us heavenly. He has brought us into that relationship of glory, and will ultimately conform us to the image of Himself, when we shall shine in all the beauty and glory of Christ. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly. So declares God's word.

This, then, is the double work of our Lord Jesus—the mighty work He wrought on the cross, and the mighty work He inaugurated from the right hand of God. Indeed His glory is set forth in other ways, though we are unworthy of all. He is in heaven, but we are on earth, and consequently here exposed to difficulties, dangers, and snares. We require, therefore, a friend on high, and the light of the grace of Christ for all the difficulties. God may employ others; but the true test of any ministry is the bringing of souls to know Christ in a way He was never learned before. If I get fresh glimpses of Christ with renewed confidence in His love; if I have the truth and the grace of the Lord brought before my soul in a manner which I had not previously realized, my soul receives a strength it never yet possessed.

Now, in this way it is that the Spirit of God shows us the immensity of Christ, and that the whole practical power of Christianity lies in His person and work. Every one admits that the great subject in the scripture is Christ, and that the object of faith is Christ; but it is not so generally seen that “Christ is all.” I have endeavored to illustrate that in deed and truth Christ is all. When we are delivered from the burden of our sins; when we are brought into association with Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, we want a center for our hearts. Man cannot be without a center. Only God is self-sufficient; we are not except in sin; and even where we pretend to be self-sufficient, we always sink low down. Now, man was made to look up, not to look down. A brute looks down, but man does not. Often, however, he only looks up as far as the stars and the sun, and worships them. You must look above them all up to God—not to the sun or to any other objects man has always been ready to deify.

(To be continued D.V.)

The Fullness of Christ, Fullness of Christ, The: Part 1 (1:29-51)

THE glory of Christ is the central truth of the Bible. Anyone could see His humiliation; Pilate and Herod and the unbelieving Jews, the Roman soldiers, all the multitude did. But the sight of His humiliation was nothing without His glory; and when His glory was discerned, it was the humiliation of the Lord Jesus that filled the heart with shame and with abasement. This always deepens in presence of the love which made One so high to stoop so low; and whatever humiliation was seen in the days of our Lord was only the prelude of a deeper humiliation.

“Himself bare our sorrows and took our sicknesses,” says the evangelist Matthew, looking on the wondrous grace of His earthly ministry; and it was true. The quotation, which is from Isaiah, does not refer to the atonement, I admit; but His path was one that led straight to the

atonement. The bearing of our sorrows and sicknesses is quite a different thing from the bearing of our sins; but it was the same person in grace. Jehovah-Messiah was of course a divine person; but partaking of Mood and flesh, He took the place of man in weakness. He drew from God the Father as a dependent man for every need that came before Him. It mattered not what it was: a sick body, a disordered soul, a mind filled with all that Satan can infuse of fear and terror and all that is most hateful to God and man; nay, death itself—nothing stood in His ray. Whatever He needed, He drew down from God to meet each case; but He always bore the sorrow on His heart. He never was like those we may see any day who get rid of an importunate beggar with a sixpence. He never did so; but He bent under the weight of every sickness and sorrow He relieved. This is perfection. It was the perfection of His life as a man here below, even in doing miracles. Signs and wonders might be wrought by people that have no communion with God, and no compassion for man. He wrought them in grace peculiar to Himself.

The Lord Jesus was always in an unbroken and of perfect relationship with God and of perfect compassionate pity towards man. Yet He well knew that all this was but preliminary to the great work that lay before Him. And what was that?

His death as the Lamb of God—a work not yet seen in all its effects, and never to be so seen till not only the kingdom—which is a grand display—be established on the earth, but full perfection be reached: the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. No longer will even government be needed—righteousness will dwell in peace, when evil and wretchedness are gone. There will be the full fruit, not only of grace, but of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, already enjoyed by faith.

Therein is a great ground of confidence for a poor soul that is anxious about its sins. I do not say that the Lord Jesus has taken sin out of the world yet. This may not be quite true; but He is the One who is to do it. There is but One, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Without saying that all is done, He is the Person; and if you ask me where is the work through which that infinite result is to be effected, on which it rests, and in virtue of which it will be done, I answer unhesitatingly, It is the cross. Love could not banish sin. Power could not banish sin according to God. Power might act, but where then love and righteousness? Had the Lord Jesus appeared merely to put away all evil from before Him, what must become of us? Where could sinful souls find refuge? If I am to stand and lift up my head in the presence of God, it must be on the ground of His righteousness. And this is exactly what the Lord Jesus provided on the cross. On the one hand, there was God in His love and holy nature, in His righteousness and majesty; on the other, there was man in all his sin and ruin; and the Lord Jesus comes between both. He goes not from man to God; but He comes from God to man, and God was glorified in His cross about man's sin. “For God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The Lord Jesus did not produce one atom of love in the heart of God that was not there before; by the atoning work on the cross He removed all hindrance for every soul that bows down and owns his sins, but for none other. No one will receive the blessing of grace without faith and repentance; and it would be no blessing to man or glory to God without it. There must be the work of the Spirit in our hearts to produce self-judgment with confidence in God through that which the Lord Jesus has borne for the sake of sinners. If the heart be unaffected, if conscience be harder than a millstone, how could such a soul give praise to God in heaven?

God is not merely working for heaven, He is raising a testimony for Christ in human hearts on the earth before they go to heaven. The best robe for the prodigal does not mean only in heaven, When heaven comes, will there be an elder son out in the field? No murmuring is heard there—if possible less insult to the Father. Nobody in heaven will act thus. It is here and now, alas! that it is done. But there is where people very often stop. They think the only thing that is now true in the gospel is the Father coming out to kiss the son, the order to take away his rags—to invest him with the best robe, and to put a ring and shoes on him. Would to God that even this were better known! There are many who would lessen the guilt of sin and wrong Christ still. Men are not ashamed of this, and do not see it is deep dishonor to Christ, defrauding Him of His just reward. That which God delights in is to make men righteously happy now and in this world; and this not in the smallest degree because of any merits on the sinner's part, but entirely as the fruit of divine grace in His own Son and His redemptive work. But then the heart must bow to it; and this not only by the faith that receives it from God, but by the repentance that judges self, not one's evil works only, but the nature.

Now the feast is given; the calling of the friends and neighbors together is what follows; but it follows here—not merely in heaven. When in the heavenly city, there will be the tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits, and every month. But what the parable of the prodigal son shows us is a feast begun on earth—God's joy (for it was not merely the prodigal's joy) in having back His erring son safe and sound.

Beloved reader, what meaning has that to you? Has it none? Are you, first of all, in the delivered condition of the prodigal? and, secondly, are you entering into the joy and love of God, which goes out and shares your joy? This is what God looks for now in this world. In heaven, no doubt, we shall have it in perfection; but the Christian man is called to enter into the love of God and joy of God while on the earth. He is not merely a forgiven man. He is not at all a man who is forborne with: this was the case before the death of Christ on the cross. When God was dealing in Old Testament times with His people, He forbore to press the debt; and they were then, as men are now in their natural state, liable to punishment. But then the work of Christ was not done, and God, looking on to it, would not exact the debt. He passed over the sins. There was a prætermission of sins; now there is a remission of sins. Not only does the Lord not judge the sins—they are completely gone.

You can conceive a wise, indulgent creditor who knew that you were greatly tried, but who thought proper to pity you, whatever might have brought about your straitened circumstances. He was merciful to you, and did not press the debt. But is this all the gospel? The gospel goes farther, and says that your sins on believing it are completely gone. Remember too it is only the first step—the threshold of the gospel; and this is what brings me to the next truth which I wish to present to you.

Notes on John, John 1:35-45, Notes on (1:35-45)

We have had before us John's testimony reaching out far beyond the Messiah in Israel; we see now the effect of his ministry. “Again, on the morrow, stood John and two of his disciples; and, looking fit Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! and the two disciples heard him speak, and followed Jesus. But Jesus, having turned and beheld them following, saith to them, What seek ye? And they said to him,

Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where abidest thou? He saith to them, Come and see.

They went therefore and saw where he abode, and abode with him that day. It was about the tenth hour." (Ver. 35-39.) It is not the fullest or clearest statement of the truth which most acts on others. Nothing tells so powerfully as the expression of the heart's joy and delight in an object that is worthy. So it was now. "Looking at Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" The greatest of woman-born acknowledges the Savior with unaffected homage, and his own disciples that heard him speak follow Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease." And so it ought to be. Not John but Jesus is the center: a man but God, for none other could be such without derogation from the divine glory. Jesus maintains that glory, but this as man too. Wonderful truth, and for man how precious and cheering! John was the servant of God's purpose, and his mission was thus best executed when His disciples followed Jesus. The Spirit of God supplants human and earthly motives. How indeed could it be otherwise, if one really believed that He in His person was God on earth? He must be the one exclusive and attractive center for all that know Him; and John's work was to prepare the way before Him. So here his ministry gathers to Jesus, sends from himself to Jesus.

But if in the Gospel of Matthew the Lord has a city if not a home, which we can name, here in that of John it is unnoticed where He dwelt. The disciples heard His voice, came and saw where He dwelt, abode with Him that day; but for others it is unnamed and unknown. We can understand that so it should be with One who was not only God in man on earth, but this wholly rejected of the world. And so divine life effects in those that are His: "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

Nor does the work stop there or then. "Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two that heard from John and followed him. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith to him, We have found the Messiah (which interpreted is Christ), and he led him to Jesus. Jesus looking at him said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which is interpreted Peter)." (Vers. 40, 42.) Deeply interesting are these glimpses at the first introduction to Jesus of those souls who receiving Him found life eternal in Him and were called afterward to be foundations of that now building which would supersede the old, God's habitation in the Spirit. But all here concentrates in the person of Jesus, to whom Simon is brought by his brother, one of the first two whose souls were drawn to Him, however little yet they appreciated His glory. Yet was it a divine work, and Simon's coming was answered with a knowledge of past and present and future that told out who and what He was, who now spoke to man on earth in grace.

Here the same principle re-appears. Jesus, the image of the invisible God, the only perfect manifestation of God, is the acknowledged center beyond all rivalry. He was to die, as this Gospel relates (chap, 11), to gather in one the scattered children of God; as He will by-and-by gather all things in heaven and all things on earth under His headship. (Eph. 1) But then His person could not but be the one center of attraction to every one who saw by faith, as it was entitled to be for every creature. Only He was come not only to declare God and show us the Father in Himself the Son, but to take all on the ground of His death and resurrection, having perfectly glorified God in respect of the sin which had ruined all; and thereon to take His place in heaven, the glorified Head over all things to the church His body on earth, as we know now. On this however, as involving the revelation of God's counsels and of the mystery hidden from ages and from generations, I do not enter, as it would carry us rather to the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, the vessel chosen for disclosing these heavenly wonders.

Our business now is with John who lets us see the Lord on earth, a man but very God, and so drawing to Himself the hearts of all taught of God. Had He not been God, it would have been robbery not only from God but sometimes also from man. But not so: all the fullness dwelt in Him—dwelt in Him bodily. He was therefore from the beginning the divine center for saints on earth as afterward when the exalted Man the center on high, to whom as Head the Spirit united them as members of His body. This last could not be till redemption made it possible according to grace, but on the basis of righteousness. What we see in John attaches to the glory of His divine person; otherwise to bring to Jesus would have been to separate from God, not to Him as it was. But, in truth, He was and is the sole revealed center, as He was and is the only full revealer of God, and this because He is God, though God manifest in flesh and so meeting and winning man to God.

"On the morrow he would go forth into Galilee, and Jesus findeth Philip and saith to him, Follow me. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter." (Ver. 44, 45.) It is an immense thing to be delivered by Jesus from the waste of one's own will or from the attachment of the heart to the will of a man stronger than ourselves; an immense thing to know that we have found in Him, not the Messiah merely, but the center of all God's revelations, plans, and counsels, so that we are gathering with Him because we are gathering to Him. All else, whatever the plea or pretension, is but scattering, and therefore labor in vain, or worse.

But we need more and find more in Jesus, who deigns to be not only our center but our "way," on earth indeed, but not of the world as He is not. For such He is, no less than the Truth and the Life. What a blessing in such a world! It is now a wilderness where is no way. He is the Way. Do we fear where to walk, what step to take? Here are snares to seduce, there dangers to affright. Above them says the voice of Jesus, "Follow me." None other is safe. The best of His servants may err, as all have. But even were it not so, He says "Follow me." Christian, hesitate no more. Follow Jesus. You will find a deeper and better fellowship with those that are His; but this by following Him whom they follow. Only look well to it that it be according to the word, not your own thoughts and feelings; for are they better than those of others? Search your motives according to the light where you walk. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." But singleness is secured by looking to Jesus, not to ourselves or others. We have seen enough of ourselves when we have judged ourselves before God. Let us follow Jesus: to Him only and absolutely, a divine person on earth, it is duo. It is the true dignity of a saint; it is the only security of him who has still to watch against the sin that is in him; it is the path of genuine humility and of real love. In this shall we be sure of the guidance of the Spirit who is here to glorify Him, taking of His and showing them to us.

Notes on John, John 1:19-28, Notes on (1:19-28)

If the verses which precede comprise the divine preface, the section which follows may be viewed as an introduction. The Baptist in answer to the inquiring deputation gives an explicit, though in the first place negative, testimony to the Lord Jesus. Singularly fitted vessel of witness to the Messiah, as was he himself filled by the Spirit from his mother's womb, he was sustained as scarce another had ever been in nothing but the function of making straight the path of Jehovah.

“And this is the witness of John when the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites that they might ask him, “Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; and confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, “What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he saith, No. They said therefore to him, Who art thou, that we may give an answer to those that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? He said I [am the] voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the path of [the] Lord, as said Esaias the prophet. And they were sent from among the Pharisees; and they asked him and said to him, Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water: in the midst of you standeth, whom ye know not, he who cometh after me, of whom I am not worthy to unloose the thong of his sandal. These things took place in Bethany,1 across the Jordan where John was baptizing.” (Ver. 19-28.)

Thus did God take care to rouse a general expectancy of the Messiah in the minds of His people, and to bear them the fullest witness. And never was there a more strictly independent witness than John, born and brought up and kept till the fit moment to testify of the Messiah. For while the minute questions of those sent by the Jews from Jerusalem show how men's minds were then exercised, how they wished to ascertain the real character and aim of the mysterious Israelite, himself of priestly lineage, and thereby as they ought to have known excluded from the Messianic title, there was no vagueness in the reply. John was not the Anointed. This was the main aim of their search; and our Gospel very simply attests the reply.

There is somewhat of difficulty in the next answer. For when asked, “Art thou Elijah?” he says, “I am not.” How is this denial from the lip of John himself to be reconciled with the Lord's own testimony to His servant in Matt. 17:11, 12? “Elias truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.” And they were right. The key appears to lie in Matt. 11:14: “And if ye will receive it,” (says the Lord in vindicating John at a time when, if ever, he seemed to waver in his testimony, for who but One is the Faithful Witness?) “this is Elias which was for to come.” Such a word however needed ears to hear. Like the Lord (Son of man no less than Messiah), his testimony and his lot were to be in unison with an advent in shame and sorrow as well as in power and glory. The Jews naturally cared only for the latter; but, to avail not only for God but for the true wants of man, first must Jesus suffer before He is glorified, and come again in power. So Elijah came to faith (“if ye will receive it") in the Baptist who testified in humiliation and with results in man's eyes scanty and evanescent. But Elijah will come in a manner consonant with the return of the Lord to deliver Israel and bless the world under His reign. To the Jew who only looked at the external he was not come: to point to the Baptist would have seemed mockery; for if they had no apprehension of God's secrets or His ways, and they saw no beauty in the humble Master, what would it avail to speak of the servant? The disciples, feeble though they might be, enter into the truths hidden from men and are given to see beneath the surface the true style of the servant and of the Master to faith.

Nevertheless John does take his stand of witness to Jesus, to His personal and divine glory; and to this end, when challenged who he was, applies to himself the prophetic oracle in every Gospel attached to him: “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of Jehovah.” Jesus was Jehovah, John no more than a voice in the desolation of the earth, yea, of Israel, to prepare the way before Him.

They further inquire why he baptized, if neither the Messiah, nor Elijah (that is, the immediate precursor of the kingdom in power and glory over the earth, Mal. 4), nor the prophet (that is, according to Deut. 18 which, however, the apostle Peter in Acts 3 as clearly applies to the Lord Jesus, as the Jews seem to have then alienated from the Messiah). This gives John the occasion to render another testimony to Christ's glory; for his answer is, that he baptized with water: but there stood among them, unknown to them, One coming after, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose.

It is evident that John's baptism had a serious import in men's minds, since, without a single miracle or other sign, it awakened the question whether the Baptist were the Christ. It intimated the close of the old state of things and a new position, instead of being the familiar practice which traditionaries would make it. On the other hand, scripture is equally plain that it is quite distinct from Christian baptism: so much so, that disciples previously baptized with John's baptism had to be baptized to Christ when they received the full truth of the gospel. (Acts 19) The Reformers and others are singularly unintelligent in denying this difference, which is not only important but plain and certain. Think of Calvin's calling it a foolish mistake, into which some had been led, of supposing that John's baptism was different from ours! The confession of a coming Messiah widely differs from that of His death and resurrection, and this is the root of differences which involve weighty consequences.

Notes on John, John 1:1-13, Notes on (1:1-13)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Word, the expression of the Godhead, has eternal being, distinct personality, and properly Deity, not merely θειότης but θεύτης. We see One who was before time began. It is not even the beginning of creation but before then, when the Word was with God before all things were made by Him. Look back as we may before creation, the Word was—not ἐγένετο, existed, as One that had commenced to be, but was, ἦν, the Word incerate, yea the Creator. Further, He “was with God,” not exactly with the Father as such; for scripture never speaks with such correlation. “The Word was with God.” Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were there, but the Word was with God, “and the Word was God.” He was no creature, but essentially divine, though not He alone divine. Other Persons there were in the Godhead. “He was in the beginning with God;” not at a subsequent date, but “in the beginning,” when no creature had commenced its existence. For this truth we are entirely indebted to God. Who could speak of such things but God? It is He who uses John to write, and all He says is worthy of implicit faith. The Word “was in the beginning with God.” His personality was eternal, no less than His nature or being. Then as an added and after communication we are told that “all things were made by him, and without him not one thing was made which has been made.” The Word was not made, but Himself made all.1 The Word is the Creator of all that has had a derived being. He created all. No creature received being save through Him.

No scripture gives us such complete information. Even Gen. 1, though it points to states of creation indefinitely anterior to Adam, begins only with John 1:3. “What was before creation is wholly omitted by Moses. John (1:1, 2) shows us what was before creation, as well as creation itself (ver. 3), in the most precise terms.

But there is much more than the power of an eternal Being. For we come now to a thing higher and more intimate: not to what was brought into being through Him, but to what was in Him. He is the true God and eternal life. “In him was life."2 Believers have life; but it is in the Son, not in them but in Him; “and the life was the light of men.” (Ver. 4.) Not angels but men were the object. He does not say life, but light of men. The life was only for those that believe in His name: the light goes far beyond, That which makes manifest is light. But men, in fact, were fallen and at a distance from God; and so it is intimated here. “And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended [that is, apprehended] it not.” (Ver. 5.)

Darkness is neither the mother of all as the heathen said, nor a malignant creator the co-eternal opponent of the Lord God of light; it is really the moral condition of man, a negation of the light, differing wholly from the physical reality, inasmuch as it is of itself unaffected by light. Grace only, as we shall see by and by, can deal effectually with the difficulty.

Here it may be noticed that John does not discourse of life absolutely, but life in the Word, which life is affirmed to be the light of men. It is exclusive of other objects; at least the proposition goes not beyond men. So, in Col. 1, Christ is said to be the image of the invisible God, who is here only revealed to perfection in man and to men. He is the Light of men, and there is no other: for if man has what scripture calls light he has it only in the Word, who is the life. Beyond controversy God is light and in Him is no darkness at all; but He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen nor can see. Not so with the Word of whom we are reading. “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” Observe the striking precision of the phrases. It appears in darkness, such is its nature—it shines, not it shone; whereas the abstract form is changed for the historical, when we are told that the darkness apprehended it not.

Thus we have had the Spirit's statement of the Word, in relation first to God, next to creation, lastly to men, with a solemn sentence on their moral state in relation to the light, and not merely to life.

We are next presented with John sent from God to testify of the light. “There was a man sent from God—his name John. This [man] came for a witness that he might witness about the light, that all might believe through him; this was not the light, but that he might witness about the light.” (Ver. 6-8.) God who is love was active in His goodness to draw attention to the light; for deep was man's need. Hence there was a man sent from Him—his name John. He, as we are told elsewhere, was the burning and shining lamp (ὁ ύχνος); but the Word was the Light (τὸ φῶς?) concerning which he came for witness. For his mission is here viewed in relation, not to the law or any legal purpose, but to the Light (and hence its scope is far beyond Israel), that he might witness concerning the Light, that all might believe through him. It is a question of personal faith in the Savior, not merely of moral exhortation to the multitude, tax-gatherers, soldiers, or any others, as in the Gospel of Luke. Every scripture is perfect, and perfectly adapted to the divine purpose of glorifying Jesus.

The Light is the object of God's gracious purpose. John is but an instrument and witness; he was not the Light, but that he might witness concerning the light. “The true light was that ['or, he was the true light] which, coming into the world, lighteth every man” in exclusion of Philonism and Platonism, as we have seen before of Manicheanism and eternal matter. The law dealt with those under it, that is, with Israel; the Light on coming into the world, a cardinal point in the teaching of our apostle (1 John 1:1-4; 2:7, 14, &c), casts its light on every man. Coming, or a comer, into the world is used by the Rabbis for birth as man; but for this very reason it would be the merest tautology if viewed in apposition with v. ίίνθρ. “every man."3 It qualifies the relative, and affirms that as incarnate the true Light lights every man.

The result however in itself, is, and can only be, condemnation by reason of opposition of nature; for as we are told, “He was in the world, and the world was made [or brought into being] through him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him to them he gave authority to become children of God, to those that believe on his name; who were born not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God.” (Ver. 10-13.) What infinite and loving condescension that He, the eternal Word, the true Light, should be in the world—the world which received its being from Him! How dense its ignorance that the world knew Him not, the Creator! But He had one place on earth which He was pleased to own as His own peculiar (ταΐδια): there He came; and (οἱ ἴδιοι) His own people (it is not said knew Him not but) received Him not! It was rejection, not ignorance! This prepared the way for the manifestation of a new thing, men from out of the ruined world separated to a new and incomparably nearer relationship with God, to whom, as many as received Him (for it is no question of “every man” here), He gave right or title to enter the place of God's children, to those that believe on His name. Nor is this a mere external position of honor, into which sovereignty might choose, so as to maintain by adoption family name and grandeur. It is a real communication of life and nature, a living birth-tie. They are τέκνα θεοῦ.

John nowhere describes believers as νἱοἱ but as τέκνα, for his point is life in Christ, rather than the counsels of God by redemption. Paul on the other hand (as in Rom. 8) calls us both υἱούς and τέκνα θεοῦ, because he is setting forth, both the high place given us now in contrast with bondage under the law, and also the intimacy of our relationship as children of God. On the other hand it is notable that Jesus is never called τέκνον (though as Messiah He is styled παῖς or servant), but νίός.” He is the Son, the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, but not τέκνον as if He were born of God as we are. To me it is the name of nearest but derived relationship. This is quite confirmed by the immediately following statement of John, “who were born... of God.” So indeed it will be seen invariably elsewhere, despite the Authorized Version which wrongly represents τέκνα by “sons” in his first epistle, chapter iii. They believe on His name, on the manifestation of what the Word is. Every creature source is shut out, as well as all previous relationship closed and done with; a new race is brought in. They were men, of course, and cease not to be men as a fact; but they are born afresh spiritually, born of God most truly, partake of the divine nature in this sense, as deriving their new life from God. Natural generation, effort of one's own, effort of others, had no place here. Life, as ever throughout John and Paul, is wholly distinct from simple immortality. It is the possession of that divine character of being, which in the Son never had a beginning, for He was the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. He is our life; because He lives, we also live, It is true in Him and in us, in Him essentially, in us derivatively through grace, but this not so as to be for a moment independent of Him, but in Him. Still we have the life now; nowhere is it taught that we shall be born of God, only that we have been. Begotten now, as distinct from born, is false, absurd, and without the shadow of scripture to support it.

Notes on John, John 19:31-42, Notes on (19:31-42)

The reader will remark how perfectly the account of the Lord's death suits the general character and special design of John's Gospel and of no other. Here Jesus is the conscious Son, the divine person who made all things, but became flesh that He might not only give eternal life, but die as a propitiation for our sins. And here therefore, here only, He said, It is finished, and bowing His head delivered up the spirit. There are witnesses, as we shall see, but they are of God, not of man or the creature, and they intimately flow from His own person. No darkness is mentioned, no cry that His God had forsaken Him, no rending of the veil, no earthquake, no centurion's confession; all of which meet to proclaim the rejected Messiah. (Matt. 27) So substantially, save the earthquake, the Servant Son of God obedient to death in Mark 15 Luke 23 adds the testimony to His grace in the crucified robber, His first-fruits in paradise, and the centurion's witness to “Jesus Christ the righteous,” after He had committed His spirit into His Father's hands. It was reserved for John to set forth His death who was God not less surely than man, and as such. The Creator but man lifted up from the earth could say, in dying for sin to God's glory, It is finished. The work, the infinite work, was done for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice. Thereon hangs not only the blessing of every soul that is to be justified by faith, but of new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. “It is finished,” τετέλεσται, one word! yet what word ever contained so much

But no heathen were more blinded and obdurate than God's ancient people who take the lead against Jesus in an unbelieving religiousness without true fear of God, and who consequently saw not that they were but accomplishing His word in their guilty rejection of His and their Messiah.

“The Jews therefore since it was the preparation that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath1 was great), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken and they be taken away. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they broke not his legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear thrust his side, and there came out immediately blood and water. And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also2 may believe. For these things came to pass that the scripture might be fulfilled, Not a bone of him shall be crushed; and again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.” (Vers. 31-37.)

In the law, the psalms, and the prophets the Spirit of God had Christ before Him, and in the sufferings to come on Him, as well as in the glories that should follow. But the fleshly mind, as it shrinks from sufferings, is disposed to overlook and get rid of testimony; especially so if the sufferings be the effect and the proof of man's evil estate, for this is of all things most unpalatable. Thus was the Jew dull to see what condemned himself and leveled him morally to the condition of any other sinner; and rejecting the fullest evidences and His own presence in divine grace and truth and the gospel at last, he wits given over to judicial hardening when wrath came on them to the uttermost. Christ only gives the key to the paschal lamb, Christ is the main object in the Psalms. No reasoning of skeptics, even if theologians, can efface the truth, though it exposes their own unbelief; and assuredly if the heart were made right by grace, it would desire that to be true which is the truth, instead of stumbling at the word being disobedient, or neglecting it because of indifference. In vain then do the Rosenmullers and the like hesitate or avow their dislike of the type and the allusion. To faiths it is food and strength and joy; for if God's word is instinct with His delight in Christ giving Himself to die, He also expresses it in every sort of form beforehand that the cry facts of His atoning death, the great stumbling-block, might render the most irrefragable testimony to its truth and His glory when thus manifested in shame here below.

How marvelously meet in Christ's cross the proud enmity of the Jew, the lawless hand of the Gentiles, the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and this in perfect grace to the guiltiest of Jews and Gentiles! For out of Christ's pierced side came out forthwith blood and water.3 And John was not so preoccupied with the Savior's dying charge concerning Mary as not to mark the sight. In the strongest form he lets us know that what he saw and testified was no mere transient fact, but before the mind as present, of permanent interest and importance. In his first epistle (ver. 6) he characterizes the Lord accordingly. “This is he that came by (sta) water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in (4) the power of water only, but in the power of water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” Moral purification however needed and precious is not enough; there must be expiation of sins also; and both are found by faith in the death of Christ, not otherwise nor elsewhere. As a fact in the Gospel the order is blood and water; as applied to us in the Epistle it is the water and the blood, and the Spirit as One personally given follows. Nothing but death flows to man from Adam: Christ, the second Man who died for sin and sinners, is the source alike of purification and of atonement to the believer, who needs both and is dead before God without both. For though the Son of God with life in Himself, He stands alone till He dies; dying He bears much fruit. He quickens, purifies and expiates; and the Holy Ghost consequently given brings us into the import of His death as well as blessing resulting from it. For it is judgment pronounced and executed by God in His cross on the flesh, but in our favor because in Him who was a sin-offering.

No wonder then that John was inspired to record the fact, not more wondrous in itself than in its consequences now made known to the believer. The salvation must be suited to and worthy of the Savior, If He was eternal, it was everlasting; if divine judgment fell on such a Victim, it was that they believing in Him should not come into judgment but have life, being forgiven all their offenses and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Such is the declared standing of every true Christian, but it is in virtue of Christ, who is all and in all. Creeds and theological systems enfeeble and hinder its enjoyment; but all this, and more than one could here develop, is clearly and plainly revealed to faith in scripture, as it is indeed due to Christ's glory.

Hence the care with which the word of God is cited and shown to be punctually fulfilled. “For these things came to pass that the scripture might be fulfilled, Not a bone of him shall be crushed; and again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."4 The natural circumstances of the crucifixion, more especially on a Friday, and that Friday the eve of sabbath in the paschal week, would have called for the breaking of the legs as a coup de grace. And in fact such was the portion of the two malefactors. But Jesus as He had proved Himself in the preceding chapter the willing Captive was now the willing Victim; and this was made manifest in His dying as and when He did die. For it surprised not only the Jews and the soldiers but Pilate, as we learn elsewhere; and it superseded all need of the crurifragium in His case. But it marked the separated Lamb of God, the Righteous One, all whose bones Jehovah keeps, not one of them broken.

Yet this very exemption led as a fact doubtless to the deed of the soldier, whose lance pierced not the malefactors but only the dead body of the Savior, wholly ignorant that so it must be, for God had said it by His prophet. All was ordered and measured; even these minute differences were revealed beforehand; yet were men and Satan indulging freely their enmity against the Son of God. And in the face of such love and light men combine their ignorance5 with their learning to escape from the truth into the dark once more. But we need not here dwell on such things. It is the same spirit that surrounded the cross:

“And after these things Joseph from Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave leave. He6 came therefore and took his body away. And there came also Nicodemus, that came at first to him7 by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pound [weight]. They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen swathes with the spices, as it is the Jews' custom to prepare for burial.8 Now there was in the place where he was crucified a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one was ever yet laid. There then on account of the preparation of the Jews, because the tomb was near, they put Jesus.” (Vers. 38-42.)

God uses a perilous time to call forth His own hidden ones. Joseph of Arimathea can be a secret disciple no longer. He was a rich man (Matt. 27) and an honorable counselor (Mark 15); but wealth and position make the confession of Christ only the harder. Fear of the Jews had hitherto prevailed. The death of Jesus, which caused others to fear, made Joseph bold. He had not consented indeed to the counsel and deed of the Jews. Now He goes to Pilate and besought the Lord's body. Nor was he alone: Nicodemus longer known, but with no happy reputation for moral-courage at the first, though afterward venturing a remonstrance to the haughty yet unjust Pharisees, joins in the last offices of love with an abundant offering of myrrh and aloes. The cross of Christ so stumbling to unbelief exercises and manifests his faith; and the twain waxed valiant by grace fulfill the lack of service of the twelve. They take the body of Jesus and bind it in linen swathes with the spices, in the manner of the Jews to prepare for burial. Egypt had its custom of embalming; so in a measure had the Jews in hope of the resurrection of the just. No prophecy is cited here; but who can forget Isaiah's words, He made His grave with the wicked [men] and with the rich [man] in His death? He was appointed His grave with the lawless and with the rich man, in His deaths, that is, after being slain: a strange combination, yet verified in Him, and who could wonder? seeing that He had done no violence and no deceit was in His mouth. And now we see in Joseph's garden, hard by the fatal scene, a new tomb which had never known an inmate: so had God provided in honor for the body of His Son, and in jealous wisdom for the truth, hewn out in the rock (as Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us): where the Lord was put Meanwhile in view of more formal burial when the sabbath should pass. So little did the disciples anticipate what the glory of the Father had at heart, though the Lord had so often plainly revealed it, till the resurrection was a fact in its own predicted time.

Notes on John, John 19:1-30, Notes on (19:1-30)

The Christ-rejecting word was passed. Their allegiance to the Roman was a lie, their mad guilt manifest in getting rid of Messiah and God Himself and all their faith and hopes. The Jews abhorred subjection to Caesar; they owned neither his right nor their own sin, which was the occasion of his supremacy. But they abhorred the Messiah more,1 not their idea but the reality according to God. They had not a thought nor a feeling, not a word nor a way nor a purpose, in common with Jesus; and this because He brought God near to them in grace, because He manifested man in perfect dependence and obedience to God, and their will with a bad conscience rejected both. Hence the cross was to them most repulsive. “We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” Yet was the law plain enough that the Messiah should be rejected by man, especially by the Jew, and die that death of curse, the terrible sin of man, yet God's atoning sacrifice for sin. But will, governed by Satan to serve a present purpose in pursuance of man's lusts and passions, blinded them to His word and to their own suicidal wickedness; as ere long they were about to prove their rebelliousness to Caesar, and have the Romans come and take away their place and nation, but not before they had filled Jerusalem with the spectacle of their own penalty till there was no room left for more crosses and wood failed to make them: so Josephus.

“Then therefore he delivered him up to them that he might be crucified. They took then Jesus, [and led [him] away]; and bearing for himself the cross he went out unto the place called of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified him, and with him two others, on this side and on that, and Jesus in the middle. And also Pilate wrote a title and put [it] on the cross; and there was written, Jesus the Nazarean, the King of the Jews. This title therefore many of the Jews read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, in Latin. Therefore said the high priest to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.” (Vers. 16-22.)

Faith alone preserves from the power and wiles of the devil. Pilate and the Jews were wholly opposed in their thoughts and wishes; but God was not in the thoughts of the one more than of the others. They had each his own way, but all astray, and now they show themselves the open enemies of righteousness as well as of grace, incapable of discerning the clearest ways, marks, and proofs of God present in love to man, no matter how low He might come down. The cross of Christ makes all and every one manifest. Pilate under pressure of fear for his own worldly interests gave up Jesus to their malice, though knowing Him innocent; and He bearing His cross went forth to the place of a Skull, Golgotha, in Latin Calvary. There was He crucified with peculiar indignity, a robber also on either hand, as a robber had been preferred to Him. Yet God took care that even there a fitting testimony, from whatever motive in Pilate's breast, should be rendered, to Him in the inscription on the cross; the despised Man of Nazareth was the Messiah. Where were the Jews if He was their King? The keenest adversaries of the true God, blindly fulfilling His terrible prophecies of their unbelief and wickedness under a self-complacent zeal for His name and law. There stood His title, read by many, for the place was near the city, written in the tongues not of the officials only, nor of the polite world, but of the Jews; and all the efforts of their high priests but riveted it to the cross under the pertinacious and irritated and scornful spirit of the procurator.

But the lowest played their part at the cross as well as the highest, men used to arms no less than the ministers of the sanctuary; and every class, every man, showed out there what each was in selfish indifference to the grace and glory of the Son of God, who suffered Himself to be numbered with the transgressors.

“The soldiers therefore, when they crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and the vest; but the vest was seamless from the top woven through the whole. They said therefore to one another, Let us not rend it, but let us draw lots for it whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled that saith, They parted my garments for themselves, and for my vesture they cast lots. The soldiers therefore did these things.” (Vers. 23, 24.) Little thought the soldiers who had charge of the execution, beyond their poor perquisites. But God's eye was now as ever on His Son; and He had taken care in His word to mark it. For in one of the most manifestly Messianic psalms, Psa. 22, stands written, a thousand years beforehand, the minute prediction of the soldiers' appropriating the garments of the Savior in a way

unmistakably applicable to Him. He is the object of scripture, though unbelief sees it not and has a will against it, because His person is as unknown as our own need of divine mercy in the cross. With what interest the Holy Spirit contemplated, as we should, every detail of His suffering, and of man's behavior at that hour! God counted Him not less worthy because the object of such indignities, and of all moment to make it known beforehand. The very minuteness of what is mentioned bears witness to the accurate reality of the prophecy. He is the demonstrated as well as rejected Messiah. His glory made it due to Him to name the particulars, which also bear witness of the depth of His grace in humiliation, that God and man might be fully shown out, and that word be proved His word in the face of every gainsayer.

But faith and love gathered near the dying Savior some of very different mind. “Now by the cross of Jesus stood his mother, and the sister of his mother, Mary the [wife] of Cleopas, and Mary of Magdala. Jesus therefore seeing his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, saith to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Next he saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother; and from that hour the disciple took her unto his own [home].” (Vers. 25-27.) These were among the women who had followed Him in His ministry and had ministered to Him in life; there they stood in His rejection by the cross, when the Lord shows how little asceticism rises to the truth. He had been absorbed in the work for which He was sent by the Father; no honey mingled with the offering, any more than leaven: salt was never absent, nor the unction; of the Holy Ghost. All had been in the consecrating power of the word and Spirit of God and to God. But perfect human affections were there, though the work undertaken in communion with the Father had filled heart and lips and hands with the higher object to the glory of God. Yet eternal interests, where thus taken up, do not efface or dishonor nature or its relationships according to God; and the Lord here marks this by commending in the most solemn and touching way John to His mother as son, and Mary to John as mother: a loving trust honored from that hour. How sweet for the loved disciple to remember and record! And how strong the contrast with superstition, no less than as we have seen with asceticism! And what a testimony in all to His own entire superiority to overwhelming circumstances!

“After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. A vessel [therefore] was standing there full of vinegar; and they, having filled a sponge with vinegar and put hyssop round [it], put [it] up to his mouth. When therefore Jesus received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and bowing his head delivered up his spirit.” (Vers. 28-30.) It is not only that in human tenderness He provides for all left behind in that supreme moment, but He thinks of scripture in spirit or in terms not yet fulfilled. No doubt there is the distressing physical effect expressed of all that mind and heart and body had endured till then; but His last request is here bound up, not with His want only, but with His undying zeal for the word if only a single thing lacked to make it honorable. Every word that proceeds through God's mouth must be fulfilled; and had He not said of Messiah, “My tongue cleaveth to my jaws,” and “In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink"? Then, having drunk, the Savior says, “It is finished” with a divine calm as perfect here, as His expression elsewhere of His unfathomable suffering.

Of none but Jesus, is it or could it be said that he gave up, παρέδωκεν, the ghost; which is wholly distinct from the expired, ἐξέπνευσεν, of Mark and Luke, confounded with the former by our translators. To expire could apply to any one's death, the blessed Lord being man as truly as any other; to give the spirit up, as said in. John, expresses His divine glory though a dying man, as the One who had title to lay down His life no less than to take it again.

Notes on John, John 19:1-15, Notes on (19:1-15)

Hard-heartedness and insult took their course, for His hour was come. Pilate took and scourged Jesus the. Lord of glory; the soldiers treated their meek prisoner with the unfeeling scorn, natural in such towards One who resisted not; yet we must look to the Jews for extreme and unrelenting hatred.

“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged [him]. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put [it] on his head, and clothed him with a purple garment, and were coming to him and saying, Hail, King of the Jews! and gave him slaps on the face. And Pilate went out again and saith to them, See! I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no fault [in him]. Jesus therefore came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment, and he saith to them, Behold the man!” (Vers. 1-8.)

The Roman saw through the baseness of the people, through the craft and deadly malice of the religions chiefs; and he seems to have resorted to the unjust policy of scourging the Lord, followed up by the allowed, if not prescribed, derision of the soldiers, as a means of satisfying the Jews and letting Jesus go. Contrary to truth and righteousness he would humor their feelings against Jesus, but he would save an innocent man if possible without loss to himself. Such is man in authority here below-at least where Christ is concerned, or even those that are Christ's. It was the place of judgment, but wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, but iniquity was there. There was not one spark of conscience in the judge, any more than in the accusers, or the crowd now quite carried away. There was man deceived by Satan; and God was in none of their thoughts. Pilate probably hoped that the uncomplaining endurance of such cruel mockery and scourging in their sight might perchance move the multitude and its leaders to compassion, whilst the exposed futility of the royal claims of Jesus would naturally awaken their contempt, and so in both ways further his own desire to dismiss the captive in whom he avowedly saw no guilt whatever. But, no! all must come out in their true colors, priests and people, learned and unlearned, civilians and soldiers, judge and prisoner. It was their hour and the power of darkness. But if man and Satan were there, so was God, morally judging them all by the One they misjudged.

Still in that blind and hardened throng the Roman, unjust as he was, shines in comparison with the Jews of all ranks; and as the difficulty grew of delivering the Guiltless from their will set on destruction, we see a man in spite of himself growingly impressed with the unaccountable dignity of Him who appeared to be at his mercy. Elsewhere indeed we read of his wife's dream sent to warn him on the judgment-seat; but here it is His person, His silence and His words alike, which increased the desire to extricate Him, from unscrupulous and murderous adversaries, always despised in Pilate's eyes, never so despicable as now.

Pilate's effort however was vain. “Behold the man!” had for its effect neither the pity nor the contempt intended to divert the crowd from their fell purpose, but rather to whet their rage afresh in clamoring for the Lord's death. In the ways of God He will not allow iniquity to prosper, least of all where Christ is in question. The unjust judge might abuse and insult the Lord, hoping to gratify the Jews thus far and turn

them from an aim from which even his stern and callous mind revolted as useless crime; but God, who abhorred the horrible iniquity of them all, lets Satan ensnare them all in the consequences of their utter unbelief, and their habitually evil state-deaf to every warning and blind to the fullest testimony of moral goodness and divine glory, and perfect grace in the holy Sufferer before them. As the judge acknowledged His innocence, yet would risk nothing on His behalf, so all commit and condemn themselves to their own ruin, stumbling over that precious Cornerstone and sure foundation as a stone disallowed by the builders.

“When then the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried, Crucify, crucify. Pilate saith to them, Take ye him, and crucify; for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered, We have a law, and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard this word, he was the more afraid, and entered into the pretorium again, and saith to Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate saith to him, Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have authority to release thee, and I have authority to crucify thee? Jesus answered, Thou hadst no authority at all against me except it were given thee from above: on this account he that delivered me up to thee hath greater sin.” (Vers. 6-12.)

The charge failing against the Lord as hostile to the powers of the world, His accusers now betake them selves to the still more solemn cry, He ought to die because He made Himself Son of God. And Pilate was the more afraid, but not more ready to fall in with their design, though he were a heathen and they the blasphemers of the Hope of Israel, the Holy One of God! Yes, He is going to die, but not for the lies some swore falsely against Him, but for the truth of God, the capital troth for man, the object of faith and one source of eternal life. He emptied Himself, and humbled Himself; but Son of God He was and is from all eternity to all eternity. Not more sure is it that matt is a sinner dead to God, than that Jesus is His Son, and eternal life is in Him only, but for every soul that believes in Him. He that believeth hath everlasting life; nor is there salvation in any other, nor is there another name under heaven which is given among men whereby we must be saved. But those who ought most to have welcomed Him, and most to have set forth His glory, were those who feared not to say, According to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself Son of God! O how real, how darkening the power of Satan, when Jews blasphemed Him boldly, and the heathen procurator “was afraid” before Him!

Fear however is not faith; and in Pilate it was not more than undefined, dread of the mysterious Man then on His trial, and a strong sense that the enmity to Him was without a cause. So entering his palace again he inquires, Whence art Thou? and, mortified at receiving no answer, he vaunts his authority to release or to crucify Him. The Lord did not answer the one query which had no better motive than curiosity apart from the fear of God or His love-but He replied to the second in terms worthy of His person, in fullness of grace and truth. Truly the hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified, and God be glorified in Him. What was the authority of a Roman governor without the will of God to sanction it? His ways, His nature must be made good; the words were now, for the deepest of purposes, just about to be accomplished to His own glory forever; and Jesus bowed absolutely to all.

Nevertheless, the accomplishing of divine counsels in Christ does not consecrate the will of man that cast Him out and slew Him; and God is righteous in judging of the evil. “On this account he that delivered me to thee hath greater sin.” The Gentile was wicked, the Jew worse: if Pontius Pilate were inexcusably unrighteous, how much more awful the position of Caiaphas or Judas Iscariot and of all they represented that day! If God sent His Son in infinite grace, He did not fail to present adequate proofs of who and what He is, to leave all inexcusable for not perceiving and receiving Him, not only those who had God's outward authority in this world, but yet more those who had His living oracles that testified of His Son, and of Himself their center and object, with such works and words and ways as never had been known on earth, proportionately measuring the guilt of those who after such grace rejected One so glorious.

“From this time Pilate sought to release him; but the Jews kept crying, saying, If thou wilt release this [man], thou art not a friend of Caesar: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. Pilate then, having heard these words, led Jesus out and sat down on [the] judgment seat at a place called Pavement,1 but in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was [the] preparation2 of the passover it was about sixth3 hour. And he saith to the Jews, See! your King. They cried therefore, Away with [him], away with [him]; crucify him, Pilate saith to them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.” (Vers. 12-15.)

How powerless is the struggle to do right, where the world is loved and one's sins unjudged, and grace unknown! The Jews saw through Pilate as he through them. How wretched not to have Christ for eternal life! Pilate preferred the friendship of the world to the Son of God, as the Jews saw no beauty in Him that they should admire Him; and both played their part in crucifying Him. Pilate may seek to release Jesus, may go in and out, may speak to Jesus and pour scorn on the Jews. But the last word of apostate unbelief passes their lips and closes Pilate's mouth, who will not be behind the Jews in allegiance to Caesar. All is over now. The prince of the world comes, and though he has nothing in Christ, Christ dies rejected of man, forsaken of God, the Righteous One for our sins; never such hatred and unrighteousness as on the world's part toward Him; never such love and righteousness as on God's part toward the world in Him.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Power and the Grace of the Name (18:1-9)

John 18:1-9

How strikingly the divine design of the Fourth Gospel differs from the three Synoptics, as seen in their reports of Gethsemane on the night of the betrayal! Who left to his own feelings would have so dwelt on his Master's agony as the beloved disciple? Yet he says not one word about it, though he alone of the Evangelists was chosen to be near the Lord in that affecting and mysterious scene, when He repaired again and again to them and found them sleeping. It fell to the others to record His exceeding sorrow in realizing the depths into which He was just about to enter; because it bore directly on the rejection of the Messiah, on the work the Righteous Servant had in hand, and on the Son of man, as perfectly dependent on His Father in the hour of woe as in all the activities of power in loving service.

Here shines out the glory of His person. Had we only the witness of John, rich as it is, what should we know of His anguish in anticipation of all before Him as He prayed to His Father, and of His entire submission whatever it cost? If most appropriately Luke alone mentions an angel strengthening Him and His sweat as clots of blood, here we see and hear the Son of the Father, to Whom He had commended His own in

chap. 17

" Jesus having said these things went out with his disciples over the winter-torrent Kidron, where was a garden into which he entered, he and his disciples. And Judas also that betrayed him knew the place; because Jesus often resorted thither with his disciples. Judas therefore, having received the band and officials from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye They answered, Jesus the Nazarene. He said to them, I am [he]. And Judas that betrayed him stood with them. When therefore he said, I am [he], they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again therefore he asked them, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus answered, I told you that I am [he]: if therefore ye seek me, let these go away; that the word might be fulfilled which he said, Of those whom thou halt given me, I lost not one " (vers. 1-9).

What communion with the Father, what prayer, what intercession, what tender care for the feeble disciples, what self-sacrificing interest on their behalf, what vigilant love of the good Shepherd, what pity for Israel, what outgoing of heart for the sheep not of this fold, had not been known in that garden! Yes, Judas knew it, and took his measures accordingly under Satan to gratify the chief priests and Pharisees. Thither he led the band with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Men who do not know the Lord talk of His " limitations," and forget that He is God, the Word become flesh, but no more ceasing to be God than a man can cease to be man. Jesus knew all things that were coming on Him, the same Jesus Who had gone through all in the profoundest grief yet dependence on the Father, for He was as truly man, the perfect man. Now when horrors began to thicken, what calm pervaded His every word and act! He went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered, Jesus the Nazarene; and on His reply, I am [He], they went backward and fell to the ground.

God indeed attested what was due to that Name; for He too was God no less than the Father and the Holy Spirit. Nor was there ever a moment more befitting. So Judas the betrayer stood with them, and he too with them fell to the ground. What a testimony to their conscience, as well as to His glory!

When the wicked Ahaziah sent a captain with his fifty to take the Tishbite prophet as he sat alone on a hill, again and again came fire down from heaven to consume the captains and their fifties. Jesus full of grace and truth came to save the lost. Not a word more did He utter. He owned Himself Jesus the Nazarene. It was enough. In His name shall bow all beings heavenly, earthly, and infernal, and every tongue confess Him Lord to God the Father's glory. It was but a witness then to that glory; but how blessed and suited and eloquent, if they had not had deaf ears, seared consciences, and hearts harder than stone! He Whose name laid them prostrate could have in a moment consigned them to death for everlasting judgment. But no! He came that God might be glorified in His death for sin, to set free every sinner that believes in Him.

And so it was of His grace that, after the manifestation of power, He asked them again, Whom seek ye? As they gave the same reply, He answered, I told you that I am [He]; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go away. O what grace now manifested on behalf of His own, so unworthy of His love, yet loved unto the end, loved though He knew all would forsake Him and flee, and that one who ventured nearer in that night of desertion would there thrice deny that he knew Him! It was a fulfillment of chap. 17:12; but great as it was, how little compared with all that those words mean and guarantee! And indeed such is His love that it covers all things great and small.

How are you who read these lines treating Him and His love? He, the Son of God and Lord of glory, was nothing to Judas and the Jews, but for the one to sell and the other to buy; and He submitted to be the willing prisoner, and the willing sacrifice, that you might hear and live. You have heard, but cannot live without faith in Him Who is the life eternal-life now that you may live of Him now-life evermore that you may have Him your life for the body and heaven as well as now for your soul on earth. But forget not that to hear and not believe on Him leaves you worse unspeakably than if you had never heard. Oh then hear, believe, and live.

Notes on John, John 18:28-40, Notes on (18:28-40)

This Lord has been before the religious authority; He is now to appear before the civil power. It was a mockery everywhere; and so it must be shown out against His person who will one day cut off him that privily slanders his neighbor and will not suffer the man that has a high look and a proud heart, any more than the liar and deceiver, early destroying all the wicked of the land, and especially from the city of Jehovah. But His glary they wist not, nor consequently His grace; yet they should not have been blind to His holy and righteous ways; but man religious or profane was filling up the cup of his iniquity, and the more so because of God's long-suffering.

“They lead then Jesus from Caiaphas to the pretorium; and it was early; and they entered not into the pretorium that they might not be defiled but eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them and said, What accusation do ye bring against this man? They answered and said to him, If this [man] were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him up to thee. Pilate therefore said to them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said to him, It is not allowed to us to put any one to death; that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which he said signifying by what death he should die. Pilate then again entered into the pretorium, and called Jesus and said to him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Of thyself sayest thou this, or did others say [it] to thee about me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thy nation and the chief priests delivered thee up to me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate then said to him, Art thou then a king? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith to him, What is truth? And having said he again went out unto the Jews, and saith to them, I find no fault in him; but ye have a custom that I release one to you at the passover: will ye then that I release to you the King of the Jews? They cried then again, all saying, Not this [man] but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.” (Vers. 28-40.)

The activity of hostile will marked the Jews, whose zeal was as great as their punctiliousness and their lack of conscience. Late and early were they at work, from one high priest to another, pushing on to the Roman governor. Bent on the blood of the Messiah they scrupled to enter the

pretorium; they must not be defiled, as they would eat the passover and had not yet done so. (Ver. 28.) Little thought they that they were but bringing about the death of the true paschal Lamb, and so in guilty unbelief fulfilling the voice of the law to their own destruction, whatever God's purpose in His death. The hard-hearted pagan seems at first fair and just compared with the chosen nation: we shall see how at last Satan found the way to excite his unrighteousness and fix him, as them, in hopeless evil through rejecting Christ. Pilate felt that there was no proper case for him, and asks a tangible accusation. (Ver. 29.) The want of this they evade by an affected or real affront at his question, as if they could not be unjust. (Ver. 30.) The governor would gladly have thrown the responsibility on the Jews, who betray their own foregone conclusion: Jesus must die; and as death could not be lawfully at their hands, it must be by the hand of lawless men. He must die the death of the cross. Thus was the word of Jesus to be fulfilled, signifying what death He should die. (Ver. 32.) John 3:15; 8:28; 12:32, 33: compare Matt. 16:21; 17:12, 22, 23; 20:18, 19. Stephen might be stoned by the Jews in an outburst of religious fury, James be slain with the sword by Herod; but the Son of man must be condemned by the Jewish chief priests and scribes, and be crucified by the Gentiles. “For in truth against thy holy servant Jesus whom thou anointedst, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the nations and people of Israel were gathered together to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel pre-determined should come to pass.” (Acts 4:27, 28.) Man universally must prove his guilt to the last degree and the divine word be fulfilled to the letter, God Himself (we may say in the person of His Son) being cast out in shame from His own earth, for all this and more was involved in this deliberate and fatal act. Yet was it the deepest moral glory. Now was the Son of man glorified, and God was glorified in Him. Obedience unto death, absolute devotedness, suffering beyond measure both for righteousness and for sin, met there on the one hand; and on the other the truth, the justice, the grace and the majesty of God, were not vindicated only but glorified, while Satan's power and claims were forever annulled, and a perfect everlasting basis to God's glory laid for the blessing of man and creation in general: such were the fruits of Christ's death on the cross. How dense the blindness of its instruments how dim the intelligence even of its favored objects! How blessed the Father and the Son in love and holiness, spite of all accomplishing all!

Again the Roman (whose characteristic common sense saw through the envy and malice of the Jews, and repudiated all anxiety as to the honor or security of Caesar) entered into the pretorium, called the Lord, and said, Art thou the King of the Jews! He who was silent before the high priest till adjured by the living God answered Pilate by the question, Of thyself sayest thou this; or did others say it to thee about Mb (Vers. 33, 34.) This was the turning-point. If the governor were uneasy as to the rights and interests of Caesar, the Lord could have pointed to His uniform life, as in John 6:15, and to His invariable teaching, as in Luke 20:25, as a perfect disproof and re-assurance. But if the question originated, as it really did, with the Jews (Luke 23:2), the Lord had nothing to say but the truth in the face of Israel's unbelief and gainsaying, nothing to do but witness the “good confession” before Pontius Pilate; and this He does.

The governor's answer made plain what was already sure, that the true Son of David was rejected by the Jew undefinitively false to the one divine hope of the nation. “Am I a Jew?” said he; “thy nation and the chief priests delivered thee up to me what hast thou done?” (Ver. 35.) Not one thing against which is any law: every word, every way, testified of God. He spoke, He was the truth, which not only detected man but presented the Father, and both were intolerable. They would have none of Him; not because He did not give every possible proof of His Messiahship, but because He put them in presence of God and of their sins, from which testimony there was no escape but the rejection of Himself. Hence the all-importance of what was in question. People and priests alike refused their own Messiah; and He bowed to it. Deeper things were meanwhile in accomplishment; and the infinite glory of His person, already confessed by the disciples, as well as His work of eternal redemption, were about to be proclaimed in the gospel and to supersede Jewish hopes, and the gathering together in one of the scattered children of God should replace the disowned nation, till at the end of the age they shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah, when the long-rejected Jesus shall once more and forever recall them as His own, and bless them unchangingly, and make them a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Hence Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence.” (Ver. 36.) When the Jews repent and the Lord returns in power and glory, not only will He be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance, but Jerusalem be made a burdensome stone for all people, bending Judah for Him and filling the bow with Ephraim. But here we have Christianity which has come in before that day with His kingdom not of this world, nor from hence but from above, where all savors of the rejected but glorified Christ, and according to the revealed knowledge of the Father, the Jews being as such outside and manifest enemies.

The governor, while satisfied that there was nothing to fear politically, could not but perceive a claim incomprehensible to his mind. “Art thou then a king?” This the Lord could not deny. It was the truth, and He confessed it, whatever it might cost. But having done so, He set forth that which applies now. “Thou sayest I am a king. I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the troth.” The law was given by Moses, and Jesus was the born King of the Jews. But He was conscious of another and higher glory bound up with His person as Son of God: grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” How solemn and unwavering the testimony! The Jews were zealous for the law, not because it was of God, but because it was theirs; the Romans sought this world and its power. They were both blind to the eternal and unseen. Jesus was the truth, as well as the Faithful and True Witness to it. But He adds more, strange to the ears of man, and not least to Roman cars; “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” If a man did not hear Him, he was not of the truth. How could it be otherwise if He was the Only-begotten Son, a man on earth? What could such an One come for but for this, if He came in grace, not in judgment? And Pilate, with a “What is truth?” returns to the Jews. He did not seriously seek an answer: an awakened conscience alone does; and grace, as it produces the desire in the sinner, gives the answer of good from God. Not so Pilate, who having said this went out again to the Jews, saying, “I find no fault in him;” and suggesting as a solution of the difficulty the customary release of a prisoner at the feast, he offers to let go their King. But this only draws out the depth of their hatred, and they all cry out.... “Not this man but Barabbas.” Now Barabbas, as the evangelist adds, was a robber. So the Jews chose Satan's son of the father; for so the word means. How evident that man rejecting Jesus is Satan's slave!

Notes on John, John 18:12-27, Notes on (18:12-27)

The believer will note the bearing of our Lord throughout these closing scenes, His lowliness and dignity, His infinite superiority to all who surrounded Him, friends or foes, His entire submission and withal His power intact. He is a man, the Sent One, but Son of God throughout. It is

He who shelters and secures the disciples; it is He who offers Himself freely. The traitor and the hand, the torches and the weapons, had all failed, if He had not been pleased in letting His own go to give Himself up. For this indeed had He entered this world, and His hour was now come. But it was His own doing and according to the will of His Father, whatever man's wickedness and Satan's malicious wiles. Not more surely was it the power of His name which overwhelmed the armed crowd of His would-be captors than that His grace alone accounts for His subsequent subjection to their will.

“The band therefore and the commander [chiliarch], and the officers of the Jews, took Jesus and bound him and led [him away]1 unto Annas first; for be was father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest of that year. But it was Caiaphas that counseled the Jews that one man should die2 for the people. Now Simon Peter was following Jesus, and the3 other disciple. And that disciple was known to the high priest and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. The other disciple therefore, that was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the porteress and brought in Peter. The maid therefore, the porteress, saith to Peter, Art thou also of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. But the bondmen and the officers were standing, having made a coal fire, for it was cold, and were warming themselves; and there was with them Peter standing and warming himself. The high priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine. Jesus answered, I have openly spoken in the world, I always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all4 the Jews assemble, and in secret I spoke nothing: why asked thou me? Ask those that have heard, what I spoke to them: behold, these know what I said. But as he said these things, one of the officers as he stood by, gave Jesus a blow, saying, Thus answerest thou the high priest? Jesus answered him, If I spoke ill, testify of the ill; but if well, why smitest thou me? Annas [therefore]5 sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, Art thou also of his disciples? He denied and said, I am not. One of the bondmen of the high priest, being kinsmen of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did I not see thee in the garden with him? Peter therefore denied again, and immediately a cock crew.” (Vers. 12-27.)

Our evangelist notices the fact that the band carried our Lord, not only to Caiaphas the high priest, but before that to Annas his father-in-law, who had preceded him in that office, but was succeeded by Caiaphas before his death. All things were out of course, and in nothing was this more evident than in the closing scenes of the Savior. And therefore does the Gospel recall what was already recorded in chapter 11, where the highest religions office blended with the lowest expediency, and the prophetic Spirit wrought in the wicked high priest, as of old in the unprincipled prophet of Midian. As the rule the Holy Spirit actuated holy men for God's will and glory; but exceptionally He could and did use for that glory those whom Satan was employing to thwart it as much as possible. Nothing can be more striking in Caiaphas' case than the way in which his heartless sentiment is turned by grace into the expression of a great truth wholly outside his ken. (Vers. 12, 13.)

Again we see, Simon Peter following the Lord, but not in the Spirit, nor was the other disciple there to his own honor, still less to the Lord's. For he finds access to the high priest's palace, as known to that functionary, and in no way as a follower of Jesus. And how he must have soon grieved over the kindly influence he exerted to get Peter let in, who had been obliged to stay without! Little did he think that his word to the porteress would give occasion to the terrible and repeated fall of his beloved fellow-servant! But every word of the Lord must be fulfilled. It would seem that the maid who kept the door was not ignorant of John's discipleship, for she says to Peter,” Art thou also of this man's disciples?” But the trying question was put not to John, but to Peter; and Peter, in the garden so bold, now utterly quails before this woman. Such is man, though a saint: what is he to be accounted of? Nor is fleshly energy better really in Christ's eyes than fleshly weakness, which not only lied but denied his Master in denying his relationship to Him as a disciple. And this was warm-hearted, fervent, courageous Peter!

Yes, but it was Peter tried under the shadow of the coming cross. Death is an overwhelming trial to the disciple till he knows what it is to have died with Christ to sin and law, crucified to the world which crucified Him, and able therefore to glory in the cross. It was not so yet with Peter, and he fell; nor can we say more of John and the rest than that they were not so tried. That they would have stood the test better is more than any can accept who believe what God says. (Vers. 14-17.)

The high priest pursues his investigation; Peter renews his sin. And no wonder. For he had slept when he ought to have watched and prayed, and he had ventured into the scene of temptation instead of heeding the warning of the Lord. “But the bondmen and the officers were standing, having made a coal-fire, for it was cold, and were warming themselves; and there was with them Peter, standing and warming himself.” (Ver. 18.) Evil communications corrupt good manners; and the confession of Jesus before friends is very different from confession before bloodthirsty enemies; and Peter must learn by painful experience what he was too unspiritual to realize from the words of Christ. It is blessed to learn our nothingness and worse in His presence who keeps from falling; but every saint, and specially every servant, must learn himself, if not there, in the bitter humiliation of what we are when we forget Him. May we abide in Him, and have His words abiding in us, and so ask what we will and have it done unto us! Peter had not thus failed before men if he had not failed before with his Master. Doubtless it is by the power of God we are kept, but it is through faith.

“The high, priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine.” He desired grounds against the Lord. Was this the procedure of-I will not ask the grace which should characterize a priest, but-ordinary painstaking righteousness? It was not to screen Himself that the Lord points to His open and constant testimony. Others unlike Him might cultivate private coteries and secret instructions, not to speak of darker counsels inciting to deeds that shunned all light of day. “Jesus answered, I have openly spoken in the world, I always taught in synagogue,6 and in the temple, where all the Jews assemble; and in secret I spoke nothing: why askest thou me? Ask those that have heard what I spoke to them: behold, these know what I said.” It was unanswerably true and right. The only reply was a brutal insult from a Jewish underling who would thus, as he could not otherwise, sustain the high priest. But the Lord answered the low as the high with a righteous dignity immeasurably above them all: “If I spoke ill, testify of the ill; but if well, why smitest thou me?”

So fared the Lord with the high priest: how painful the contrast of the disciple warming himself with the slaves? More than one assailed him with the crucial question, “Art thou also of his disciples?” Again the fear of man prevailed; and he who truly believed in Him did not confess but denied and said, I am not. But this was not all. For “one of the bondmen of the high priest, being kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did I not see thee in the garden with him? Peter therefore denied again, and immediately a cock crew.” (Vers. 26, 27.) Oh what fear of man bringing a snare! What blinding power of the enemy thus to involve a saint in direct and daring falsehood, and this to shame Him who was his life and salvation! But of what is not the heart capable when the Lord is not before it, but fear or lust or aught else by which Satan beguiles? God however took care that the dread of man to His dishonor should cover the guilty disciple with self-reproach and contempt and utter humiliation when an eye-witness could brand him before all with his reiterated lying in denial of his Master.

It will be noticed that we have in this Gospel neither the Lord's antecedent praying for Peter and assurance of restoration, nor His turning and looking on Peter after his last denial, when he, remembering the word of the Lord, went out and wept bitterly. These are given explicitly in the only Gospel whose character they suit and sustain. (See Luke 22:31, 32, and 60, 61.) Here all turns, not on the discovery of what man's heart is, and the grace of the Lord's, but on the person of Christ as the one central object, not so much the Second man despised by man, and the energy of His love acting on a disciple spite of utter failure in himself, but the Son of God glorifying the Father in the midst of complete and universal ruin.

Notes on John, John 18:1-11, Notes on (18:1-11)

The Lord had concluded His words to the disciples and to His Father. His work on earth now about to close had been before Him, as well as His departure on high, and contingent on both the approaching mission of the Holy Spirit to abide with His own apart from the world. That rejection of the Savior which has been in view throughout our Gospel was now to reach its extreme in the cross; but its dark shadow, far from obscuring, only serves to bring out the True Light more distinctly. He is man, but a divine person, the Son throughout wherever He moves.

“Having said these things Jesus went out with His disciples beyond the torrent-bed of Kedron,1 where was a garden, into which he entered himself and his disciples. And Judas also that was betraying him knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. Judas then, having received the guard and officers from the high priests and from [the] Pharisees, cometh there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus then, knowing all things that were coming on him, went out and saith to them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazarean. He saith to them, I am [he]. And Judas that was betraying him was standing with them. When then he said to them, I am [he], they went backward and fell to the ground. Again then he asked them, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus the Nazarean. Jesus answered, I told you that I am [he]: if then ye seek me, leave these to go away; that the word might be fulfilled which he said, Of those whom thou hast given me, I have lost not one of them. Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it, and smote the bondman of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. Now the bondsman's name was Malchus. Jesus said then to Peter, Put the sword into the scabbard: the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Vers. 1-11.)

It was the same orchard or garden which in the other Gospels is called Gethsemane (a word formed from the Hebrew words meaning a winepress and oil), but giving no real ground to say,2 as some after the patristic and medieval style, that here emphatically were fulfilled those dark words, “I have trodden the winepress alone,” as Isaiah has foretold, and as the name imports. For the treading of the winefat is when the Lord comes to judge, not to suffer, as the connected text, Rev. 14:20, ought to have been plain. Indeed no reader save one perverted by theological tradition could mistake the earlier prophet any more than the latest. For what is described in these prophecies is not agony but vengeance, not His bloody sweat with strong crying and tears, but His treading the peoples in His anger and their blood sprinkled on His garments.

But an intelligent and thoughtful reader would remark the striking absence of that wondrous scene where even those who loved the Lord, yea Peter, James, and John, could not watch with Him one hour. For His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and though He asked them to tarry and watch, whilst He went a little farther to pray, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and this repeatedly. I am aware that some left out of their copies of Luke the verses which record the angel which appeared from heaven strengthening Him, and the conflict such that His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down on the earth; as if the Lord were lowered by such an expression of real humanity and unspeakable grief, instead of seeing how characteristic the facts are of that Evangelist and adoring Himself who could so love and suffer as there portrayed. Yet John, who alone of all four writers of the Gospels was near the Lord, nearer than Matthew-John is the only one who does not describe that conflict at all: and this, not because it was not infinitely precious to his spirit, nor because the others had given it to us, but because what he gave, as they also, was by inspiration and in no way a question of human judgment or feeling. John records, no less than Matthew and Mark and Luke, the miracle of the five barley loaves; and this because it was as essential to the work given him to do as for the others in theirs. For the same reason he, led by the Holy Spirit, does not give the agony in the garden, as not falling within his assigned province. He knew it of course, and must have often dwelt on it in his spirit deeply meditative beyond all the others, yet is silent.

Can anything more attest the overruling wisdom and power of the inspiring Spirit? Yes, in every part and every detail, one almost as much as another, were we not so dull of hearing; not only in what is omitted, but in what is inserted by infinite grace. Witness what our evangelist tells us next. He brings before us, no doubt, the appalling spectacle of Judas availing himself of his intimate knowledge of the Savior's habit and haunt to guide those who wished to take and slay Him. With the guard and officers from His enemies, Judas guides them to the spot of nightly prayer, with lanterns and torches and weapons to make sure of their prey, though full moon shone and He had never struck a blow in self-defense. But Judas really knew not Him any more than his companions did. How terrible the sight of a soul blinded to the deadly malice at work, no less than to the Savior's glory and His love! How surely Satan had entered, when we look at him as he stood with them and betrayed Him!

Jesus, knowing all that was coming on Him, goes out to them saying, Whom seek ye? and at His confession of Himself in reply to their answer of Jesus the Nazarean, they went backward and fell to the ground. How manifest the proof of His intrinsic divine glory! A Man sent and come in love, yet the true God, and this the constant and special testimony of John, the true key to what he does not say, no less than to what he does say. Yet is there no effort, but the most charming simplicity along with this deep and divine under-current. Not all the treachery of Judas, not all the hatred and enmity of the Jews, not all the power of Rome could have seized the Lord, had not the time arrived to give Himself up. His hour was now come. He could have destroyed the company which sought to apprehend Him as easily as He caused them to fall prostrate before His name; as by-and-by in virtue of His name every knee shall bow, of beings in heaven and beings on earth and beings under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But when He asked them again, Whom seek ye? and they said, Jesus the Nazarean, grace shone out, not power: the former now, as the latter before, expressing the true God who was now manifesting Himself on earth in His own person. “If then ye seek me, leave these to go away; that the word might be fulfilled which he said, Of those whom thou hast given me, I have lost not one of them.” (Vers. 8, 9.) Like the ark in Jordan He would go alone into the waters of death, and His own pass over dry-shod. He gives Himself up freely for them. The great salvation

which is infallible includes every lesser one which suits and serves the glory of God meanwhile. And blessed it is to trace to the same spring of gracious power in Christ all the passing mercies we experience, where His hand shields us from the enemy's malice. He puts Himself forward to endure all. His people go free; His word is fulfilled in every way. Where the Father gives, the Son loses none. What comfort and assurance before a hostile world!

But even His most honored servants fail, and are apt to fail most where they push forward in natural zeal and their own wisdom, too self-confident to watch His ways and heed His word and thus learn of Him. So Simon Peter then displays his haste in total discord with the grace of Christ; for having a sword he drew it and struck Malchus the servitor of the high priest, maiming him of his right ear. Had Peter watched and prayed instead of sleeping, it might have been otherwise; when we fail to pray, we enter into temptation.

Luke alone, true to his testimony to God's grace, tolls us of the Lord's answer, “Suffer ye thus far,” and of His touching the ear to heal the wounded man. Matthew alone, in harmony with the rejected Messiah but true King of Israel, gives the reproof which warned His servant of what it is for saints to resist carnally. Mark mentions the fact, but no more. John, agreeably to the purpose of God in his work, presents the Lord in unfaltering obedience to His Father, as before in divine power and grace. Nothing more calm than His correction of Peter's energy; nothing more distinct than His submission to the Father's will, whatever it cost. “The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” It is the same Jesus as in Luke and the other Gospels, yet what a difference! Everywhere worthy, never a word or way beneath the Holy One of God, but here above all the Son with perfect dignity and withal perfect subjection of heart in suffering as in work. It was His drink now in doing His will, as before His meat in doing it. As the living Father sent Him and He lived on account of the Father, so He lays down His life that He may take it again; but if He says, I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again, He adds, This commandment I received of my Father. Never was such deep and holy conflict as the second Man knew in the garden; but none of this appears in John: it is all the power and grace and calm of the Son with no motive but the Father's will. Never was there an approach to such glorifying of God the Father.

Notes on John, John 17:24-26, Notes on (17:24-26)

The closing section of our Lord's words is quite distinct in its character, and yet more intimate, as is marked by His use of θέλω “I will” (or “desire") for the first and only time throughout His prayer.

“Father, those (or, that) which1 thou hast given me, I will that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold thy glory which thou hast given me, because thou lovedst me before the world's foundation. Righteous Father, both the world knew thee not, and I knew thee, and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made thy name known to them and will make [it] known, that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them.” (Vers. 24-26.)

First, the Lord desires of the Father that those whom He had given Him should be with Him where He is. He is in spirit on high before the Father, and would have His own with Himself there, It is no question of display in glory before the world, even though in the closest association with Him; it is to be with Himself where no stranger can (I do not say merely, intermeddle with the joy, but) look on Him or them, in the hidden scene which divine love forms for its deepest satisfaction. There the Father has the Son after glorifying Himself perfectly in the face of all possible difficulty, and the suffering entailed not by creature opposition and malice, but by divine judgment of God on that evil, the consequences of which must be borne unsparingly by Him, who would vindicate God on the one hand, and on the other deliver to the uttermost the guilty, so far as suited the gracious purpose of God. And this Jesus did in absolute obedience, as became Himself a man in grace beyond measure and at all cost; this He did in infinite suffering to His Father's praise, who acquired fresh and everlasting glory and could thenceforward act as freely as righteously according to His nature and His love.

And now, as we have seen at the beginning of the chapter, going to heaven on the ground not of His personal title only but of His work, He expresses His desire that His own also, the disciples whom the Father had given Him, should be with Him above, “that they may behold my glory.” It is not on the one hand that which is personal from everlasting to everlasting, beyond creature ken, that in the Son which I presume none really knows nor can, save the Father who is not said to reveal Him. Neither is it on the other hand the glory given to the blessed Lord which is to be manifested even to the world in that day, in which glory we are to be manifested along with Him. Here it is proper to Himself on high, yet given Him by the Father, as we are in His perfect favor to behold it: a far higher thing than any glory shared along with us, and which the Lord, reckoning on unselfish affections divinely formed in us, looks for our valuing accordingly, as more blessed in beholding Him thus than in aught conferred on ourselves. It is a joy for us alone, wholly outside and above the world, and given because the Father loved Him before its foundation. None but the Eternal could be thus glorified, but it is the secret glory which none but His own are permitted to contemplate, “blest answer to reproach and shame,” not the public glory in which every eye shall see Him. Nothing less than that meets His desire for us. How truly even now our hearts can say that He is worthy!

Next, the Lord draws the line definitively between the world and His own, and makes it turn not on rejecting Himself but on ignoring His Father. Here therefore it is a question of judgment in result, however grace may tarry and entreat; and therefore He says, “Righteous Father,” not “Holy Father,” as in verse 11 where He asks Him to keep them in His name, as He Himself had done whilst with them. Now He sets forth not the lawlessness of the world, not its murderous hatred of Himself or of His disciples, nor yet of the grace and truth revealed in the gospel, nor of the, corruptions of Christianity and the church which we are sure lay naked and opened before His all-seeing eyes, but that on the one side the world knew not the Father, and on the other that the Son did, as the disciples that the Father sent the Son: words simple and briefly said, but how solemn in character and issues!

Never was so competent a witness of anyone or anything, as Christ of the Father. Yet the world knew Him not, nor received His testimony for a moment, but rose up more and more against it till all closed in the cross. Thenceforward He is hid in heaven, and those who believe in Him are heavenly. False pretension to it is salt that has lost its savor. And all those who are true are the first to own that all turns for them on the Son's knowledge of the Father, as they themselves knew the Father sent Him. It is no question of themselves at all, but of the Father; and He is only known in the Son, whom He sent; and this is eternal life, whether now had in Christ or enjoyed without alloy when we behold His glory

on high; as ignorance of the Father implies the guilty rejection of the Son, to the everlasting loss, and not merely passing judgment, of the world.

But, lastly, where Christ is known as the Father's sent One, the deepest blessing and the highest privileges are even now given, and not merely what awaits the saints at Christ's coming. “And I made known to them thy name, and will make known, that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.” If ever there was one capable of estimating another, it was the Son in respect of the Father; and His name, the expression of what He was, with equal competency He made known to us. He had done it on earth to the disciples; He would do so from heaven whither He was going; and this that He might give them, and give us, the consciousness of the same love of the Father which rested ever on Himself here below. As if to cut off the not unnatural hesitation of the disciples, He adds the blessed guarantee in His own being in them, their life. For they could understand that, if they lived of His life, and could be somehow as He before the Father, the Father might love them as Him. This is just what He does give and secure by identification with them, or rather as He puts it, “and I in them.” Christ is all and in all.

Notes on John, John 17:22-23, Notes on (17:22-23)

There is yet another unity of the deepest interest which our Lord next spreads before the Father: not discipular or apostolic, which was so marvelously sustained, nor of testimony in the grace that would embrace all Christians, which after a bright display at first has long painfully broken down, but unity in glory where all is stable and according to God.

“And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one as we [are] one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that thou didst send me and lovedst them as thou lovedst me.” (Vers. 22, 23.)

This is wholly distinct from what we have seen, though all be to the praise of Christ. It is an exclusively future unity, though the glory be given to our faith now, and grace would have us apprehend it and feel and walk accordingly. For all is revealed to act now on our souls. But this unity will be in glory when we shall be one as the Father and the Son are. Hence failure here is impossible. The weakness of man, the power of Satan, can damage no more.

The manner of this unity is to be noted also. It is not the mutuality which we had described in verse 21, that we should be one in the Father and the Son, as the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father. Such is the admirable way in which the Savior set out what we are called to now by the Spirit, that the world may believe the Father sent the Son. But by-and-by, when the glory is revealed, there will be this new character, that, while the saints are to be one even as the Father and the Son are one, it will be Christ the Son in them and the Father in Him. And this as exactly agrees with Rev. 21 as the former answers to 1 John 1:3.

For as the holy city, new Jerusalem, is the bride the Lamb's wife, the symbol of the glorified saints in that day, so we are shown that the city had the glory of God, and the Lamb its lamp, while the nations walk in its light. (Vers. 11, 23, 24.) Thus are the blessed on earth to enjoy the heavenly glory, not directly like the glorified on high who have the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb as their temple and need none other; whereas those on earth have it but mediately. Yet how constant and impressive the proof before them that the Father sent the Son! For how else could there have grown up such a holy temple in the Lord? And what adequately could account for men thus called out of the earth and glorified on high? Sovereign grace had given them that heavenly portion as the fruit of His mission who at all cost to Himself had glorified God on the earth. And now they share His glory above, and are so displayed before the wondering world. The salvation-bearing grace which had appeared to all and had done its suited and appointed work in redeeming and purifying these to God as a people of possession will then have given place to the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, but this through the church reigning over the earth, at any rate as the ordinary or normal method of its manifestation during the kingdom. As we by faith saw the Father in the on to eternal life, they in that day will behold and learn them in the church, the glorious vessel of the light of Christ in whom God's glory shines. For then the false glory of man is forever judged, never more to mislead the heart, and Satan will never regain his bad eminence in the heavenlies whereby he found means most effectively to misrepresent God, oppose Christ, accuse the saints, and deceive the world. It is thenceforward the glory of God that is established before all eyes, so that men “know” it in and by the glorified saints, instead of being objects of testimony that they might “believe.” For the earth shall be full of the glory of Jehovah (Num. 14:21) and of the knowledge of Jehovah (Isa. 11) and of the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea, when Christ shall have come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believed, in that day.

Therefore do we hear for the first time of being “perfected into one.” The apostolic unity first spoken of, unity in counsel and action, as the Father and the Son gave pattern was as blessed as it was all-important for the place they had to fill and the work to be done in the testimony of Christ. Still it was comparatively partial, and necessarily on a small scale. Far wider was the second unity of fellowship in the Father and the Son exhibited in the Pentecostal assembly at large, when thousands of souls walked together superior to selfish influence and great grace was upon them all, and of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them, and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. But this was only transient. The third will be perfect in glory, and so permanent as well as complete.

And the effect will be immense and immediate, as indeed one could not conceive it otherwise. The world will contemplate with amazement the church in the glory and the glory of God in the church, or (as the Lord says) the Father in Him, and He in them glorified. It is unity perfect both in connection with its source and in manifestation of the divine glory. And what a demonstration that the Father sent the Son and loved the saints as He loved Him! For how should the Son be there as the glorified Man unless previously sent here in love? and how should we be manifested together with Him in glory, unless loved with the same love? It is no question of “believing” this being undeniable fact. The world will “know” it. We may know now what is only revealed in the word to our faith; but this will be a display of divine glory.

Notes on John, John 17:20-21, Notes on (17:20-21)

The Lord now proceeds to plead for those to be brought into faith in Him by apostolic testimony that they too might form a unity according to God and bear witness before the world to His mission of the Son. Verse 11 had contemplated only those disciples who were then surrounding Him in view of special grace and the consequent responsibility which attached to them.

“And not for these only do I ask, but also for those that believe on me through their word, that they may be all one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me.” (Vers. 20, 21.)

There was to be, as we have seen, an astonishing exhibition of unity in the apostles. But there is another and larger unity here. Those believing on Him through their word are now presented to the. Father, “that they may be all one.” Room is thus left for multitudes of believers, for confessors of His name, Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; for those that had hitherto clung tenaciously to legal forms, the substance of which they refused through their unbelief of Him; for those that had been well-nigh as obstinate in cleaving to the dreams of heathenism and its debasing immorality, in utter ignorance of the only true God only known through Him whom He sent. The gospel was about to go forth to every land and in every tongue, as the Holy Ghost bore witness on the day of Pentecost; and the more strikingly on that day, because they as yet were Jews only from Gentile countries as well as Palestine, and the miracle was not the obvious and comparatively easy one of enabling all, home or foreign sons of Israel, to understand the wonderful works of God in the Hebrew tongue, but conversely that they, every man in his own dialect in which they had been born, should hear the disciples speak. God has of old smitten men's pride and divided them into ever so many differing tongues. Grace now rose above judgment, not reducing them all to one lip and the same words, but meeting each where thus scattered. Nor was this all; but the power of the Spirit baptized all the believers into one body, the church. The unity here however, though produced of course by the same Spirit in those who compose that body, is not that which fell to the apostle Paul to set out. Of a spiritual nature it nevertheless displays itself in that which the world can see and appreciate in measure. It is not precisely “one as we,” that is, as the Father and the Sons which verse 11 had predicated of the disciples. As the Father and the Son had but one mind and affection, purpose and way, so was this oneness desired for the apostles in their work and life; and wondrously was it realized in them as we have already noticed. Here the saints at large, those who believe through their word, are in view; and the thing sought is that they should be “all one,” “even as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” —not “as we” but “in us,” in the Father and the Son. It is communion in virtue of the Father made known in the Son, and of the Son the object of the Father's love and delight, into which we are brought by the Holy Ghost. With the Father we share the Son; with the Son we share the Father. Into this blessedness the saints were now for the first time to be introduced, and in such sort that they should be all one, even as the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father, so they also one in the Father and the Son.

This was to be a testimony to the world, not preaching only, but this oneness so singular, so unprecedented among men, oneness in the joy of divine grace which drew together souls so diverse and by the power of divine objects, motives and affections, those who had been once utterly indifferent or bitterly opposed, hating and hated. What a call for the world to believe that the Father sent the Son! For this and this only, but this adequately, accounted for it, when the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven gave the truth energy in hearts purified by faith. For as flesh tends to scatter by the assertion of its own will, so the Spirit operates to unite in the Father and the Son; and when the world sees the fruits of such gracious and holy power in the oneness of men otherwise alienated, and by nothing so keenly and permanently as their varying religions, what a demonstration that the Father sent the Son! For here at least was no power of the sword, here no pandering to lust, here no inducement of wealth or worldly honor, here no allowance any more of sin than of human righteousness, no pride of philosophy any more than religious show or ritualism. None can deny that as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets there was constant and unresisting exposure to the world's scorn and violence. Self-sacrificing love reigned, grace we may say through righteousness in devotedness to the name of Jesus; and a heavenly separateness to Him for whom they avowedly waited from heaven. What then accounted for so astonishing a change from all that had previously characterized mankind, not merely among the Gentiles but in Israel even in its most flourishing estate? What did it attest but that the Father sent the Son? What of grace and truth, of perfect and eternal redemption, of near and heavenly relationship, does not this involve?

For if the Father sent the Son, it could not but be for ends impossible otherwise and worthy of the true God revealing Himself in sovereign grace, yea in intimate love, as well as in the light which makes everything manifest. Nor was the Son only to make the truth known and to impart the divine nature, the eternal life, capable of receiving and enjoying it and walking in it by the Spirit of God. There was an incomparably solemn yet blessed work to be wrought to God's glory as well as for man's deep need and everlasting salvation: sin had to be borne in judgment, a propitiation made for our sins so complete that God should be righteous in justifying the believer, and that believers should become God's righteousness in Christ. Thus washed, sanctified, justified, children of God consciously, the Holy Ghost given, they find others in the communion of the same blessing; they are all one, as the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, and brought out as they are of the strongest prejudices into a mutuality of enjoyed blessedness, into oneness in the Father and the Son, what could more powerfully bear witness to the world that the Father sent the Son?

Notes on John, John 17:14-19, Notes on (17:14-19)

From verse 14 the Lord pleads for another object on behalf of the disciples. He had entreated for them to be set in His love in presence of the Father; He now asks that they may have His place in presence of the world. As He had sought their association with Himself in the one case, so in the other He would have no less an association. There it was for His joy to be fulfilled in them; here it is for the Father's testimony in and by them; His place on earth, as in heaven.

“I have given them thy word; and the world hated them because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. I do not ask that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of the evil. Of the world they are not, as I am not of the world.” (Vers. 14-16.)

It is not here as in verse 8 “the words” (ῥήματα) given of the Father to the Son which the Son had given to the disciples, the communications of love, whence they knew truly that He came from the Father, and believed to their joy that the Father sent Him. It is here the Father's “word” (λόγος), the expression of His mind. This, it was said already, they had kept. But the Lord resumes the notice of it in connection with testimony in the world which for Him was closed. In the world they were to be witnesses of Him, and the Father's word He has given them, and the world hated them, not for that word only, offensive as it is to the world, but because they, the disciples who had it, were not of the world even as their Master is not. This is the true measure of unworldliness, and it is intolerable in the world's eyes, and nowhere so much as in the religious world. For men on earth to know themselves possessors of eternal life sounds presumptuous to such as know not Christ and His work. But to add that they are not of the world the world will have to be intolerance. The truth is that nothing is so lowly as faith, and faith works by love, the very reverse of despising others or trusting in themselves that they are righteous. Christ is all to the believer, as He is to the Father; and as He is not of the world, so they are not. That they are not of the world depends on the former truth, that they are the Father's and given to the son, who manifested the Father's name to them and kept them in that name; as He besought that the Father would keep them still during His absence from the world. Christ in John is from the outset unknown to the world and rejected: they know not the Father and the Son. So it is with the children of God. “Therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not.” The breach is complete. “The world hated1 them,” as it hated both the Father and the Son.

Never had there been such a breach before. It was not so during God's dealings with Israel of old; nor yet in their ruin during the ensuing times of the Gentiles. Man was still under trial; and even while the Lord was here below, the character of His ministry was God in Him reconciling the world to Himself. But the world would none of Him, and is judged in its prince. And as man is now in the light of the cross pronounced lost, so is the saint crucified to the world and the world to him. They are not of the world, as Christ is not of the world. It is a fact, and not merely an obligation, though the firmest ground of obligation. They are not of the world, not merely they ought not to be; whilst if they are not, it is grievous inconsistency even to seem to be of the world. It is to be false to our relationship, for we are the Father's and given to the rejected Son who has done with the world; and if it be said that this is to bring in everlasting and heavenly relationships now, be it so: this is exactly what Christianity means in principle and practice. It is faith possessing Christ, who gives the believer His own place of relationship and acceptance on high as well as of testimony apart from and rejected by the world below; which he has to make good in words and ways, in spirit and conversation, whilst waiting for the Lord. Hence if going back to law or flesh, as in Galatia, was to fall from grace, no less thorough is the departure of the Christian when he seeks the world of which he is not. That the world improves for Christ or His own is as false as that the flesh can ameliorate. It is the light become darkness, and how great is that darkness! There may not be the reflex of the latter part of Rom. 1, but it answers to the beginning of 2 Tim. 3. It is the natural man knowing enough to forego what is shameless, and invested with a religious veil; it is the world essentially, occupying itself with the things of God in profession but in reality of the world, where common sense suffices for its service and its worship, and the mind of Christ would be altogether inapplicable. What a triumph to the enemy! It is just what we see in Christendom; and nothing irritates so much as the refusal so to walk, worship or serve. It does not matter how loudly you denounce or protest: if you join the world, they will not mind your words, and you are faithless to Christ. Nor does it matter how much grace and patience you show; if you keep apart as not of the world, you incur enmity and hatred, and contempt. A disciple is not above his Master; but everyone that is perfected shall be as his Master. To act as not of the world is felt to be its strongest condemnation; and no meekness or love can make it palatable. Nor does God intend that it should, for He means it as part of the testimony to His Son. And as the world neither receives nor understands the Father's word, so it hates those who have and act on that word.

Doubtless there is a moment when the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we the living who remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, when He shall Himself with a shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, descend from heaven; and thus we shall ever be with Him. But the Lord did not ask yet that the Father should thus take His own out of the world, but that He should keep them out of the evil. This He does by His grace through His word, as we shall see presently. Only the Lord, before He explains how the Father keeps the saints, reiterates in a new form so as to give greater emphasis, Of the world they are not, as I am not of the world. Nor is anything more speedily forgotten, unless the eye be fixed on Christ above, with continual vigilance as to our motives ways and ends, as well as unsparing self-judgment. It was of all moment to have it firm and clear that the world and the Christian have no common ground, and that Christ Himself, according to whose grace and for whose glory in communion with the Father we are here, is the pattern of our unworldliness. What separateness so absolute? or dependent on relationship to the Father so near, save only His, who is in the highest way its pattern? For the world in the sense here conveyed is that vast system which man has built up away from God in independence and self-reliance, and to the exclusion, not of His nominal honor, but of any real submission to His righteousness, His will, or His glory, which fully came out in the rejection and cross of His Son, who thereon reveals as wholly distinct in source, nature, character, and aim, those that the Father owns as His in the world, whose fellowship is indeed with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Of the world they are not, as He is not. They are Christ's.

Now comes the formative power, as wholly new as above man, and not of God merely but of the Father. “Sanctify them by [or, in] the truth: thy word is truth. As thou didst send me forth into the world, I also sent them forth into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify thyself that they also may be sanctified in truth.” (Vers. 17-19.)

It is impossible to overrate the importance of the Savior's words for His disciples; it is easy for men to misapprehend them, as those do who lower and narrow the word to separation for ministerial service.2 But He had at heart a more personal and intimate want, that the disciples should themselves be imbued with, formed and fashioned by, the truth. The law now sufficed not; not even in the most comprehensive sense, as embracing the prophets and the Psalms. For Christ was come, the Only-begotten who declared God otherwise unseen of any one. He revealed the Father, who would make a fresh and full yet permanent revelation, as we have it not only in Him but in the scriptures as a whole. The sanctification or setting apart was therefore as new as complete. It was to the Father that the Son spread His request for men who were none of them heathen but of the holy seed. Yet for such does He say, “Sanctify them by the truth.” The truth was revealed as it never was before. “Thy word,” the Father's word, “is truth.” Truths had been made known, never the truth till Jesus who is it. For He first, He only as an objective display, showed out every one, God, man, Satan even, and everything, heaven, earth, hell, and all things in them, as they really are, for His person (the Word made flesh) alone was competent to do it. His advent and redemption gave the suited occasion and needed object for the full revelation, as being Son of man and withal true God and eternal life. By the truth then, the Father's word, were the disciples to be sanctified. The Father revealed, not only in the Son personally but in His word detailedly, changed all for the soul. None but the Son, and the Son a man on earth, glorifying the Father perfectly in His life, glorifying God as such in His death, could furnish the adequate motive for the Father's love, object for His ways, center of His counsels or manifestation of His glory. Hence all is out and in perfection: testimony

higher, deeper, fuller is looked for in vain, as those know who acknowledging the Son have the Father also and are not of the world.

Then comes their mission, which is drawn from the same unworldly source and is characterized by it. “As thou didst send me forth into the world, I also sent them forth into the world.” Moses disappears even as a pattern; so do the prophets. Even John the Baptist (and among those born of women was no prophet greater) was but man in mission from God; but he that is least in the kingdom is greater than he. He that cometh from above-from heaven-is above all. Such was Jesus; and as the Father sent forth Him, so He too sent those who then surrounded Him, their mission as new as the word which formed and furnished their souls. It flowed from One apart from the world and above it, who had been sent into it on an errand of infinite love to the Father's glory and was in spirit no more here but in heaven, whither He was actually going soon. It was thus the Son sent the disciples associated with Himself in heaven and charged with the Father's testimony to the world. Not of the world as He was not, they could be and were sent into it. Had they been of the world, they could not he sent into it; but, as taken out of it by grace in Christ, they were not of it.

This is fitly followed by another and crowning means of sanctification of which the Lord speaks. “And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified in truth.” It is not the Father's word now as given to them here and revealing Him in every detail as the disciples needed, though inseparable from Christ's person as come into the world, where they too were sent. This was essential both for themselves and their work. But grace does more; and the Lord goes on to show how He is setting Himself apart on high, the Son as ever but model Man before the Father in heaven, so as to complete their sanctification in seeing Him thus in glory. Thus it is not only the truth brought out here in all its application, but the truth also in the glorified Christ as the suited object to animate and strengthen as well as transform, while we behold Him with unveiled face: God revealed in man, the Son of man; the Son of man now glorified by God in Himself, and this straightway, that the disciples might be sanctified “in truth,” both bearing on their nature and walk. For, without such an object above, the fullest demonstration of God's righteousness and power were lacking, and so too, one might add, of the Father's love and glory, as well as what was due to His own person foot only as divine but as man, and man glorified according to the counsels of God. And the disciples also needed His blessed person thus before them at God's right hand in order to fix and fill their affections, beside the word which perfectly reveals all the mind of God in grace. Thus it is not simply as incarnate that the Lord sanctifies Himself on their behalf,-nor yet as dying sacrificially, according to Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, with a crowd of followers since their day, but as glorified, consequent on death and resurrection, that He becomes the pattern of His own. Beholding Him they are transformed into His image from glory to glory even as by the Lord the Spirit; and, when He shall be manifested, they are to be like Him, seeing Him as He is, and conformed to the image of the Son in resurrection glory. God Himself could give no other portion so blessed, when Christ shall be the firstborn among many brethren.

Notes on John, John 17:6-13, Notes on (17:6-13)

The Lord then explains how souls were brought into such nearness of relationship to Him before the Father.

“I manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and to me thou gavest them, and they have kept thy word. Now have they known that all things as many as thou hast given me are of thee; because the words which thou gavest me I have given to them, and they received [them], and knew truly that I came out from thee, and believed that thou didst send me.” (Vers. 6-8)

Thus the manifestation of the Father's name is first laid down. It was a characteristic and most influential truth, the Son being the only one competent, though none of course could enter in even so but by the Spirit, as we know and as is taught elsewhere. But as the Son could manifest His Father's name, so this He did in unjealous love, that the disciples, the men whom the Father gave Him out of the world, might know what He is as the Son knew Him; not, it need hardly be said, infinitely as was proper to the Only-begotten, but after that manner, as children of God, to whom the Son would impart that which was wholly outside and above man, and intrinsically of God for the family of God. For though the Lord had come to the Jews as their promised Messiah on earth, Him they would not have but had rejected, as they were just about to do even to the death of the cross. Hence, whatever may be the divine retribution another day when God makes inquisition for blood, and above all for His blood which they had blindly imprecated on themselves and their children, it became wholly a question of sovereign and heavenly grace, which, coming in the person of the Son, manifested His Father's name as no saint had ever enjoyed, no prophet so much as predicted, save perhaps in such a sort as to fall in with and confirm this most precious privilege when communicated. But even Hos. 1:10 is comparatively vague. Here all is as full as it is precise. It was the positive side of what the Lord undertook with His own here below, and its highest character: not the meeting sin and misery in grace, not even the display of excellency as the righteous One, the Servant, the Man and as such Son of God, but the manifestation of what His Father was and is as He knew Him, and as they were learning who were given to the Son by the Father out of the world. For the world is now defined and judged as alien and opposed to the Father. How blessed for the disciples to hear themselves thus singled out and designated as His!

Nor is this all. “Thine they were, and to me thou gavest them, and they have kept thy word.” It appears to me that they err who refer the Lord's description to His followers as formerly of Israel merely, and as walking in all the commandments and ordinances of Jehovah blameless. They were His elect. The Father had a purpose about them, and thus they belonged to Him, who gave them to the Son, the object of His love and effectuator of His counsels, as He is also the accomplisher of redemption, to His own glory. And as the men given out of the world are thus viewed on a divine ground outside Jewish ties, so that which formed their souls and their ways was quite distinct; they had kept, says the Son, His Father's word, made known by Himself when with them on earth hitherto. This we have, speaking generally, in the Gospels, with not a little they could not then gear in the Epistles. Everything refers to the Father: the Son, a man on earth, is always exalting Him, and in view of his own departure would endear them to Him and give them the assurance of it.

This is developed yet more in what follows. “Now have they known that all things as many as thou hast given me are of thee.” (Ver. 7.) They had entered into the secret of which the world knew nothing: the Father was the source of all that was given to the Son. Some wondered at His works and His words; others in their enmity blasphemously attributed what was beyond man to Satan. The disciples had learned that they were all of the Father, as the Son desired that they should. It was not only that He came out from the Father, nor that He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do, as their title to blessing with the Son before Him; but the means for bringing them into the blessing were also of the Father; “because the words which thou gavest me I have given to them, and they received [them], and knew truly that I

came out from thee and believed that thou didst send me.” (Ver. 8.) Thus the Lord handed over to His disciples those intimate communications of grace which the Father gave to Himself. It was no longer a question of the ten words given by Moses, the measure of man's responsibility to prove his sin and ruin which he neither owned nor felt. The words which the Father gave the Son were the expression of divine grace and love according to that blessed relationship in which the Son stood, though man; and the disciples, once mere men, but now born of God, have eternal life in Him and are given these words by the Son that they might know and enjoy the new relationship which grace had conferred on them. Nor was it in vain, however slow of heart they might be in believing all. For if He had given to them the words the Father gave to Him, the disciples received the truth really, though no doubt imperfectly; and the result was that they knew truly that Christ the Son came out from the Father, and believed that the Father sent Him. This is all the reckoning of grace here, not measuring degrees, but making much of reality, as He can well do whose love gives, deepens, and secures from first to last. Even for them to know assuredly that the Son came out from the Father does not suffice His heart, for this would not necessarily prove more than His own love in so coming; but the disciples believed the further truth that the Father sent Him, the proof of His own love to them. How rich, how needful, is every word of His grace!

“I ask for them: not for the world do I ask, but for those whom thou host given me, for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine (and all my things are thine, and all thy things mine), and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee.” (Vers. 9-11)

It is concerning the disciples He makes request, not for Israel nor the nations, not for the land nor the earth at large, but concerning those whom the Father had given Him. It is no question of taking up the world for government or blessing now: He is occupied with the joint-heirs, not with the inheritance as yet. By-and-by, as Psa. 2 lets us know, Jehovah will say, Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. But then the Son will be upon His holy hill of Zion, instead of being rejected on earth and received up on high. Then, instead of sustaining the suffering family of God who bear His reproach here below and wait for heavenly glory with Him, He will break the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It is not the interval of the gospel as now, but the day of the kingdom in power and glory. Here the Lord is praying for His own as the precious gift of the Father to Himself, while cut off and having nothing that was promised Him here below; and He asks the more, because they were the Father's. But this gives occasion for a parenthetic statement which lets out much of the light of His personal glory: And all My things are Thine, and all Thy things Mine.1 As the Son of David, the Messiah, could this reciprocity have been so expressed? Is it not evidently and only in virtue of His being the Eternal Son, one with the Father, that they have rights and interests no less boundless than common? After this however He returns to the saints as those in whom He was glorified as a fact, not past but abiding, urging their care on the Father, both because He sees Himself no longer with them in the world and themselves so much the more exposed in it, as He was going back to the Father. Hence arises afresh appeal.

“Holy Father, keep them in thy name which2 thou hast given me, that they may be one even as [also] we. When I was with them, I was keeping them in the name which thou hast given me, and I guarded [them], and not one of them perished but the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now unto thee I come, and these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” (Vers. 11-13)

The Lord asks His Father, as a holy Father, to keep the disciples in His name that they might be one, even as also the Father and the Son. And this was accomplished by the power of the Holy Ghost in those very men who then stood around Him. Never before or since was such unity produced in human beings on earth. Yet the Gospels are the plainest proof that they were far from it whilst our Lord was here below with them. It was to be the fruit of His grace through redemption after He went on high and sent down the Holy Ghost to effect it. And it was essential as a practical basis for Christianity. For doctrine is not enough without reality in life, and this most of all in those who were raised up of God to lay down the foundation. Granted that they were men of like passions with ourselves or any; granted that they displayed varied and not slight infirmities even under their Master's eyes and ministry on earth; granted that they then from first to last betrayed petty prejudices and narrow hearts and no small jealousy of each other, even in presence of the deepest love and lowliness, and words and ways which made their contrasted jars (and the selfishness which gave rise to all) most humbling and painful: all this, and more, only add to the blessedness of what God wrought in these very men by His Spirit in answer to the Lord's demand. The power of the Father's name, which the Lord here below knew so well, was manifest in them, and the twelve were one, even as the Father and the Son. None would have ventured so to describe but Christ; but if He did, He is the truth; and in fact with whom or what else could their unity as witnessed in the Acts and Epistles of the apostles be compared? Never elsewhere was seen such rising above egotism in the aims, measures, objects, the life and service of men on earth; never such common devotedness to, and absorption in, the will of God for the magnifying of the risen Jesus.

The Lord then, in committing His own to the Father whom in that name He was keeping whilst here, speaks of having kept them safe, save that one who was doomed to destruction. Awful lesson! that even the constant presence of Jesus fails to win where the Spirit brings not the truth home to the conscience. Does this enfeeble scripture? On the contrary, the scripture was thereby fulfilled. Chapter xiii. referred to Jades that none should be stumbled by such an end of his ministry. Here it is rather that none should therefore doubt the Lord's care or the scripture. He was not one of those given to Christ by the Father, though called to be an apostle: of those so given He had lost none. Judas was an apparent, not a real, exception, as he was not a child of God but the son of perdition. To see the awful end of so heartless a course would only give more force to His works of grace who, if He left the world for the Father, was bringing them into His own associations before the Father. Judas may never have meant the worst, as Satan did who entered him; but he did mean at all cost to gratify his love of money, trusting that He who had heretofore baffled His enemies would be able to extricate Himself. But he trusted his own thoughts to the death of His Master, and to his own eternal ruin; as Jesus carrying out His love in obedience to His Father would bring His own by His death to glory on high and His own place there: and expressed it here that even now they might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. And now that the Lord was going to the Father He speaks these things in the world that the disciples might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. The Father would surely prove the value of His name when the Son was not here in person to watch over them; and the very ruin of Judas rightly read should make the scripture still more solemn and sure to their souls.

Notes on John, John 17:1-5, Notes on (17:1-5)

Next follows a chapter which one may perhaps characterize truly as unequaled for depth and scope in all the scriptures. Holiness, devotedness, love, reign throughout. Who can wonder, seeing that it is unique in this respect as it is the Son opening His heart to the Father when just about to die and leave His own for heaven? Yet profoundly interesting and momentous as the case was, it is the Son addressing Him thus which is so wondrous a privilege for us to hear. But all this may well fill our hearts with the sense of utter insufficiency to speak of such communications suitably. Nevertheless as the Savior uttered all within the hearing of the disciples, so the Holy Spirit has been pleased to reproduce His words with divine precision. They are therefore for us now, as then for His favored followers. Encouraged by this grace we would count on the Lord's real and living interest in us and on His faithfulness who still abides with us to glorify Him by taking of His things and showing them to us.

“These things spake Jesus, and lifting up his eyes unto heaven said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy [or, the] Son may glorify thee, according as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that, everything which thou hast given him, he should give them eternal life. And this is the eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send forth, Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on the earth, having finished the work which thou hast given me to do; and now do thou, Father, glorify me along with thyself with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was.” (Vers. 1-5.)

The Lord had closed His parting instructions to the disciples who had now to testify of and for him, and so much the more because He was just about to leave them, His own personal testimony being already complete. To them not only had He spoken with fullness, but promised the Holy Spirit from heaven on His departure, that there might be power as well as truth. Unto heaven therefore did the Savior lift up His eyes in addressing His Father. He who even as Son of man is in heaven as a divine person was going there in bodily presence, when the work of redemption was effected. In virtue of this work accomplished in death, proved in resurrection, He would take His seat there, the witness of its infinite acceptance. His proper ministry on earth, not merely to men but to the disciples, had been fully rendered. To the Father He turns as ever, but now in the hearing of His own, as indeed He would open His heart, if unto Himself and His work, about them yet more, always the Sent One and Servant in divine love, though Lord of all. He looked to heaven when He blessed and brake the five loaves to feed the five thousand. He looked there and groaned as He made the deaf stammerer to hear and speak. Upward He lifted His eyes when at the grave of Lazarus He said, Father, I thank thee that Thou hast heard Me. To heaven He raising them once more said, “Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee.” He is ever a divine person, the Son, but a man; not here as in the other Gospels the rejected and agonized sufferer, but the perfect executor of God's purposes, heavenly and everlasting.

Hence, whatever the necessary and all-important intervention of His death, without which all else had been in vain for God's glory in presence of sin and ruin, He nowhere speaks of it here, nor does He ask for resurrection but glorification. “Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son;” but, even so, it is “that thy Son may glorify thee.” He is man, and asks the Father to glorify Him; He is Son, and when there, if glorified, it is still to glorify the Father. “According as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that, everything which thou hast given him, he should give them eternal life.” Though God, He exerts no power in His own right; He is true to the place into which He was pleased to come, and as man receives authority from the Father, but authority inconceivable, either in its universality of sphere or in its specialty of object, were He not God. For the authority given is over “all flesh,” and the special aim now, as to whatsoever the Father had given Him, is to give them eternal life. Thus the right of our Lord extends without limit, the Gentile being no more outside His title than the Jew; whilst eternal life is the portion of none beyond what is given of the Father to the Son, as elsewhere it is said to belong to the believer only.

This leads to the explanation of “the eternal life” in question. Life for evermore, life to eternity, is the blessing commanded by Jehovah on the mountains of Zion; and of the many Jews that sleep in the dust of the earth, some shall awake to everlasting life, as surely as some to shame and everlasting contempt; but both these scriptures contemplate that great turning-point for the earth, the kingdom when it comes in manifest power and glory. The Lord speaks of life as given in Himself to faith now. “And this is the eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ.” If it be distinguished from that which is to be enjoyed in the displayed kingdom by-and-by, it stands as to its character in the knowledge not of the Most High Possessor of heaven and earth, but of the Father and of His sent One, the only true God now plainly revealed in the Son, and the true Melchisedec, a Priest on His throne, the one Mediator between God and man. If distinguished from the past, it is no longer the Creator-God giving promises to the fathers protected and lodging as under the shadow of the Almighty, nor the sons of Israel in relationship with the name of Jehovah the moral governor of that chosen nation. It is the children of God in possession of the revelation of the Father and of Jesus Christ whom He had sent; and this knowledge identified, not with promises nor government, but with “eternal life,” as a present thing in

Christ, the portion of every believer. A deeper blessing it is impossible for God to bestow or for man to receive; for it is exactly what characterized the Lord Himself who is that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. Only Christ was that life; we as believers are not, but have it in Him; and as by faith alone it is received, so in faith it is exercised, sustained, and strengthened.

It may be noticed further that, as eternal life is bound up with the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, in contrast with the gods many and false of the Gentiles, so it cannot be where Christ is not known whom the Father sent, in contrast with His rejection by the Jews to their own deeper guilt and ruin. Neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost is excluded from the deity, which is elsewhere predicated or assumed of both equally with the Father. Here the object is to assert it of the Father and to state the place taken hereto below by Him who did not regard it as a prize [act or object of plunder] to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman. He was here to obey, to do the will of the Father that sent Him. But that He took such a place in lowly love is the strongest if indirect proof of His proper and eternal Godhead; for even the archangel is a servant and can never rise out of the position or relation of a servant, whereas the Son was pleased to take it in order to the full blessing of redemption unto the glory of God the Father. So life was in Him, and He was eternal life from everlasting; but here He is viewed as coming down to impart it in a scene departed from God, and to a creature, which otherwise must know death in its most terrible shape in judgment as now in guilt.

Next, the Lord presents His work: we have seen His person as the Son pleaded. But now He urges what He had done hereto below. “I glorified thee on the earth, having finished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me along with thyself with the glory

which I had along with thee before the world was." The language here is more general than in chapter 13:31, 32, where it is a question of glorifying God, before whom sin comes into unsparing judgment. Here it is glorifying His Father, and so there is no special contemplation of that final dealing where all that God is and feels came out against, evil imputatively laid on the head of the Son of man. Here the entire path of Christ on earth in giving Himself up to obey and please His Father is summed up. Therefore it was the more needful to specify its completion, "having finished the work which thou hast given me to do." He speaks not more as the faithful servant than as the conscious Son of God who sees all completed to the Father's glory, Who had given Him the work that He should do it who alone could. And thereon does He ask the Father to glorify Him, not because of His personal glory and relationship only, but in virtue of the work completed to His glory here below, that He might thus lay a valid and sure title for us to join Him in the same heavenly blessedness. It is not that He ever did or could cease to be God, any more than after becoming incarnate He will ever cease to be man; but, having, in divine love come down to be a servant and a man to glorify God the Father and make a righteous channel for all the purposes of divine grace, He asks to be glorified by the Father along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him before the world was. There He had been from everlasting as the Son; there He asks to be as the Son but now also a man, the Word made flesh but risen, to everlasting. It was His perfection as man to ask for this glorification. Not even as risen does He glorify Himself. He had emptied and humbled Himself for the Father's glory; He asks the Father to glorify Him, though He states His eternal and divine competency by asking to be glorified with the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Never so weighty a plea, never so solid a ground of righteousness, never such exquisite and infinite grace.

Notes on John, John 16:29-33, Notes on (16:29-33)

IT would be difficult to find a verse of John which presents more tersely and completely toe the character of his Gospel than the one we have just had before us; nor one less really apprehended now as then by the disciples. His divine relationship and mission from the Father stand clearly revealed on earth before they join Him on high, His presence as man in the world, no less than His quitting the world, and going to the Father, none the less the Son become now mall, with the immense results of all this for God, and more especially the saints; these great truths wholly transcend all Messianic glory which as yet filled the minds of His followers, who proved, how little they knew by the very fact that they thought they knew all clearly.

"His disciples say [to him]1, Lo, now thou talkest with2 openness and speakest no parable. Now we know that thou knowest all things and hast no need that one ask thee: herein we believe that thou didst come out from God." (Vers. 29, 30.) Their own language bewrayed them. Simple as His words were, they had not taken in their depth. They had no conception of the mighty change from all they had gathered of the kingdom as revealed in the Old Testament to the new state of things that would follow His absence with the Father on high and the presence of the Spirit here below. It sounded plain to their ears; but even up to the ascension they feebly if at all caught a glimpse of it. They to the last clang to the hopes of Israel, and these surely remain to be fulfilled another day, But they understood not this day, daring which, if the Jews are treated as reprobate, even as He was rejected of them, those born of God should in virtue of Christ and His work be placed in immediate relationship with the Father. His return to the Father was a parable still, though the Lord does not correct their error, as indeed it was useless: they would soon enough learn how little they knew. But at least even then they had the inward consciousness that He knew all, end, as He penetrated their thoughts, had no need that any should ask Him. "Herein we believe that then camest out from God." Undoubtedly: yet how far below the truth He had uttered is that which they were thus confessing! The Spirit of His Son sent into their hearts would give them in due time to know the Father; as redemption accomplished and accepted could alone lay the needful ground for it.

"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? [or, Just now ye believe]: lo, an hour cometh, and3 is come, that ye should be scattered, each onto his own, and leave me alone; and I and not alone, because the Father is with me. These things have4 I spoken to you that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world." (Vers. 31-33)

Their faith was real, but they were shortly to show how small it would be proved to be in the hour of trial already come. If doubt is never justifiable, it is good in our weakness to live in constant dependence. When strong in our own eyes, we are weak indeed; when weak, we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus. But O what a Savior! and what disciples! They scattered to their own, and He left alone in the hour of His deepest need! Would any heart but His own have hastened to add, after such desertion on their part, "and I am not alone, because the Father is with me?" Could any but Himself have added, especially to such saints and under such circumstances, These things have I spoken to you that in Me ye may have peace? or have given such solid ground for it, at the very moment of contemplating their present portion of trouble in the world? "Be of good courage: I have overcome the world." As Christ alone could so feel and bless so are these worlds worthy of Him; and one knows not whether to admire most their divine authority, or their matchless grace and suitability to our need here below. As He is absolutely what He also speaks, so He speaks what He is to the unfailing comfort of the believer.

Strikingly characteristic of our Gospel is the omission of the sorrows of Gethsemane, and yet more of God's abandoning Him on the cross. Neither fell in with that account of Him which sets forth the glory of His person whose it was to do the will of Him who sent Him and to finish His work. Others bring out His complete rejection and humiliation, the service He rendered, and the depth of his sympathy as the perfect Man. John sees, bears, and records the Son above all circumstances, the object and the revealer of the Father, even when that sorrow came which nattered them, or that forsaking of God which was unfathomable save to Himself.

With all before Him He spoke what He did here that in Him they might have peace; and se He was: in the world tribulation their portion, not as for the Jew retributively at a specified and measured hour Jeremiah 30:7; Dan. 12:1 Matt. 24:21; Mark 8:19) at the time of the end or even preparatorily meanwhile (Luke 21:22-24), but habitually for those not of the worlds and hence a prey in it: Yet are they called to courage, as knowing Him whom they have believed, His fiery and His grace, who has overcome the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Notes on John, John 16:23-28, Notes on (16:23-28)

The Lord proceeds to set forth yet more fully the blessing and privilege which should flow from His going to heaven and so bringing out the Father's love to them.

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing: verily, verily, I say to you,1 whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, he will give you in my name.2 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” (Vers 28, 24.)

It is well known that the Greek words we are well nigh obliged to translate “ask” in verse 28 are not the same, the first (ἐρωτάω) being expressive rather of familiar entreaty, the second (αἰτέω) of lowly petition. Hence, while our Lord often in this Gospel employs the former in His asking the Father on behalf of the disciples, never does He use the latter. However low He may go down in grace, He is ever the conscious Son of God, a man but none the less a divine person; whilst Martha shows her slight appreciation of His glory by supposing that He might fitly and successfully appeal to God after a suppliant sort. (John 11:22.)

But it seems too strong to say that every competent judge admits that “ye shall ask” of the first half of the verse has nothing to do with “ye shall ask” of the second; or that in the first Christ is referring back to the desire of the disciples in verse 19 to question Him. So Euthymius, as well as the Vulgate, and a crowd of moderns from Beza to Trench, including many German and British theologians. But though the word ἐρωτάω occurs often in the New Testament, and even in this chapter in the ordinary classical sense of “question” (interrogo), it is used quite as often or more so for “praying” or “beseeching,” &c. (rogo), as in the LXX., and thus like our English “ask,” which means “to request” no less than “to question” or “inquire.” Inquiring of God in Old Testament phrase approaches in fact nearer to prayer for any one or thing than to a question. I think then that varying the English word was not the true solution, though obvious enough on the surface, and that the earlier Greek commentators were nearer the truth, save Origen who like later errorists perverted the passage to deny the propriety of praying to our Lord, thus flatly contradicting the early disciples (Acts 1:24), Stephen (Acts 7:59), and the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:8.) In matters which concern His service and His church it is even more proper according to scripture to pray to Him than to the Father, to whom we instinctively turn for all that concerns the family of God.

The Lord is really signifying the great change from recourse to Him as their Messiah on earth for every difficulty, not for questions only but for all they might want day by day, to that access unto the Father into which He would introduce them as the accepted Man and glorified Savior on high. Till redemption is known, and the soul by grace is set in righteousness, even believers are afraid of God and hide as it were behind Christ. They draw near in spirit, as the disciples did actually, to Him who in love came down from heaven to bless and reconcile them to God. But they do not really know what it is to come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace. They are not in the distinct consciousness of children before their Father, enjoying liberty in Christ by the Spirit of adoption.

This then appears to me what the Lord gives the disciples to know should follow His resurrection and departure “in that day,” a day already come, the day of grace, not of glory, save so far as we enter in by virtue of Him who is gone above and sent the Spirit thence to be in us. He had already and fully told them what the Spirit of truth would do in guiding them into all the truth (vers. 12-15); here He substitutes access to the Father for everything in prayer, instead of personal requests to Himself as their Master ever ready to help on earth. It is not a question then of a declaration of being so taught of the Spirit as to have nothing further to inquire, but of no longer having One at hand to whom they had been in the habit of appealing for each difficulty as it rose. The departing Son of God would draw out confidence of heart in the Father.

Hence the solemnity of making known their new resource. “Verily, verily, I say to you, whatsoever [or, if] ye shall ask the Father [in my name], he will give you [in my name].” The text differs in the manuscripts and other authorities; but the best of them place “in my name” after the assurance that the Father will give, not after the saints asking the Father as in the common text, which however is best supported by the ancient versions. There can be no doubt, as we shall see presently, that the saints are encouraged and entitled in the value of the revelation of Christ to prefer their requests to the Father; but, if the more ancient reading hold in verse 28, we have the collateral truth that He gives in virtue of that name whatsoever they shall ask Him. How blessed and cheering to the saints! What pleasure to the Father and honor to the Son! The rejection of the Messiah only turns to His greater glory and better blessings for His own.

And this is followed up in verse 24: “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” The importance of this can hardly be exaggerated: I do not mean as bearing merely on the use of the blessed prayer given long before to the disciples, but on the broader question of their approaching new relationship and standing by redemption and the gift of the Spirit. On the face of the words however it is plain that to use that prayer is not to ask the Father in Christ's name. The disciples were no doubt in the habit of using it day by day; yet up to the present they had asked nothing in His name. Now so to ask the Father in the Son's name is alone Christian prayer in the true and full sense. Those therefore who insist on going back to the prayer of the disciples fail to enter into the new place on which the Lord here sets all that are His. It may be reverently meant; but is it the faith which really enters into God's mind and honors the Master? I trow not. As a prayer to be used when the disciples knew not how to pray, it was perfection; as a model, it abides ever full of depths of instruction. But the Lord, now at the end of His career here below, lets them know the shortcoming in ground and object of their previous petitions, and tells them what should be their character in future,

It would have been out of season and presumptuous for the disciples in the past to have drawn near to the Father as the Son did, who, in His wisdom and goodness, gave them a prayer really suited to their then state when the atoning work was not yet done and the Holy Ghost accordingly not given. But now, as we have already seen so often in this context, consequent on Christ's glorifying God on earth by death and going up on high, the Holy Ghost would come to be in and with them; and this is the great result Godward, as we have already seen much saintward: they should ask in Christ's name, and they are called to ask and receive, that their joy might be full. Life in Christ would go forth in suited desires, to which the Holy Ghost would impart power as well as intelligence; and assuredly, with such a ground and motive before Him as the Son of man who had devoted Himself at all cost to His glory, the Father would fail in nothing on His part. Their joy would indeed be at the full.

“These things have I spoken to you in parables: an hour cometh when I shall speak no longer to you in parables, but openly report to you about the Father. In that day ye shall ask (αἰτήσεσθε) in my name, and I say not to you that I will pray (ἐρωτήσω) the Father for you; for the Father Himself dearly loveth you because ye have dearly loved me and have believed that I came out from God. I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and proceed unto the Father.” (Vers. 25-28.)

It is owing, I presume, to the large and various meaning of the Hebrew îÈùÑÈì that we have in Greek παροιμίαas well as παραβολή used correspondingly not only in the LXX. but in the New Testament, the synoptic Gospels always use the latter, John only the former as in chapter 10 and here. Perhaps “allegory” might be more appropriate, or even a “dark saying” in our chapter where parable or allegory can scarcely apply. A close examination of the usage will prove that both Greek words are employed with considerable latitude in the four Gospels, as elsewhere,

Here the Lord was conscious that what He uttered fell like enigmas on the ears of the disciples. His plain declaration or report about the Father would clear up all in due time. What did not His resurrection? and His appearances and converse from the first to the last of His forty days' intercourse, as well as His ascension? Take alone the message through Mary of Magdala on the first day of the week. Did He not plainly declare about the Father, His and theirs? But above all when He testified by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, did not the truth shine out more than ever? He made known to them His. Father's name then; He was to make it known when gone above (John 17:26), and did so only more effectively from thence.

This also turned (as was intended) to their increasing sense of the value of Christ's own name. “In that day ye shall ask (αἰτ) in my name.” (Ver. 26.) Asking in His name is not merely for Christ's sake as a motive, but in the value of Himself and His acceptance. His worth goes in its, fullness to the account of those who thus plead; and how precious and all-prevailing it is in the. Father's eyes! How glorifying to both the Father and the Son! How humbling and no less strengthening to the saints themselves! It is the title of every Christian now; none ever enjoyed it before. Never was there a soul blessed on earth apart from Him and His work foreseen; but this is known nearness and acceptance applied even to our petitions in virtue of Himself fully revealed when His work was done in infinite efficacy.

“And I say not that I will ask (ἐρωτ.) the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you dearly, because ye have loved me dearly, and have believed that I came out from God."3 (Vers. 26, 27.) This is another of those sentences over which not men and scholars but saints also stumble, because many a believer even is not enjoying the truth of it; and what John's Gospel and Epistles treat of must be entered into really to be understood. This verse 26 not more denies Christ's intercession for us, than verse 23 forbids the servant praying to His Lord about His work or His house. It is not an absolute statement, nor is there the smallest need to apply the technical device of Praeteritio, as it is called, so as to convey not a negation, about a strong affirmation. Thus it would mean “I need not assure you that I will pray the Father for you.” But it is simply an ellipse, which the words following explain: I do not say that I will ask the Father for you, as if He did not love you; for the Father Himself (proprio motu) does love you dearly, &c. This too accounts for the words of special affection, φιλεὶ and πεφιλ, which follow. It was grace, the Father's drawing, which brought them to hear the voice of the Son and believe in Him; yet does the Lord speak of the Father's dearly loving them and of their having dearly loved Him, to whom they clung truly, however feebly. They had believed that He came out from God. They truly believed that He was the Christ of God, and were born of Him.

But this was far short of the full truth which He proceeds to reveal: “I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and proceed onto the Father.” (Ver. 28.) Here they were altogether short. They realized as yet little or nothing of His full, divine, and eternal glory as the Son of the Father. God the Father was fully revealed no doubt in the Son; but the presence and power of the Spirit, personally sent down, was needed to give them communion with Him thus made known. It is this which, when the conscience is purged, brings into happy liberty; and here is what so many saints are still ignorant of, in the state of their souls pretty ranch where the disciples then were; for though they see the glory of the Son, they fail to see in Him and His work their title to rest in the Father's love.

Notes on John, John 16:12-22, Notes on (16:12-22)

Men are apt to err doubly in their estimate of the Holy Spirit's relation to us. They either overlook the immense effect of His presence and teaching, or they attribute to Him what may be the mere fruit of natural conscience and diffused information. Our Lord here puts in His own perfect way what the Spirit would do as sent down from heaven, not now in external demonstration to the world, but in the positive blessing and help of the disciples.

“I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, shall have come, he will guide you in1 [or, into] all the truth; for he will not speak from himself, but whatever2 he shall hear3 he will speak; and he will report to you the things to come. He will glorify me, for he will receive of mine, and will report [it] to you. All things that the Father hath are mine: on this account I said, that he receiveth4 of mine and will report [it] to you.” (Vers. 12-15.)

It has been repeatedly shown, and in this chapter most expressly, that the presence of the Spirit depended on the departure of Christ to heaven consequent on accomplished redemption. This changed the entire groundwork, besides morally fitting the saints for the new truths, work, character, and hopes of Christianity. The disciples were not ignorant of the promise that the Spirit should be given to inaugurate the reign of the Messiah. They knew the judgment under which the chosen people abide” until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest;” so vast outwardly, no less than inwardly, the change when God puts forth His power for the kingdom of His Son. They knew that He will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh; not only the sons and daughters, the old and young of Israel enjoying a blessing far beyond all temporal favors, but the servants and the handmaidens, in short all flesh and not the Jews alone sharing it.

But here it is the sound heard when the great High Priest goes in into the sanctuary before Jehovah, and not only when He comes out for the deliverance and joy of repentant Israel in the last days. It is the Spirit given when the Lord Jesus went on high, and by Him thus gone. For this they were wholly unprepared, as indeed it is one of the most essential characteristics of God's testimony between the rejection and the reception of the Jews; and the Spirit, when given, was to supply what the then state of the disciples could not bear. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God; and He is a Spirit, not of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind, besides the incalculable facts of Christ's work in death, resurrection, and ascension to which He testifies. Truly the Lord had many things to say reserved for the Holy Ghost, when the disciples had their consciences purged and could draw near boldly into the holiest, and a Man glorified in heaven furnished the meet occasion for the display of all that is in God, even for the secret hid in God before all worlds, of which not John or any other than the

apostle Paul was to be the administrator.

But be the instrument who it might, when He is come, the Spirit of truth, as the Lord intimates here, “he will guide you into all truth,” or “in” it all as the Sinaitic, Cambridge (D), and Parisian (L) uncials with other authorities have it. For this two main grounds are given, besides His necessary competency as a divine person. First, He does not act independently but fulfilling the mission on which He is sent expressly. “For he shall not speak from himself, but whatever he shall hear, he will speak; and he will report to you the things to come.” Secondly, His prime object is to exalt the Lord Jesus, and therefore He will assuredly make this good in testimony to the disciples. “He will glorify me, for he will receive of mine and report [it] to you.”

The reader must guard against the popular error, easily suggested by the Authorized Version of verse 13, as if the sense meant were that the Spirit shall not speak about Himself. But it is neither true as a fact, nor is it of course intended here. The Spirit largely speaks concerning Himself in this Gospel, and particularly in the section we are examining; as He does in Rom. 8 Cor. 2; 12 Cor. 3, Eph. 4, and many other parts of scripture; which makes it the more strange that even the simplest have not learned the meaning here to be, that He shall not speak from Himself, but, as the next clause explains, whatever He shall hear He will speak. As the Son came not to act independently, whatever His glory, but to serve His Father; so the Spirit is come to serve the Son, and whatever He shall hear, He will speak.

But there is more. Not only can He speak of the Son in heaven as sent down by Him, and thus bear the highest testimony to His intrinsic dignity and the new position Christ is in there, but He has not ceased to be the Spirit of prophecy. On the contrary, He, would thus work abundantly in view of the world's total ruin and the blessing that waits on the Lord's return. “And he will report to you the things to come.” The prophetic word is found largely in the New Testament, not only in the Gospels, but also in the Epistles, but most of all in the wonderful book of Revelation. And the effect was immense in detaching the saints from the world as under judgment, however this might tarry. They knew these things before, and thus held fast their own steadfastness. Nevertheless prophecy as occupied with the earth, even though it go on to the kingdom of God there, is but a small and even inferior part of the Spirit's testimony, however astonishing in man's eyes and precious in itself. Christ's own glory, now on high, is the direct object; and this in every way. “He will glorify me, for he will receive of mine and will report [it] to you.” And here also all is in contrast with Messianic light or earthly dominion, however jest and great. “All things that the Father hath are mine: on this account I said that he receiveth of mine and will report [it] to you.” He is sent down to glorify not the church but Christ, and this by receiving and reporting what is Christ's (and all the Father has is His), not by exaggerating the importance or allowing the will of man.

But there is another intimation needful to press the “little while” with its issues of sorrow and joy.

“A little while and ye behold me not;5 and again a little while and ye shall see me [because I go away unto the Father]. [Some] therefore of his disciples said one to another, What is this which he saith to us, A little while and ye behold me not, and again a little while and ye shall see me, and because I go away to the Father. They said therefore, What is this that he saith, the6 little while? We know not of what he talketh. Jesus knew [therefore7] that they wished to ask him, and said to them, Do ye inquire of this one with another, because I said, a little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily I say to you that ye shall weep and lament, and the world shall rejoice; ye8 shall be grieved, but your grief shall be turned into joy. The woman, when she bringeth forth, hath grief because her hour is come; but when she hath given birth to the child, she no longer remembereth the affliction for the joy that a man hath been born into the world. And ye now therefore have grief, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh from you.” (Vers. 16-22.)

The “little while” in any and every sense was a strange sound td Jewish ears; so is His going away to the Father. It is no question here of their lost Messiah, the suffering Son of man. This of course is true and important in its place, and fully treated in the closing scenes of the synoptic gospels. But here we see and hear the conscious Son of God, a man but a divine person who had come from and was now going back to the Father. We need especially to be in the spirit of this to estimate the “little while” and indeed Christianity in contradistinction to what was and what will be. The resurrection brought the disciples into the intelligence of this “little while,” though it may not be all out till He comes again. The Jew thought nothing more certain than that the Christ when He came would abide forever. The “little while” was therefore another enigma which His death and resurrection cleared up, and the Spirit subsequently showed to be bound up with all that is characteristic of the present work of God for the glory of Christ. We anticipate by faith what will come and manifestly at His appearing.

Nothing can be more marked than the Lord's avoidance here of introducing His death as such; and it is all the more striking because it is so prominent in chapters 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12. Here no doubt it underlies all, and poor indeed had been the joy without His infinite sorrow on the cross. But that solemn hour is here passed over thus: “A little while, and ye behold me not; and again, a little while and ye shall see, me. Verily, verily, I say to you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be grieved, but your grief shall be turned into joy.” This was sorely true when He rose after His brief absence, as it will be fully verified when He comes for them never to part more. And this He illustrates by the most familiar of all figures of sorrow issuing in joy. (Vers. 21, 22.) The absence of the Lord to the world is getting rid of Him; but even now His resurrection is a joy which none takes away. What will it be when He comes to receive us to Himself?

Notes on John, John 16:7-11, Notes on (16:7-11)

This leads the way to the main distinctive truth the Lord is intimating, the presence and action of the Holy Ghost when sent down from heaven.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is profitable for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you.” (Ver. 7.)

The Lord had told them before, that had they loved Him, they would have rejoiced because He said, I go unto the Father. What was it not for the humbled, holy, and suffering Son of man to quit the scene of His unequaled sorrows for His Father's presence on high? Now He shows the

connection of His departure with their fresh and deeper blessing. It might seem, to them especially, strange to say that the loss of His bodily presence should be their gain. But so it was to be. The truth is not what seems but the manifestation of what really is, nor is it found in the first man but in the Second; nor can we know it but by the Spirit. Now it was to be established and enjoyed more than ever. For Christ was going to heaven on the ground of accomplished redemption, thence to send the Holy Spirit to the saints on earth. It was profitable for them then that Christ should go away. He who alone effectuates any spiritual good would not otherwise come.

And now that the Lord was going above, having obtained eternal redemption, the Holy Spirit was not only to work as He had never before wrought in the children of men or in the children of God, but was to come personally and undertake the entire charge and business of the disciples. For this is the meaning of παράκλητος, which our “Advocate” so feebly represents. He had come in person to abide in Jesus; He had sealed the Son of man; He had anointed Him with power. None could have Him thus till God's judgment of sin had taken its course in the cross. Not that compassion or fidelity of goodness, or any other form or way of divine love had been lacking in times past; but this presence of the Spirit could not be till then. Jesus had the Spirit thus descending and abiding on Him, and this as the perfect Man without blood-shedding, for He knew no sin, at His baptism. But others were sinners, and those who believed had a sinful nature, notwithstanding their believing. The flesh still remained, and they are contrary to each other. Here comes in the efficacy of Christ's work. God was then and there glorified even as to sin in His cross. His blood cleanses from all sin. God made Him to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 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. Not only were the bad fruits gone but the evil root that bore them was judged and sentence executed. Hence could the Spirit come and dwell in us as never before, not to our houses beyond the saints of past ages, but in virtue of Christ's death and its infinite value in God's eyes.

This then is the distinctive character of Christianity: not as in the kingdom Christ reigning in Jehovah power and glory, and the Spirit poured out upon all flesh, but Christ departing to be in heaven and the Spirit as Advocate sent and abiding with the saints.

“And when he is come, he will convince [or, afford proof to] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my [or, the] Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” (Vers. 8-11.)

The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it sees Him not neither knoweth Him. He is the object of neither sense nor intellect. Whatever the effects or displays of His energy, He abides invisible in Himself and outside the ken of the world. But the saints know Him, and that their bodies are His temple, even as they by Him know all else that they really know. God has revealed to us by His Spirit what is beyond human intelligence as such; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, His depths; and just as the spirit of man knows the things of a man, even so the things of God no man knows, but the Spirit of God. And Him we as Christians have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. And not only so, but they are communicated in words by Him, and received by His power in the believer, as truly as they are by Him revealed: all is by the Holy Spirit of God.

Here we have His present relation, not to the saints, but to that world which is outside. And the Lord tells us, that, when come, He ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον. It is difficult to convey justly the force of this. “Reprove,” as in the Authorized Version, is too narrow a meaning, if not false. “Rebuke” is here out of the question. “Convict” hardly applies even to the first, not at all to the second and the third clauses; and supposes an effect produced which may not really be in any case. Nor is one satisfied with “convince,” save in the sense of affording proof by His presence, rather than by His action. For by His coming and abiding in the saints, apart from the world, He gives demonstrative proof of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

The law dealt with Israel as those under it. But now it is the Spirit who demonstrates the sin of the world; and this not because they violate that divine measure of a man's duty, but because they reject the Son of God: “of sin, because they believe not on me.” (Ver. 9.) That was grace, this fatal. It is not merely failure in obligation, but despite of grace. And such is the true and actual gauge of the world before God, who tests and proves the guilt of the whole system which opposes Him by its unbelieving ignorance and refusal of His Son, spite of the fullest testimony to Him.

Further, He affords demonstration of righteousness. Where is this? In the race or first man? On the contrary, there is none righteous, no, not one. And as for the Righteous One, even Jesus, He as we have seen was despised and rejected of men, by none so keenly as by the Jews, but in fact and to the uttermost by the world. Where then is the Spirit's proof of righteousness? “Because I go to my [or, the] Father, and ye see me no more.” (Ver. 10.) Righteousness is on God's part only. Man condemned and killed the Just One; God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand. The Son “going to the Father” is the standing witness of righteousness there, and not here; for man He who came into the world in love is clean gone. They would not have Him, and “ye see me no more.” He returns for the world as Judge; but this is a wholly different and most solemn affair. But He is lost to men: all is closed with His mission to the world as He came. And the Spirit testifies and demonstrates only divine righteousness in Him on high, and man lost in casting Him out no longer to be seen as before here below.

But again the spirit gives proof of “judgment;” and this, “because the prince of this world is judged.” (Ver. 11.) Here again it is not a question of the kingdom in power and glory when Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and slay the dragon that is in the sea. The Christian knows what will be for the earthly people's deliverance and the joy of all nations, but he sees already by faith that Satan is judged in Christ's death and resurrection and ascension. The Holy Ghost sums up all in Christ's person; and this is the grand demonstration for the world. Its ruler is already judged in rejecting Him who made known the Father, glorified God, and is glorified of God. All is closed for the world in Him who came in love, and is gone up in righteousness. The ruler of the world is judged in His cross.

Notes on John, John 16:1-6, Notes on (16:1-6)

The Lord proceeds to explain why He had now and not before spoken of the things which were then occupying His heart and being made known to the disciples.

“These things I have spoken to you that ye should not be offended. They wilt put you out of the synagogue; nay, an hour is coming that everyone that hath killed you will think that he is offering service to God. And these things will they do1 to you because they knew not the Father nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when the [or, their]2 hour shall have come, ye may remember them that I told you; but these things I told you not from [the] beginning, because I was with you. But now I go unto him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Where goest thou? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart” (Vers. 1-6.)

Many were to be stumbled among the Jews who looked for anything but sorrow, shame, and groundless hatred to be the portion of those who follow the Messiah. But the Lord graciously considers His own; and while He uses trial for the blessing of the strong, He would shield and strengthen the weak, both by warning them of the world's undying and of the Holy Ghost's coming to add His testimony to theirs in the face of the persecution of the servants as of their Master. (Ver. 1.)

Two forms should be taken to get rid of Christians and their testimony: one in common when men affect the utmost zeal for divine authority and holiness; the other open to individuals even to the extreme point of death to extinguish malefactors not fit to live. “They will put you out of the synagogue; nay, an hour cometh that everyone that hath killed you will think that he is offering service to God.” Impossible to conceive rancor more deadly, yet sanctioned by all, than that any one who liked might take on himself to kill a follower of Christ, not only with impunity, but claiming therein to do a religious service to God. Saul of Tarsus furnishes a notable example of all this till sovereign grace chose him to bear the Lord's name before all and to suffer great things for His sake. (Ver. 2.)

Doubtless there is a disposition in men generally to fight for their religion, whatever it be. But a special reason gives intensity to the world's, and in particular to the Jew's enmity to Christians. The measure of truth possessed is to the flesh the most powerful motive for disliking and resenting that which claims fuller light; and Christianity cannot but confess the truth in all its fullness in Christ by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. He who confesses the Son has the Father also; as he is the antichrist who denies both. (1 John 2:23.) And this is what the proud unbelief of Judaism ever tends to when confronted with the testimony of Christ. They set their partial and preparatory knowledge against that complete revelation which could not be till He came who shows the Father, and accomplished everlasting redemption. How blessed for the babes of God's family that, if what they heard from the beginning abides in them, they too shall abide in the Son and in the Father

And as it was with the Jew, so it is with every ecclesiastical system of Christendom itself, which in order to embrace the greatest possible number contents itself with the least and lowest confession, and hence is exposed to the snare of the devil in setting itself against all that go beyond the Christian alphabet. So even the reformed bodies settled themselves on what their founders learned on emerging from popery, and oppose as innovation all that working of the Spirit which recalls to the fullness of Christ in the written word which was long before either the Reformation or Popery. They too persecuted when they had any confidence in their own confessions; till of late they have become so honeycombed with the indifference or the activity of skepticism that they care too little for anything to persecute anybody. But where there is a real holding fast of such a measure of traditional truth as arrogates the name of orthodoxy, there is always a jealousy of the action of the Spirit which insists on Christ more richly known with fresh power to men's hearts, and consequently claiming exercise of faith. So the Jew set the unity of the Godhead to deny the Father and the Son and the Spirit; so men now resist the truth of the one body and one Spirit, devoted to the fleshly unity of Rome or boasting of the active rivalry of Protestant societies. But the more they hold even truth itself in a measure as a form, the less willing are they to allow the activity of the Spirit by God's word as a whole. “And these things will they do, because they knew not the Father nor me.” Yet to know both is eternal life, which every Christian characteristically has by the gospel, though the most advanced is marked by deepening acquaintance with Him that is from the beginning. When and where idols reigned, it needed the energy of grace to turn to God, the living and true; where God was making Himself known in the Son, flesh might avail itself of old truth no longer contested nor costing any sacrifice, and have its tongue set on fire of bell to blaspheme the full revelation which tests actual faith and faithfulness, and seek to exterminate those who testified it. The principle holds good in small things as well as in the greatest, and now as ever.

But as the Lord thus prepared the disciples for harsher things from the professing people of God than from men wholly ignorant, so now He lets them know what they must suffer, that they might gather comfort even in that hour by remembering His words. As the trial that came to pass was known to Him and made known to them, now they could trust His assurance of love and blessing, of deliverance and glory. Besides He explains why He had not told of those things before. He was with them, their shield and Paraclete; and what need was there to say a word? But as He was about to leave them, it was well, and would help all to work for good. (Ver. 4.)

“But now I go unto him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Where goest thou? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart.” (Vers. 5, 6.) This sorrow was more of nature than of faith. No wonder it surprised them to hear of their divine Master leaving them with such a prospect before them, with so little manifestation of the effects of His coming in the world or even in Israel. And they had forsaken their all and followed Him: what could it mean? He had already assured them that He would not leave them orphans, but was coming to them. Had faith been simpler, they would have not only counted on His loving care of them, but had asked whither He was going, and have learned its bearing on His glory and their blessing. It is ignorance of His mind which fills the heart with sorrow at His words, for they are spirit and life, though we may need to wait on God in order to lay hold on them intelligently. But the Lord proceeds to bring out all clearly in what follows.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Vine (15:1-8)

The disciples were used to regard Israel as the vine of Jehovah's planting. He brought it out of Egypt and planted it in the land on which His eyes rested. But the Psalm (80), which tells us so, mourns its actual devastation by the wild beasts of the field, and beseeches Him to visit this vine, as He will by the Son of man. Here the Lord meanwhile sets aside Israel altogether, and substitutes Himself for that empty vine. Christ is the True Vine, and His Father is the Husbandman. This is clearly, not His office in heaven as Advocate (chap. 13), nor His coming as our Hope to place us with Himself in the Father's house (chap. 16), but His relation to His own on earth for fruit-bearing. Christ is all.

Hence we see throughout that it is the responsibility of the disciple to depend on Christ, to cleave to Him, to refer all to Him. Thus only is fruit borne to His praise, and the Father glorified. Throughout our abiding has the first place, and it is a question of " if." The very reverse appears

invariably where God presents salvation by grace.

" I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Already ye are clean on account of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you: even as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither ye unless ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, he beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing. Unless one abide in me, he is cast forth as the branch and is withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask whatever ye will, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples to me " (vers. 1-8).

Luminous as these words are, bias has misunderstood them, Calvinists and Arminians wresting them, each to his scheme. Both start with the assumption that the figurative language means union with Christ, or membership of His body. But His body is never taught in our Gospel nor indeed by any but the apostle Paul; and though union is elsewhere, it is not here, but communion. Union is a settled fact in the spiritual realm, on the basis of Christ's death (chap. 11:52) and by the given Spirit's power (17:11, 21, 22, 23). But communion is conditional, and hence may or may not be, as it depends on abiding in Christ.

For this reason it is not a question here of believing on Christ to life eternal, but of abiding in Him and bearing fruit. Man's will for this wholly fails; the chosen people have no power more than others; the law is in vain; and so is the church. Angels, saints living or departed, the Virgin, are but sinking sand. Christ is the True Vine, Christ only. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself; apart from Him it can do nothing.

It is the responsible position of all that call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. All such have left Gentilism or Judaism for Christ. It may be a heart or a lip confession of Christ; but those that confess Him are all branches in the Vine. He is the True Vine; but they may not be true branches. If they abide in Him, they bear fruit; if they do not, they are sooner or later taken away. They may leave Him, or, if put away, they may never be restored either inwardly or outwardly. So we read (chap. 6:66) that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. So it was going to be manifest in Judas, one of the Twelve. They were branches in the Vine; they confessed His name. But if they did not abide, they hence bore no fruit for His Father. The truest branch needs pruning, or cleansing, by the Father, that it may bear more fruit; but every branch that is true bears fruit. Those that are untrue prove it by not abiding in Christ, and hence by bearing no fruit, self-confident and active though they may be.

The Lord Jesus is life eternal to those that believe on Him. This however is not the subject which is here treated of. It is rather how to bear fruit; and abiding in Christ is its source and way. He is not only life, but the rule of life; and as He is absolutely what He also speaks, His word expresses it fully. By His word were they begotten afresh; on account of it they were already clean. To abide in Him, and have His words abiding in them, draws out in suited prayer and ensures the answer. There is thus much fruit to the glory of the Father, and Christ is not ashamed of them as His disciples. Not to abide in Him, after knowing and confessing Him, is worse than never to have heard, and leaves those who abandon Him as dried up branches of the Vine, only fit for the" burning. Such souls never had life in the Son.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Do you yearn after fruit acceptable to God the Father? Is it in your heart to serve the Lord Jesus? You cannot, unless you abide in Him. If you strive to abide in Him in order to service and fruit-bearing, it will be a failure. And the Lord here solemnly warns of failure, as He explains the secret of realizing. Begin with taking the place of a guilty and lost sinner that you may be saved through grace by believing on Christ. Thus only is life eternal given. " Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth hath life eternal." " Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life eternal."

The responsibility of bearing fruit attaches to all who confess Christ. If you believe on Him at God's word, you have life in Him, and will respond to His call of abiding in Him; if it be but confessing Him on evidence satisfactory to your own mind, you will play fast and loose, and turn away on pressure or to please yourself. This is the reverse of abiding in Him, and it is the prelude to everlasting judgment.

Notes on John, John 15:26-27, Notes on (15:26-27)

Thus had the Lord prepared His own for the world's hatred, not only because He had known it before them, but because it had fallen on Him with an intensity and groundlessness beyond all experience. As even their law had forewarned of it, they were the more inexcusable. But nothing is so blind as unbelief, nor so cruel as its will irritated by the light of God which treats it as sin, and sin refusing God in sovereign grace, the Father and the Son. For they that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, as Paul could say elsewhere, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him.

It might seem then all must be swept away by the murderous rancor of man, and especially religious man. But not so. It is not that the Lord was not to die as well as suffer; nor that His feeble followers should escape the lot of their Master, as far as God was pleased to let them taste it; but that He was about to leave the world for glory on high, and to send down the Holy Ghost thence, as a new, divine and heavenly witness here below.

[“But]1 when the Paraclete is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth out from the Father, he shall testify concerning me; and ye too testify, because ye are with me from [the] beginning.” (Vers. 26, 27.)

Here the Holy Spirit is viewed as sent by the ascended Christ from the Father, and consequently as witness of His heavenly glory. This is an advance on what we saw in the preceding chapter, where Christ asks and the Father gives the Paraclete to be with them forever, sending Him in the Son's name. Here the Son Himself sends, though of course from the Father. The Spirit of truth is thus the suited testifier of Christ as He is above; the disciples also testify, as His companions and so chosen from the beginning. For the first time it is said “when the Paraclete is come,” not merely given or sent. He is a divine person in the fullest sense, not only to abide, teach and recall to remembrance, but to testify concerning Christ, and that which the chosen companions, the apostles, of the Lord could not testify; for they as such could not go

beyond what they had seen and heard, at any rate what fell within the range of their being with Him from the beginning. The Spirit of truth which proceeds out from the Father could not merely strengthen them to do perfectly that task, but add quite another testimony of hitherto unknown blessedness, as sent by Christ personally from the Father.

Thus is clearly defined the position of the disciples, henceforward in due time called Christians: not of the world, but chosen by Christ out of it, commanded to love one another as loved of Christ, and hated of the world, with the Paraclete the Spirit of truth sent by Christ to testify of Him, of whom they too were bearing witness as being with Him from the beginning. Who so competent to tell of Christ's glory with the Father as the Spirit proceeding forth from the Father; and sent by the exalted Christ? Thus was secured full testimony to His glory morally on earth by the disciples (though not without the Spirit's power already assured), and actually in heaven as the glorified Man by the One who in every way could make it best known.

It is evident that those who personally followed the Lord had a special place in the testimony to His manifestation on earth; and this testimony we have in the Gospels as fully as God saw fit to preserve it permanently for all saints, as the Holy Ghost's testimony to His heavenly glory was pre-eminently presented in the inspired epistles of Paul for like permanent use, though doubtless in no way limited to him or them.

And assuredly in principle the place of testimony abides for those who are Christ's, whatever the change of circumstances and alas! of state. As certainly as Christ abides on high and the Holy Ghost is come, never to leave us, it is not only that we know by faith the Son's relationship to the Father and our blessedness by virtue of it, and in Him who is in the Father as He is in us, but we have all the profit of His place as the True Vine on earth, as we know Him gone on high exalted as man, a quite new thing. And as we have the joy of His relationship to the Father and to us, we are called to bear witness to Him in every way. Wonderful comfort in our weakness! He the Spirit of truth was to testify of Jesus, and especially of Jesus where none could be with Him, none but the Paraclete Himself competent. It was not necessary to repeat here or later that He abides: this had been said at first in relation to us (chap. 14.) where His guaranteed presence with us was most graciously named, lest we might feel orphans indeed. But if we have the comfortable pledge of His being with us forever, it is Without doubt not less but more for testifying of Christ's glory than for our consolation. Of this however we shall hear more in what is to follow, where the Lord renews the subject most fully.

Notes on John, John 15:22-25, Notes on (15:22-25)

The presence and testimony of the Son of God had the gravest possible results. It was not only an infinite blessing in itself and for God's glory, but it left men, and Israel especially, reprobate. Law had proved man's weakness and sin, as it put under curse all who took their stand on the legal principle. There was none righteous, none that sought after God, none that did good, no, not one. The heathen were manifestly wicked, the Jews proved so by the incontestable sentence of the law. Thus every mouth was stopped, and all the world obnoxious to God's judgment. But the presence of Christ brought out, not merely failure to meet obligation as under law, but hatred of divine goodness come down to man in perfect grace. God was in Christ, as the apostle says, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses. How immense the change! How worthy of God when revealed in His Son, as Man amongst men! But they could not endure His words and His works, and this increasingly, till the cross demonstrated that it was absolute rejection of God's love without bounds. It is not here the place or time, as with the apostle, to show how divine love rose in complete victory over man's evil and hatred as attested in the ministry of reconciliation which is founded on the cross. Here the Lord is affirming the solemn position and state of the world in antagonism to the disciples, after preparing them for persecution: from its hating them as Him, and its ignorance of Him who had sent their Master.

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” (Vers. 22, 23.) Sin before or otherwise was swallowed up in this surpassing sin of rejecting the Son come in love and speaking not merely as man never spoke, yea, as God never spoke; for by whom should He speak as in a Son? It was meet that He who is the image of the invisible God, the only-begotten in the bosom of the Father, should speak above all, as He is above all, God blessed forever. Servants had been sent, prophets had spoken; and their messages had divine authority; but they were partial. The law made nothing perfect. Now He who had thus spoken of old πολυμερῶ καὶ πολυτρόπως spoke to us ἐν υἱῷ. He was their Messiah, the Son of David, born where and when they expected, attested not only by the signs and vouchers of prophecy, but by the powers of the world to come; but He was more, infinitely more, He was Son of God, unapproachable in His own glory, yet here on earth the most accessible of men, giving out the words of the Father, as none had ever spoken since the world began. There never had been an adequate object on earth to draw out such communications; now there was in both dignity of person, intimacy of relationship, and moral perfection as man. And the disciples were reaping the benefit; as the Jews, the world, which had Him before their eyes and oars had the responsibility. Flaws, failure, there had been in all others who had spoken for and from God, so as to weaken the effect of their testimony where men thought of men and forgot the God who sent them.

But now the Father had sent the Son who had come and spoken not in law but in love, the true Light shining in a world of darkness which apprehended it not, and sin appeared as never before. What pretext could be pleaded now? It was no question of man or his weakness; no requirement of his duty as measured by the ten words, or any statutes or judgments whatsoever. There was the Son, the Word become flesh dwelling among men, full of grace and truth, in divine love that rose above every fault and all evil, to give what is of God for eternity, only met by increasing hatred till it could go no farther. Their ignorance of Him who sent Christ was no doubt at the bottom of their hating Him, but it was inexcusable. For He was God as well as Son of the Father, and so perfectly able to present the truth and render man thoroughly and evidently guilty if he bowed not. What then did their not bowing prove but sin, without excuse for it, and hatred of the Father also in hating the Son?

And there was this further aggravation of their sin, the works that He had wrought. For some men are affected powerfully by suited words, others yet more deeply by works which express not power only but goodness, holiness, and love. Here they had in perfect harmony and mutual confirmation such words and works as never were save in Jesus the Son of God. But what was the effect? “If I had not done among them the works which no other hath done, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But [it is] that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” (Vers. 24, 25.)

Such was man's gratuitousness in presence of divine grace. Full manifestation of grace can have no other issue. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. Not only is there insubjection to His law, but hatred of His love: and this was proved now. Anything short of Jesus thus present, speaking and working among men as He did, would have fallen short of the demonstration. The testimony was complete; the One who is the sum and substance, the subject and object of all divine testimony, was there; and they had seen Him, as well as the Father in Him; and they had hated both They, the people of God once, had nothing but sin—they were lost. So they were then, and so they abide still, whatever grace may do another day to save the generation to come. But hatred of the Father and the Son is in itself irreparable, complete, and final.

Nor did the law in which they boasted to the rejection of their Messiah speak otherwise; on the contrary it was fulfilled in the word there written of Him, long suspended over them, now applied by His own lips to His own person, They hated me for nothing—gratuitously. How true, and how solemn! “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” O Israel, what have you not lost in the rejected Messiah, in the Father and Son alike seen and hated? And what have not we, once poor sinners of the Gentiles, gained? Life eternal in the knowledge of a God no longer dwelling in thick darkness, but fully revealed in Christ, and in the utmost nearness to the believer, His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Truly Israel's fall has proved the world's wealth, and their loss the true wealth of nations; but the nations so blessed boast and are high-minded, and will be spared no more than the Jews who, no longer abiding in unbelief, shall be grafted in again, and so all Israel shall be saved. Meanwhile they have lost their Messiah to their ruin, and their sin cannot be hid.

Notes on John, John 15:18-21, Notes on (15:18-21)

To love one another then is the new and repeated commandment of Christ to His own. To love is the positive and proper and constant exercise of the new nature, as acted on by the Spirit's ministration of Christ, not always brotherly kindness in exercise, but love never failing. But this very affection, strange here below, exposes those in whom it is found to the direct counter-working of Satan, a murderer and liar from the beginning.

“If the world hateth you, know [or, ye know] that me it hath hated before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, on this account doth the world hate you. Call to mind the word which I told you, A bondsman is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also; but all these things they will do unto you on account of my name, because they know not him that sent me.” (Vers. 18-21.)

To be Christ's is enough to rouse the world's rancor. Circumstances may be needed to call it forth, but there it is. The world hates those who, being His, are no longer of the world. But the Lord would have us know that, not more surely does it hate us, than it had hated Himself before us. (Ver. 18.) Is it not sweet and consoling to us that so it is, however awful in itself, to have such a conviction of the world? For it bates us because of Him, not Him because of us. It is not our faults therefore which are the true cause, but His grace and moral excellence, His divine nature and glory; it is the world's repugnance and enmity to what is of God, and to Him who is God. The world hates the Father shown in the Son; hence it hates the children who were the Father's and then were given to the Son. Christ was hated first, they next, and for His sake.

Not that the world does not love in its own way those who are of it, in most pointed contrast with the grace that goes out to the stranger, and the wretched, and the lost, to such as have wronged and have despitefully treated us. But grace is of all things most offensive to the world, which can love nature in its fallen state. Even righteousness, with its necessary condemnation of the sinner is not so repugnant as the grace which can rise above the sins it condemns in compassion toward the sinner to save him by and in Christ; and this because it treats man as nothing, giving the entire glory to God: indignity intolerable to the flesh, the mind of which is enmity against God. Hence the world's hatred and rejection of Christ, who had revealed God perfectly, and perfectly glorified Him in all His nature and ways. Hence also the world's hatred of us who confess Christ, not only because we are not of the world, but chosen out of it by Christ, which implies its utter worthlessness and condemnation. (Ver. 19.)

The Lord then recalls to their mind His word that no bondsman is greater than his lord. They must rather expect His position, who was despised and rejected of men. They themselves and their teaching would be equally odious for His sake. (Ver. 20.) If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. His person and His word brought God too near their souls which drew back unwilling either to own their sins, or to be debtors to nothing but grace for pardon and deliverance. But this aversion assumes a stronger form where religion is honored and men have a character to lose; and as these things were true in the highest degree among the Jews, they broke out to the last degree in resentment which claimed to persecute, as a duty to God, the Master first and then the disciples. And here the Lord graciously forewarned them that no sorrow might befall them unawares.

But He does more. He gives His own the comfort of knowing in such hours, it might be of bitter woe, as beforehand also, that all the contempt and suffering they might endure from the world was for His sake, because of the world's ignorance of Him that sent Himself, ignorance of the Father. How profoundly true! Impossible that a professing religion could persecute if it really knew Him that sent Christ.

There might be discipline according to His word; and there must be in that which bears the name of the Lord: else the very grace it knows would tend to sink it below the world's level if there were not vigilant, constant, and holy discipline. But discipline is never holy but worldly, when it takes the shape of persecution. What can one think then when that which arrogated the loftiest name invoked the civil arm to enforce the punishment of men's bodies for the pretended good of their souls? What, when it sought and found means to inaugurate ecclesiastical tribunals with torments up to the bitter end in congenial secrecy with an unrelenting cruelty which never had a match even in this dark world? Truly it was the self-same spirit of worldly hatred which first animated the Jews against the Lord and His disciples, and later wrought in the world-church, when it exchanged its pagan for its papal garb, and baptism was more easily adopted than circumcision. “But all these things they will do unto you on account of my name, because they know not him that sent me.” (Ver. 21.) No I forms avail not: God will have reality, and never more plainly and stringently than since Christ and His cross which proved the vanity of religious man and of a worldly sanctuary. Christianity came into being and manifestation when it was demonstrated that man in his best estate was not only worthless before God, but would not have God at any price, even in the person and mission of His own Son come in grace. “O righteous Father, the

world hath not known thee.” Yet is there no eternal life for man save in the knowledge of the only true God, the Father, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. The world is lost, and nowhere more evidently and guiltily than when, in religious pride, it hates Christ and those who are His.

Notes on John, John 15:12-17, Notes on (15:12-17)

The Lord now specifies one special character of fruit, ever precious, but here in the disciples' relation one to another, as before we had the relation of Christ and the Father to them.

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I loved you. Greater love no one hath than this, that one1 lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do what2 I command you. No longer do I call you bondmen, for the bondman knoweth not what his master doeth; but you I have called [my] friends, because all things which I heard from my Father I made known to you. Not ye chose me, but I chose you and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit, and your fruit abide; that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he may give you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.” (Vers. 12-17.)

Love is emphatically the Lord's injunction on His disciples, the love of each other. It is not the general moral duty of loving one's neighbor, but the mutual love of Christians, of which His own love to them is the standard. The nature of the case excludes the love of God which went out to them in their guilt, enmity, and weakness, when objects of sovereign grace. They were now born of God, and hence love; for love, as it is of God who is love, is the energy of the new nature. Hence, whatever else the Lord may enjoin, this is His commandment: He loved them, and would have them love one another accordingly. So Paul tells the Thessalonians that he needed not to write about it to them, for, young as they were in divine things, they were taught of God to love one another. This too was the more excellent way he would show the Corinthian saints, pre-occupied to their hurt with power rather than love, at best the display of the Lord's victory in His creation over Satan rather than the inward energy which enjoys His grace toward our own souls or others to God's glory. On the Roman saints again love is repeatedly urged, as that which should be unfeigned, and also which, wherever it is, has fulfilled the law practically without thinking of it. It is needless to go over all the epistles where the Holy Spirit unfolds its immense place and power.

But every believer acquainted with the New Testament will remember how large a part it fills in the First Epistle of our evangelist. Not that love is God, but God is love as He is light, and he that loves is born of Him and knows Him. For men as then made knowledge all, as before some made power; but it is a question of life in the Son of God, and the Holy Ghost works in that life by virtue of redemption, and those who have life, as they walk in the light, so also walk in love. And even as to knowledge, there is none true save in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life: every object outside Him is an idol, from which we have to keep ourselves, be it knowledge, power, position, love, truth, or anything or anyone else, for whoever denies the Son has not the Father, he who confesses the Son has the Father also. And as the Father has bestowed on us love beyond all measure, giving us even now to be children of God, so loving the brethren marks those who have passed from death to life. The old commandment is the word of Christ that we should love one another, but it is also a new commandment as being true in Him and in us. If Christ lives in me, I live by faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me: and this life is characterized not only by obedience but by love according to its source.

And so here. The Lord had laid it down as a new and distinguishing commandment He was giving them in chapter 13. Here He repeats love to one another according to the pattern of His love to them. How pure and unbounded it was! Do we believe this as His will about us? Do we love as if we believed Him and appreciated His love? Can anything be more hollow, or dangerous, or nauseous than the highest words with low and inconsistent ways? Gnosticism ate out the heart of early Christendom, where it fell not into superstition and formality, ever growing more dark and cold; and the same spirit is no less destructive now, because it has more abundant materials. Loving one another, not merely those who think alike, least of all those who think alike on some comparatively small and external point, but loving those who are Christ's, spite of ten thousand things trying to our nature, is of all moment along with the truth, and guarded as it is here, loving one another as He loved us. He delights in love up to death itself. (Ver. 18.) Greater love none has than to lay down his life for his friends. The love of God in Jesus went infinitely beyond this; but then necessarily it stands alone, and it is meet that it should. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, as we are taught elsewhere. But where is the worth of such a theory if we fail in every-day going out of heart to common wants and sufferings of God's children? And the Lord at once binds love up with obedience, without which it is but self-pleasing, not having Him in it or before the soul. “Ye are my friends if ye do what [ever.] I command you.” (Ver. 14.) It is not reconciling enemies He speaks of, but why He calls us His friends. Obedience is the character and condition. Nor does He here indicate how He stood as our friend when we were enemies, but He calls us His friends if we practice what He enjoins.

Is this all? Far from it. He treats us as friends according to His perfect love, for He lets us into His secrets, instead of merely pressing our duty. “No longer do I call you bondmen, for the bondman knoweth not what his master death, but you I have called friends, because all things whatsoever I heard from my Father I made known to you.” (Ver. 15.) He who of old was called “the friend of God” enjoyed this intimacy with his Almighty protector in the midst of the doomed races he lived amongst, a separated and circumcised pilgrim; and so it is with His own now that the Lord dealt in still more lavish grace; for what did He keep back? In another sense it is our boast to be His bond-men, as one said who was pre-eminently separated to the gospel of God. But none the less—indeed very much more truly—do we enter in, and value and act on the free communications of His love if we are habitually obedient, as we may see in Joseph of old or in Daniel later. It ought to be, it is in principle, the cherished privilege of the church thus to know His mind and by it to interpret the tangled web of human life or even the world's changing fortunes; but practically we must be exercised and constant in obedience if the privilege is to be a living reality and not a bare title. Christendom has given it up, counting it nothing but presumption, and content to walk by sight, not by faith.

But God is faithful, and there are those who, walking obedient to His word, enter into what He has made known, and find the blessing. Doubtless the responsibility is great no less than the privilege; and therefore do His own need to be cheered with the grace that underlies all. Hence it is that He adds; “Not ye chose me, but I chose you and appointed [or set] you that ye should go and bear fruit, and your fruit abide; that whatever ye may ask the Father in my name he may give you. These things I command that ye love one another.” (Vers. 16, 17.)

Blessing ever comes from the Lord Jesus and the grace that is in Him. Obedience follows, and ought to follow, such unmerited favor, as in obedience there is surely fresh blessing. But the heart needs to turn from our obedience or the blessing to the Blesser, if it would escape fresh dangers and positive evil; the spring of power is never known save in Him, and the grace that sought and found, saves and blesses. Hence it was of the greatest moment, in pressing the divine government of the saints, that they should ever remember Him and His sovereign will, as the source of all that distinguished them. Not they chose Christ, but He chose them. Nor was it only to know and follow their Master. He appointed,3 or set, them that they should go and bear fruit, and their fruit should abide.

Thus, while responsibility is maintained intact, grace is shown to be the fountain of all that is looked for and made good; and further the connection of both with dependence on the Father, who alone brings to a successful issue whatever they should have asked in the name of Jesus. The deeper and higher the blessing, the more need of prayer; but then the character and confidence of prayer should rise with the sense of grace in Christ, and the Father's unwavering purpose to put honor on His name in which they draw near with their petitions. His name by faith in it can make the weakest strong, and the Father is thus glorified in the Son who glorifies Him. Distrust or negligence are equally precluded.

It is hardly necessary to say many words in disproof of Calvin's exposition, and of others, who make this a question of choosing and ordaining to the apostolate, and consequently who take the fruit abiding to mean that the church will last to the very end of the world as the fruit of apostolic labor continued also in their successors. The love enjoined here is accordingly restricted to mutual affection among ministers. Undoubtedly a free and unsuspicious flow of loving confidence is essential to a good state, and among those who labor especially, as the lack of it here is most deplorable; but the Lord does not limit His words to the apostles or even to such as follow them in the public service of His name.

Notes on John, John 15:9-11, Notes on (15:9-11)

Another element of incalculable value in the disciple's path is the consciousness of the Savior's love. This is next set before them. “As the Father loved me, I also loved you abide in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things have I spoken to you that my joy may be1 in you, and your joy may be fulfilled.” (Vers. 9-11.)

We must bear in mind that the subject is fruit-bearing daring the disciple's passage through this world. It is not eternal purpose, nor is it that love in relationship which secures unfailingly from first to last, but Christ's love toward each in his path of daily walk and trial. He knew what this was on His Father's part to Himself as man, though never ceasing to be Son here below. Such was His own love to the disciples; and now He calls on them to abide in it, not in Him only, but, what is more, in His love: an immense and unfailing spring of comfort in the necessarily painful and otherwise disappointing current of earthly circumstances so strongly opposed to them for His sake. Give wine, says the Book of Proverbs, unto those that be of heavy hearts. But His love is better than wine, cheering and strengthening without fleshly excitement. There is thus not only dependence on Him, but that confidence in Him which His love is meant to inspire.

But there is more that follows, even obedience. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” (Ver. 6.) It is manifest that we have nothing here to do with the sovereign mercy of God which goes out to the lost, and reconciles enemies by the death of His Son. For as by the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one (Christ) shall the many be constituted righteous. Grace in Christ surmounts every hindrance, and reigns righteously above all evil, whether of the individual or of the race. Here not the sinner's ruin or deliverance, but the disciple's path, is in question; and his obedience is the condition of abiding in his Master's love. He who in all things has, and must have, the pre-eminence trod the same path and accepted the same condition as man here below; though He counted it no robbery to be on equality with God, He became obedient, and this to the lowest point, for the glory of God the Father. He in unwavering perfection did the will of Him that sent Him, and enjoyed its fruit in a like perfection; we follow Him though with unequal steps; and assuredly he that says be abides in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked. And obedience is the way. None other morally befits us; as this but verifies our love to Him and sense of relationship to God. Nothing is so lowly, nothing so firm, as obedience. It delivers from self-assertion on the one hand, and on the other from subjection to the opinions or traditions of men. It brings us face to face with God's word, and tests our desire to please Him in the midst of present ease, honor, lust, or passion. Here too it is a question of keeping Christ's commandments, as that which secures His love, as in chapter 14 we saw that it proved their love to Him.

The last motive the Lord brings to bear on the disciples as to this is contained in the next verse. “These things have I spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be fulfilled.” (Ver. 11.) Nor is there a better criterion of our state, and consequently of our failure or success in entering into His mind. For if we take up the words of this chapter legally, scarce any words in the Bible are surer to plunge an upright soul into sorrow and depression; but if we understand them as He intended, they are expressly given to impart His joy to us and make our joy full. His joy when here was in pleasing His Father; to obey His commandments was not burdensome. This joy of His He would now make ours. What a contrast with the unfruitful groaning of a soul, even though quickened, under law, as in the close of Rom. 7! What a mercy, if we have tasted such bitterness, now to know our joy in obedience fulfilled! The latter part of Rom. 7 is a wholesome process for us to pass through, but a miserable ground of standing: for this God never intended it. Chapter 8 shows us the Christian delivered, holy, and abounding in good fruit.

This is clearly His desire concerning us. Those who ignore or deny it would deprive us of His joy, as no doubt they lack it themselves. Nor need we wonder; for as philosophy never can conceive divine love, so theology, pandering as it does to human science, ever misses the Savior's joy, seeking pleasure and applause in the schools of the world, which knows the Father no more now than of old. O righteous Father, said He a little later, the world knew Thee not; but I knew Thee, and these (the disciples) knew that Thou didst send Me; and I made known to them Thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.

What ineffable goodness! Does not every thought, feeling, word prove itself divine? Settled peace is a great thing as the soul's foundation, never to be moved, and God would have us know it simply and immutably; but we must not forget the joy of obedience and the favor of the Lord as a present thing in our daily ways. This has been too much overlooked by children of God, and scarcely more through the slipshod laxity of evangelicalism than by the morose hardness of the legalists, ignorant alike of the full ground of grace, and of the true character of God's government which is bound up with it.

Notes on John, John 15:5-8, Notes on (15:5-8)

The opening words had laid down the principle of Christ as the source of fruit, in contrast with Israel, and under the living, watchful, care of the Father. It was wholly distinct from government of the flesh by the law before Jehovah, as in the chosen nation to which all the branches belonged. Christ here displaced the old associations. He had shown fruit to be so indispensable in the Father's eyes, that not to bear it involves the removal of the branch, whilst that which bears fruit is cleansed in order to bear more. He had pronounced the disciples already clean by reason of His word, and had urged them to abide in Him, as He in them; and this because they could not bear fruit except they abode in Christ, any more than the branch itself except it abide in the vine.

Next, He sums up and applies this weighty truth of communion with Him, in its great positive elements, and in strong contradistinction from abandonment of Him. “I am the vine, ye the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, he beareth much fruit; because apart from me ye can do nothing.” (Ver. 5.) Nothing more precise. The Lord leaves no uncertainty in a matter so nearly affecting both Himself and them. As surely as He was the Vine, they were the branches. There is, and could be, no failure on His part. It is easy for us to fail in dependence, and to lack confidence in Him. To abide in Him supposes, not merely distrust of ourselves, but cleaving to Him and counting on Him. Every influence around us is adverse to this; every natural feeling not less so. Faith working by love alone secures it, for self and the world are then alike judged in the light of God. It is not only that we need, and cannot do without, Him for the least things as truly as the greatest, but He attracts us by His positive excellency. If He is the one source of fruit according to the Father, He cannot be slighted with impunity, least of all by those who confess Him. It is not the grace which gives eternal life in Him, of which the Lord speaks, but throughout these verses the responsibility of the disciples. Hence, as we shall see presently, there is danger of ruin, no less than fruitlessness, where one does not abide in Him.

This, then, is the secret of fruit-bearing. It is not in saints, any more than in self, but by abiding in Christ, and Christ in us. Then there is more than promising blossom; fruit follows. Where He is intercepted from our view, or we look elsewhere, there is no such power: we manifest our nature, not Christ. Nor does the character of the circumstances affect the result. He is superior to all, spite of our weakness. Abiding in Christ, we may safely face the most hostile; and if traps be laid, and provocation given, what matters it, if Christ abides in us, as He then does? For that the two are correlative, He guarantees, and we know. Again, does fruit follow because we are with dear children of God? Alas! how often the very reverse is proved, and the levity, if not the bitterness, in the heart comes out so much the more because we are saints not abiding in Christ. For gossip about saints to saints is even more painful than among the sons of this age, not a few of whom are above it, though on grounds of nature—of course not of Christ. Trials, again, cannot shake off spiritual fruit, nor blighting influences enter, if we abide in Christ, and Christ in us; but the greater the pressure, the more fruit where we thus abide. And the heart feels that so it should be, as it is. For, as ordinances fail, and law is the strength of sin, not of holiness, flesh being what it is, Christ here, as everywhere, has the glory by faith, and to faith; “because apart from him ye can do nothing.”

On the other hand the peril is proportionally greater. “If one abide1 not in me, he is cast out as the branch, and is dried up: and they gather it,2 and cast [it] into the fire, and it burneth.” (Ver. 6.) Christ being the sole source of fruit, to abandon Him is fatal; and so much the worse, if at the last, when He should be the more precious, as the worthlessness of all else is learned practically, and His excellency better known to faith. So it was with Judas, so in general with those not born of God, who essay to follow Jesus. Not only their lusts, but His words, may give the occasion, as we see in John 6. It is vain and mischievous to distinguish between the person and the work, as theologians and others do who reason on either side of the equator of truth. The Calvinist fears to compromise his doctrines of grace; the Arminian is anxious to push his advantage on the side of falling away. Hence the former is apt to evade the solemn warning of personal ruin and final judgment conveyed here, as the latter argues that the passage implies that a saved soul may be lost after all. They both confound the figure of the Vine with the body in Eph. 2-4, and hence are alike wrong, and of course, unable to expound these scriptures satisfactorily, so as to hold all the truth, without sacrificing one part to another. The error comes put plainly in the Anglican Baptismal Service: “seeing now that this child is regenerated, and grafted into the body of Christ's church.” To be grafted into the olive of Rom. 11 is equivalent, in this teaching, to being made a member of Christ's body; and the results of such confusion are ever favorable to the adversaries of the truth. The answer is that the body is the expression of unity by the Holy Ghost, the vine insists on communion as the condition of bearing fruit. In no case do such trees necessarily imply life, but the possession of privilege as the olive, and the responsibility of bearing fruit as the vine. To leave Christ, therefore, is utter ruin, not only to be fruitless, but to burn. It is not merely to suffer loss, as in 1 Cor. 3:18, but to be manifestly lost, as in 1 Cor. 9:27. Thus each scripture renders its own testimony, and has its own value, while none can be broken, though men may stumble at the word, being disobedient.

But now, from the sad case of the man that quits Him, the Lord returns to the disciples, and, with divine simplicity and fullness, gives the way of blessing and abundant fruit. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask [or, ye shall ask] 3what ye will, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and [ye shall] become4 my disciples.” (Vers. 7, 8.) Thus is each thing put in its place. The first need for the Christian is to abide in Christ; the next, to have Christ's words abiding in him; then he is emboldened to ask, with the assurance that the resources of divine power effect accordingly. For thus Christ Himself has the first place, and the saint is kept in dependence as well as confidence. Then His words direct, as well as correct; and we need and have both, though doubtless, in so abiding, direction would here be the characteristic, rather than that holy correction which we deeply want in our walk through this unclean and slippery world. So led, prayer is encouraged to expect the surest answer, for the heart is in fellowship with Him who prompts the desire, in order to accomplish it in His love and faithfulness. Further, in this is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit, and become disciples of His. What enlargement of heart that so it should be in the midst of what, apart from Him, would be but a grief and worry to the saint, if not worse! With Christ all is changed, and even the most distracting cares turn to fruit; so that to live in flesh, instead of being with Him in glory,

becomes worth the while, but only when to live is Christ. Thus is His Father glorified even now, and we become Christ's disciples in deed and in truth.

Notes on John, John 15:1-4, Notes on (15:1-4)

The change of subject having been made thus apparent, the Lord now proceeds to set forth His mind for the disciples, in one of the allegories peculiar to our Gospel. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me not bearing fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Already ye are clean, because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit from itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither [can] ye, unless ye abide in me.” (Vers. 1-4.)

Thus the Lord sets aside Israel as any source of fruit-bearing for God. Long since had the prophets denounced the nation as bearing wild grapes, or an empty vine, or only fit for the burning. But the Lord brings to light Himself, as the true and only stock acceptable unto God. This was an immense truth for Jews to learn. In Israel was all that they trusted of religion. There was the temple, there the priesthood, there the sacrifices, there the feasts; there every ordinance, public or private, great or small, instituted of God. Outside Israel were the heathen, who knew not God. Now the Lord does not merely strip the veil from the elect people's hollow state, but makes known the secret—He is the Vine, the true Vine. He is not merely a fruitful branch, where all others were unfruitful; He is Himself the true Vine. Thus we have the positive Object before us, the one source of fruit-bearing.

“And my Father,” He adds, “is the husbandman.” But there is another truth needed, the revelation of His Father (not yet revealed as theirs, though soon so to be in His resurrection), no longer of Jehovah as once in the vineyard of the nation, nor as the Almighty as to their fathers. As Father, He deals with the branches of the Vine, which is Christ Himself on earth, object of all the active and watchful interest of His Father, who looks for fruit. But it is not Himself alone; there are branches in Him. And here their responsibility enters; for they are the disciples, Jews in their natural condition, henceforth called to bear fruit unto God.

And what then are the terms laid down? “Every branch in me not bearing fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Clearly it is the Father's government of those who bear the name of the Lord. The fruitless professor He removes, the fruitful one He cleanses, that more fruit may be borne. It is the Father judging according to every man's work. The disciples were primarily in view; but the principle, of course, applies to us, now that Israel is still more manifestly set aside. As the apostle teaches us in Heb. 12, He chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Here, if not taken away, we are cleansed, in order to bear more fruit. It is a wholly different state of things from a Messiah reigning in power, and His people in nothing but prosperity. Doubtless, it is not union with Christ in heaven, nor even the privileges of grace generally in Him, but the call to make Him everything on earth in daily ways, if we would indeed bear fruit. He, not the law, is the rule of life, and the source of fruitfulness; nor is there any other for the Christian, not even the Spirit, who uses the word to glorify Christ, not Himself.

The disciples had already proved the purging power of the word. “Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” They had received it, and knew that He came from God, though they knew the Father imperfectly, if at all. And Christ's word had wrought in their souls; it had cleansed their ways, it had judged their worldly thoughts, it had laid bare their carnal desires: the effect was real in their consciences. Judas was now gone, so that the Lord does not need to say, “Ye are clean, but not all;” but, on the contrary,” Ye are clean already,” even before the Holy Ghost was given as power from on high. The cleansing efficacy of the word is a cardinal truth of scripture apt to be forgotten, not merely by the Catholic, who trusts in ordinances, but by the Protestant, who speaks exclusively of the Savior's blood” that cleanseth from all sin.” God forbid that a word should be said to obscure that blood, or to turn a soul from its justifying value. But out of the Lord's side flowed water and blood, and we need both. The blood atones, the water purifies; and as the blood abides shed and efficacious once for all, in contrast with the ineffectual and many sacrifices of the Jews, the washing of water by the word is not only applied at the first, but is needed to purge all through. Where this is not seen, confusion follows, and the enfeebling, if not destruction, of fundamental truth.

But here the Lord insists on more—the necessity and the importance of dependence on Him, of intimacy with Himself. This is to abide in Christ; and His word is, “Abide in me, and I in you.” It is not sovereign grace to the sinner, but His call to the disciple; and hence His abiding in us, as a matter of daily communion, depends on our abiding in Him. “As the branch cannot bear fruit from itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither [can] ye, unless ye abide in me.” Nothing simpler than the fact outwardly, nothing surer in our experience than that so it is inwardly. He, and He only, is the dwelling-place for the soul in this world of snare and danger, in this desert where no water is. Make Him the resource, make Him the object, and the sap, as it were, flows without hindrance, and fruit is borne. Without Him no teaching avails, and all religious excitement fails; bring Him in, confide in Him, and, no matter what the difficulty or the pain or the shame, no matter what the opposition or the detraction, He sustains the heart, and fruit-bearing follows. Apart from Him we can do nothing; with Him, all things. So said one who had learned it well, “I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me.”

It seems scarcely needful to remark, that the relation of head and body serves quite another purpose in scripture, and must be kept wholly distinct. Heavenly grace forms that one body by the one Spirit, united to the glorified Head; and therein we do not hear of rending, maiming, or cutting off. It is the church viewed as the object of Christ's unfailing love, till He present it to Himself in glory. Responsibility on earth, under divine government, is another thing; and this, not the unfailing heavenly relationship of the church, is taught by the Vine and its branches. Hence Calvinistic devices are as uncalled-for as the Arminian assaults they are meant to avert. No one doubts that profession may fail. Life is eternal for all that; and in Christ there is nothing short of eternal life; but this is not the teaching of the Vine, any more than the unity of the body. It is a pity that learned commentators do not read with care the scriptures they essay to comment on.

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, John 14:1-3 (14:1-3)

It is very common even among the children of God to confound the Christian hope with prophecy, but Scripture gives no countenance to anything so lowering to the heavenly calling; though prophecy is a very important part of scripture, either directly or indirectly as in the book of Genesis. All the blessings of a converted soul in the days of Genesis lay in the future, so that it is not in order to disparage prophecy that I claim a higher place for the Christian hope. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. It was so in Old Testament days, and will be again. The more we distinguish that which is for the earth from that which is for heaven, the more honor we give not merely to the heavenly, but also to the earthly. God's purpose is to bring both earth and heaven under the Lord Jesus. The great mistake is to make the earth the scene of the Lord's being peculiarly glorified, and the saints with Him. For the earth is what God means for Israel. They are the people to be exalted in the earth. There is not one part of the universe (I do not speak of that awful but suited vision throughout eternity of the lake of fire) in all the scene of blessing but will be under the direct control of the Lord Jesus. But as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the heavenly blessings than the earthly.

God means to bless every family of the earth. It was the promise given to Israel ... But what about saints raised from the dead and glorified? To have them for the earth is a terrible blunder. It is a sorrowful thing that any saint could look for a place on earth when a heavenly hope is made known. The effect is to blot out Israel's portion (which cannot fail), and to lose all sense of heavenly glory into which Christ is gone, and gone as our Forerunner.

Now it will help if I show the context of the words read; for you are never sure you have the real truth if you take a few words by themselves. But if the surroundings are of a similar character, they strengthen the true meaning. From the beginning of John 13 the Lord opened out the entirely new character of Christianity; that which follows His total rejection by Israel. The great doctrine of the Gospel of John is that we are children of God and know it, and are now fitted to enjoy it. As the apostle Paul, who says we are to bear the image of the heavenly when Christ comes, also says we are heavenly now. “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” John 13 brings before us a most remarkable act on the part of our Lord. After the intimation that He was going to leave them, for the chapter begins with, “When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,” etc.—that is the way His departure is looked at; not that He should die, though He was going to die—it proceeds, “And supper being come (not “ended")... Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands...he riseth from supper,” etc. Here is a very remarkable thing, though we might pass over it as nothing peculiar. Jesus is here not looking for the throne of David, for Jerusalem, and the land—all to be given Him by and by. That is what God will do for His Beloved Son, who by His death not only reconciles the creature with the Creator, but glorifies God about that in which He had been so dishonored. But now that the Lord Jesus (no longer in the world where we still are, but) is gone to the Father, He devotes Himself on high that we, whilst walking here, may nevertheless by His advocacy there, be maintained in blessed communion with Him now glorified. This is to have “part with him,” and is effected by His cleansing our feet—from the defilements of the way—by “the washing of water by the word.”

In these chapters the Spirit of God gives a far deeper account of that which ever had been revealed in the Old Testament. What! the Messiah wash our feet! There is nothing in the Old Testament scriptures nor in the heart of man to prepare for such a thing, and it astonished the disciples; it astonished Peter. Peter had part in Christ, eternal life in Christ; but the Lord would give him part with Christ, i.e. communion with Him in heaven whilst we are still walking down here on earth. Christianity is not only being born of the Spirit; the Old Testament saints were that, though they did not know it. They rested on the coming Savior, and there is nothing good for God without that, without faith. What is needed is that which is of God. We are called to acknowledge the utter ruin of all that is of ourselves. This is repentance, taking part with God's righteousness and holiness against myself. But this is negative; faith gives us the positive—the Lord Jesus. He presses on Peter the necessity of washing his feet, not his whole body; for if a man is regenerate by being born of water and of the Spirit, that is done once; there is no repetition, as there is none of the death of Christ.

Washing of feet meets defilement of our walk. Is that nothing? or am I merely to fall back on forgiveness of sins through His blood? It is as Advocate He washes our feet. The advocacy is one grand characteristic of Christianity. His priesthood is quite distinct. As Priest He strengthens us against the enemy, but if we break down His advocacy comes in. What makes a man repent? Not sinning, that hardens. It is an Advocate with the Father. Not with God—God is the Judge of sin—but with the Father, for we are children of God.

In the case of Peter we see the Advocate. He was warned not to enter into temptation. The Lord endured temptation. That is very different from entering into it. But Peter, bold enough to get into the difficulty, failed; and when he denied the Lord, the Lord looked upon Peter; then Peter remembered. This is a little specimen before the time of advocacy. It is eminently belonging to the Christian. Though Christianity rests on Christ's death, it is characterized by His resurrection and ascension—all facts. There is nothing so simple as a fact, but these facts are the groundwork of all the truth of Christianity.

The same chapter also shows the death of Christ in quite a different way from Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22. Judas went out to betray the Lord, “and it was night “; and he was going into the deepest darkness that a poor soul could enter—going to sell the Lord for the price of a slave! What does the Lord say? “Now is the Son of man glorified.” What, by being crucified! Yes. There is no glory so bright as moral glory. It was an easy thing for God to give the Lord Jesus actual glory, but it was no easy thing for Christ to suffer. In that, God was glorified, not as Father, but as God, the Judge of sin; and that insoluble question was about to be settled for all eternity! The Father had been glorified in all the life of Jesus; He was His delight. Christ, who by His love, humility, entire obedience had glorified Him in good, had now to glorify Him about all that was bad. “If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him.” That is what He has done. God having set Him, not on the throne of David, but on the throne of God, where no man can sit but Himself, He is there as Man; but if He were one hair's breadth less God than the Father there could be no Christianity.

He is glorified in Himself—that brings in Christianity. The Holy Spirit is sent down from Christ in glory, and every one who truly believes is “one spirit with the Lord,” and this leads me into my subject to-night. “Let not your heart be troubled.” It seemed one of the greatest troubles that He was going to leave them, but He says, as it were, “You ought to rejoice if you cared for Me, for I am going to the Father; but I am going to care for you in a way impossible otherwise.” “Ye believe in God,” though you never saw God; “Believe in Me,” when you no longer see Me. Thomas gives a good sample of the Jew, but “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Who are they? Those who, unlike Thomas, believe on Him before they see Him; though it was precious also to see Him, for His life lays the foundation for love of His person.

“In my Father's house.” The temple was entirely too low. What can match the Father's house? the description of that place where God the Father shows His delight in His Son! Here is the blessed hope—room for you all; room for every Christian, room for you to be “with Me.” In all heaven there is but one Father's house, only one place worthy of the Son, and, says the Lord, “I am going to have you with Myself.” They are to be “with Me.” Prophetic scriptures are connected with Israel's hope. Association with Christ is ours now, and by a tie that cannot be broken—the Holy Spirit.

Every member of Christ's body will be there—a matter entirely of sovereign grace, though there will be reward according to faithfulness.

W. K.

Christian Truth: Volume 16, Our Blessed Hope (14:1-3)

In the 14th chapter of John there is a very beautiful setting forth of the blessed hope. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." At first it sounds very peculiar that the Lord should here tell believing disciples to believe in Him. I do not think it means that they were merely to increase in their former faith. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." I take it that the force is this: You believe in God though you have not seen Him; believe in Me, who am going to become invisible to you. I, who have been your visible Master, your Teacher present in your midst, am going to leave the world. I am going, therefore, to enter a condition of invisibility as far as you are concerned, because I shall be no longer on earth, but in heaven.

This follows most simply and naturally from the words of the next verse—"In My Father's house are many mansions." It is not that the Lord was going to have done with His body; He will never do that to all eternity. In that sense, therefore, it will never be a question of absolute invisibility, but only relative—to those disciples, certainly so. And this is necessary for Christianity.

If I were asked to give in very few words one specific difference between Christianity and Judaism, I would say that Judaism was a religion of sight; Christianity, of faith. We walk not by sight, but by faith. Here then, now, to test the truth of it all, the Lord enters into that condition, but not by becoming a spirit. The Lord is not a spirit; He has a spiritual body. An angel is a spirit, but the Lord Jesus is not. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones."

We must not at all allow such a notion as that the Lord Jesus, in His risen condition, has not flesh and bones—of course He has. He has no longer a life in the blood, because this is a life in connection with earth, a life which lives by food, air, etc. The Lord is capable of taking food. He partook of a piece of honeycomb and a fish; but this was not because He required them, but because they required to learn that He was truly risen from the dead. His we know, is a spiritual body glorified in heaven. And so shall we be, but the Lord here speaks of our faith meanwhile. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Although He had taken a body, and although He was to take that body after the resurrection, still He would be invisible by going to heaven. It is the Christian's faith contrasted with Jewish sight of the Messiah reigning visibly over the earth. "In My Father's house are many mansions." He was going thither.... "I go to prepare a place for you."

Christ the Way and Christ the Truth, Christ the Way and Christ the Truth: Part 2 (14:6)

I have already endeavored to show the meaning of the Way; that Christ, and Christ only is the Way. But there is another thing, Christ is not only the Way to the Father, but He is also the Truth. Where is truth to be found? In Him alone. He Himself is the Truth. Thus the man who has taken the way, possesses the truth. He who has bowed to Christ does not want some new resource. Truly God is wise, and as good as He is wise.

Let me now try to unfold what truth is. Man in his natural state may ask, but eludes the answer. How is this? Because he is gone away from God, serves Satan in whom is no truth, and likes Christ less, the more he knows about Him. When He came into the world, people seemed to value Him at first; for they did not then know that He was the Truth, and were not yet proved by Him.

They were all looking for, and expecting the promised Messiah. The time spoken of by Daniel was fulfilled, and men were in a state of expectation. The famous prophecy of the weeks pointed to those days, and the Jews all knew, or might have known, that the time was quite near when the Messiah, the Prince, was to appear, though none understood that He was to be cut off. The very heathen were moved by the rumors of a coming Deliverer; they heard that the time was at hand that a mighty king should reign, and most remarkable changes happen for the world. Wise men came from the East to see the born King of the Jews. More than one hundred and fifty years before Christ, the Old Testament had been translated into the Greek tongue, which was at that time the usual means of communication, as French has been in modern times. This translation of the Bible was a sort of preparatory testimony. Thus the Jews were not the only people who were looking for the Messiah.

But He is much more. He is the Word, He is God, He is the light, which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. And men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Hence the early attraction soon faded, and gave way to fear and hatred; and as they desired not to know God or themselves, they sought to get rid of what convicted them by killing Him. They might kill, but they could not get rid of the Son of God; and as we have seen Him the Way, so He is the Truth. What is meant by it? Let us compare the law with Him.

The law is holy, just, and good; but still it is nowhere called the truth. The law is the standard of divine requirement from man; it declares what God demands from him who takes the ground of his own obedience as his standing before Him. The truth is the revelation of God, the manifestation of everything else, in Christ. It is therefore not requirement, but revelation. In fact, God Himself contrasts them; as it is written, “The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Was it not God’s law? Yes; but it was given by Moses, who was the

channel of communication. But Christ was and is the Way; and this not only for God to come down to man, but for man to go to God—nay, to the Father. Besides, He is the Truth. He makes every one and everything known as they really are; and when we weigh what the truth is, we can see that Christ only could be the full presentation of it. God is thus revealed; and Christ, being the revealer of God, is Himself said to be the Truth. As Son, He brings out what the Father is. But He, the Holy One of God, shows me what sin is, what I am. In short, He manifests every one and everything exactly as each is.

God is never said to be the Truth, but Christ, being the image of the invisible God. Man is not capable of fathoming God; no man hath seen God at any time. Who is competent to know God? No man, nor even angel. The creature does not know God; but God can make Himself known to the creature. How? In Christ by the Holy Ghost. This is the reason why the Holy Spirit is also called the Truth in 1 John 5 Christ, the Truth, is the object presented in whom I can learn everything as it is; the Spirit of God is the inward power that makes the truth enter into my soul that I may have and enjoy it. Hence the necessity for the Holy Ghost to be the Truth as well as Christ. The spirit of man in itself is no more capable of knowing God than a beast of understanding the mind of man. The beast has its own creature instincts; but no beast, no creature of that order, can pass its own limits. No lower creature is capable of understanding man, and no man, as such, can rise to what is above his nature.

Yet, without the truth, how wretched one must ever be! I have sinned. How do I stand, and in what relation, to God? Are we doomed to be in utter uncertainty of the only thing that is of supreme importance? There are things that a man can come to, left to himself—dread and horror, hardness or indifference. But these fears are only the premonition of what, far more terrible and unending, will befall him if he lives and dies as he is. What is to become of his soul? My answer is: Christ is the truth; and Christ was here expressly on an errand of love, to glorify God, to save sinners by faith, to meet this dark and awful void, and give life and peace, with certainty, to the believer.

Do not take the ground of an unbeliever, and say that it is impossible to have certainty in this life. Perhaps it might be impossible for a Jew, no doubt it was for the heathen; but if God tells me anything, and I believe, is it certain or not? If God tells me His mind, does this give no certainty? Christ is God’s revelation of Himself to me. Do you say, I am a sinner? It is true, as far as it goes; but even so you do not know what a sinner you are, else you could not take it so quietly. You go to God about your sins then. Will He leave you in a state of uncertainty? No; Christ has come, the sent One of God, to do His will in the offering of His body; and by Him came grace and truth, not merely truth. And what grace it was! The Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, becoming a man; and not only so, but born of a woman! Adam even was not, never having been born, but made. He was not a son of man therefore, though son of God in a certain sense (Luke 3). He came into the world mature and formed to be its head; he had attained his full proportion when he came from God’s hand. Jesus was not merely a man, but the Seed of the woman, as no one ever was save He. He became a servant all that man is—except sin. It is not only that He did not sin, but He never in His life knew what sin was; He could always say that His meat was to do God’s will. “Lo, I come to do thy will.” But He was made sin on the cross; He suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Do I learn what sin is by prayer, or by looking into my own heart? No; but I see it in His cross. What did my sin cost Him? It brought upon Him, the Holy One, the horrors of divine judgment; and now He is become captain of salvation, having obtained eternal redemption. The same Jesus who gives me the truth of a sinner in myself gives me the truth of a Savior in Him. Where shall I find what a holy man is? Can it be Adam? The man who could not keep his hands off the fruit of the tree that God had told him not to eat—he a holy man! Why did he not listen to God? He disobeyed, and became unholy. Not that he was made so; for God made him innocent, and innocence supposes absence of evil, with liability to fall into it. But when Jesus was made flesh He was not only sinless, but holy, holy not in ways only, but in nature. “That holy thing which shall he born of thee shall he called the Son of God.” There also do we read, “A body hast thou prepared me”; and this is never said of anyone else. Why was this body so specially prepared? Because there could not be the least relic that defiles in the Holy One. The smallest taint of evil would spoil the sacrifice; the lamb for the burnt-offering was to be without blemish and without spot. When Jesus was born, although He was the Seed of the woman, there was no taint of sin in His nature; He is called that holy thing, for He was born by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus He could take upon Him not merely all our sins, but sin itself. This is the truth?

If I want to see sin, I can see it by contrast with the Lord Jesus. He came and showed out all its darkness. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.” Christ is the Truth; so all is brought out in its own character.

But there is just the same result about God; Christ as the Truth clearly shows what God is. It is never said that Christ is the likeness of God, though with the greatest emphasis said to be His image. It would not be true to say of any man that he is like a man, although you might say so of an angel. Just in the same way Jesus is not said to be like God, because He is God. Here was One who was perfectly able to show what God is. It is the Absolute deigning to become relative. As long as God is only God, He is unapproachable by man; man cannot understand Him. But I must know God, or I cannot have eternal life; and this cannot be apart from Him whom He has sent, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, and He has brought me exactly what I want. God is the One who loves me, who comes down in the person of Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, to meet the need of a poor sinner. If, again, I want to know what the devil is, it is the same Jesus that brings it out. He, a murderer from the beginning, and a liar, is the one being who stands always opposed to the Lord Jesus. Jesus therefore brought out what the devil was as it had never been manifested before; but the Son of God came that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Now, have you got the Truth? You have heard the truth in Him; what is the effect on your soul? “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” The law makes me feel my shortcomings, but the truth makes them even better known. But if I am willing to know how bad I am, I want to be delivered. Will the law do this? When the law was given, it put man at a distance. Moses was to set hounds to the mountain; and if a beast so much as touched it, it was to be slain. This, no doubt, was a wholesome righteous warning; but the truth is, that the Lord Jesus came down from heaven to seek and to save the lost. And how are you to be saved? By submitting to the Truth; by coming as a sinner to the Savior of sinners. I cannot be saved except by the Truth. It is the Lord Jesus Himself who brings it all out to the soul, and in confessing Him Lord, I believe God, and set to my seal that He is true. By the grace of God my soul bows to the truth, and I can say in my heart, this is just the truth for me. I abjure my unbelief; I bow to what God says of His Son. It is God proclaiming what is true; and I believe He is as good as He says. I believe that He is forgiving my sins and making me His child on the spot. I have no desert; but Christ is my plea. I am willing to be nothing, that Christ and His cross may be everything for and to me.

But we must remember that the Holy Spirit is the Truth just as truly as Christ is. May He bring the truth home to your souls! Were you to live ever so long, and learn ever so much, it is only knowing better the Truth you receive at the start. Confess Jesus Lord, the only Savior, the Son of God. Confess all that grace has given you to know, and look well to it that your ways be a living confession of that Blessed One who is the Truth.

W.K.

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Christ the Way and Christ the Truth, Christ the Way and Christ the Truth: Part 1 (14:6)

This was a momentous word for man—for every man, woman, and child. No words more encouraging were ever uttered, even by the Lord Jesus Himself, for such as felt the need of divine direction.

I have no doubt that there was more in them than the mere answer to the question. They meet the need not of one man only, but of all. Yet our Lord was not addressing a multitude of hearers, but the perplexed disciples; and this gives a definiteness of application. He is addressing a believer under Jewish prejudice, not an unconverted man. Not that I am going to confine myself to its strict bearing on the inquiring disciples, for there is in it the fullest answer to the darkest heart. There is divine help for those who know really but very partially. Their knowledge was scanty; they were not the wise and prudent of the earth; and Scripture takes pains to show this. They were not chosen for anything in themselves. It was manifest that they could add no luster to the gospel. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Thus does God confound the pride of flesh, and show the utter folly of any pretension on man’s part to worth in the things of God, seeing that he is really nothing but a lost sinner. When Thomas asked the question about the way, the thoughts of the disciples were still hampered by the earthly expectation of Israel. But how different was their condition in little more than a month afterward! We do not hear again of Thomas. May it not have been because he was going on well? In that case there is not much to talk about. It is people’s intrigues and ambitious designs, their quarrels and fights, that make up the most of history, man’s attempts to circumvent or repel evil, sometimes successful, more often failing. It is the constant conflict of evil with good; and evil but too often prosperous. The time will come when good will always triumph; but it is not come vet. A poor thing truly is man the world. No wonder that God’s thoughts find their center in one person; and He is the object of God here and everywhere.

One person was always before the mind of God, and this was expressed thousands of years before He became a man. He was not only perfection, but He was the perfect Man, as well as God come down to deliver those who were most opposite to Him in every way. Here we see divine good in a man, and nowhere else. No man can be a Christian who refuses Him, or takes any other way. On the one hand, were He not God it would take away from God’s glory as well as destroy man’s hopes. He could not else have been the perfect Savior and Deliverer. On the other hand, it would have taken away all the means of our blessedness if He had not deigned to become man. But He who was God became man, is so now, and ever will so abide, though infinitely more than man. It is just as true that He is always God, even on the cross; and this is the pledge of sure and stable blessing for every soul who would hide himself by faith in Him, spite of all his sins.

Have you fled for refuge? Have you thus come to Him? Or are you thinking to try and make yourself a little better first? But remember, salvation is for sinners. He does not want people who are good (not that He could find them if He did); He is come to seek and to save the lost. It is they who need Him. Are you willing to take this place? It is a solemn thing to tell out all our sins to God; it is as much as to confess that one deserves hell-fire. Do not draw back when I press this. Does it make any difference to God’s thought of you? He knows it all before; but for you it is all-important to take the place of good-for-nothingness in His presence. Thomas was slow to believe; and so are very many. No man likes to tell out what he really is, but when he does he finds out what God is, and He is love. Indeed grace, and grace alone and exactly, meets the need of him who finds out that he is nothing but a sinner. It will not do to say in a general way, “Ah, yes, we are all sinners.” I must have to do with God about my own sins, and that in a particular way. It is neither faith nor conscience to deal with them all in a lump as it were. Do not tell me that you have done so; that you have been to God about your sins and come away empty. You deceive yourself as to this.

You have not been simple or truthful in telling out what you are, else you would have found all you want to meet your need in the Lord Jesus. His fullness meets all our wants. Could I say less when it is about Jesus? He did not come to limit Himself to any one people, or country, or age. His grace flows out freely to all. It is no longer only Israel, but any sinner at any time. When John said, “Behold the Lamb of God,” what was the effect? He tells us: “which taketh away the sin of the world.” Accordingly this is what the work of the Lord Jesus will accomplish; no particle of sin or of its effects will be left in the world. But that day is not come yet. Before it can come the wicked must be banished, that they may go to their own place. No man will be condemned merely because he is bad, but because he refuses the grace of God as shown in Christ. Wrath then comes on him for all his sins. The promise of salvation is to him who hears the word of God the gospel; and man is condemned because he refuses God’s remedy in it. Do not you then lose your time, and it may be your soul, in troubling yourself about God’s dealings with the heathen. The Lord will judge them; and He will do His work perfectly. What you want yourself is mercy, forgiveness, salvation. Therefore, I pray you, banish all thoughts of your own on such a subject; you do not and cannot yet understand God’s ways. Venture not to sit in judgment on Him.

There is nothing so presumptuous and inconsistent as unbelief, nothing so humble as faith. So those who would not scruple to discuss and condemn God’s dealings with the heathen, count it the height of presumption on a believer’s part to say, “I know I am forgiven, washed perfectly white, and free from all stain.” Yet this confidence is from nothing in themselves; it is founded simply on faith in the efficacy of

Christ’s blood. It is due to what Christ has done, not to what we are. A man who knows he is a sinner gladly owns the Savior. His first desire is that he may be brought to God. How is he to get to Him? Here is our Lord’s answer, “I am the way.” Let us consider then a little what “the way” means in Scripture.

When man was first made, he was not as he is now. God made man upright. He was the most wonderful being that God had made. An infidel may talk (and there is plenty of such talk in these days) of man having grown gradually to the state he is now in, that he came into existence of himself, nobody knows how, out of nobody knows what. And this is science! Nothing is so utterly foolish as unbelief. But supposing the protoplasm was seaweed, we have still the difficulty, How did the seaweed come? and how did it so change? The very least object could not have come into being without the will and power of God.

But wonderful as the power of God in His works may be, and the more as we think truly of all He has made, much the most wonderful is man even now, though fallen; for he is still responsible as the image of God, if not His likeness. And this is why murder can only he wiped out by death; for man has destroyed the image of God in another. Yet there has never been a good man born into this world.

Man was originally made in the likeness of God, but Adam was fallen before his firstborn child appeared. Thus sin had come in, and so even Seth was born in Adam’s “likeness,” though in God’s “image” still. A brute has not a reasonable soul. Man is the only one of all God’s creatures here who is thus endowed. We therefore see that God did not make the world or man as we see them now; for, when they came from His hand there was not a single thing that He did not pronounce good, or very good. Then there was no need of a way, for whether man turned to the right or to the left, all was good; and there could be no need yet to say, “This is the way; walk ye in it.”

The use and importance of a way would be when that which may have been good everywhere. is so no longer. Evil has come in, and the world has become a wilderness. Such being the case, there is no way; and we need one. The world is nothing but a waste and howling wilderness, through which we cannot pass without a way. There is no rest here, nothing to satisfy the heart of man. He may seek to take his fill of the pleasures of the world; it is but a dram to render him insensible to the fact that he is miserable at the thought of facing God. Having a bad conscience through his sins, there is no one he would so like to get away from as God. He has perhaps some fear of Satan, but he is not so afraid of him as he is of God. What does this tell? That he is a sinner away from God. It is the sense of sin that makes him afraid. The same terrible being (Satan) first entraps a man into sin, and then whispers that he is done for; first entices, and then gives a sense of God’s judgment against him. Man then tries to drown his fears in pleasure. He will go anywhere, do anything, to get rid of the pressure of sin; he will occupy himself with, it may be, his family, his business, even his duties, as he calls them—anything that will keep him away from God. Then, it may be, he is laid on a sick bed, and he feels, “I must meet God in my sins”; and some especially come up to mind that had been long forgotten, but ah! none forgiven. For you cannot be forgiven a little here and a little there. Sin is not to be got rid of in this fashion, one at a time, perhaps when you feel sorry about it. Whatever they may say who sell masses, it is not so with God. But when and how does He meet this ruined condition? Man is lost, and the world is as much of a wilderness as the sands of Arabia to a traveler who has missed his way. Man has absolutely no resources as regards his sins. What then is to meet him in his need? Trying to make amends will not avail. Your sins are upon you, and what can you do when they confront you in the light of God’s throne?

But how does God meet your need? Jesus says, “I am the way.” Jesus is the Way, the only way to God the Father. Jesus is the Way in this world of utter alienation and departure from God. Man is the head of all the ruin as he is the head of the creation. Adam was the head of all before Eve was given to him; he had called all the creatures by their names. Eve’s place was in association with him. So the church has no claim but by association with Christ. He is the way; and can this way fail? Christ fail! What folly! He is the Way. I have nothing to do but to take the way. Crowds of different cases come, and no wonder; for no one that came ever went away as he came. Nor did Christ ever send a soul away unblessed—none that came as sinners and lost.

This is what man really is, a sinner ruined and lost. He has no resources towards God; he cannot diminish one of his sins. What is to become of him? Jesus says, “I am the way,” and it is sure, unfailing. The Son of God became a man in order that He might be the Way. He came to be a Savior, but a Savior only to those who believe. He will be Judge of those who reject Him. He has other offices too, but they are mostly connected with salvation. A man who will be saved is not brought into judgment. Men who have life and are saved have no sins upon them. How then and for what are they to be judged? “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). The word really is judgment, not “condemnation,” as it is translated in the A.V.

I do not wish to find fault with our translation, but let me prove that the word ought to be “judgment.” “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment.” Here the very same word that is translated “condemnation” is used. “‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Here it is another word; and there is just as much difference in the words used in the Greek as in the English. What God declares is, that he that hears His word has everlasting life. It is a present thing. The believer again is passed from death unto life. What would be the sense of judging life, of judging what God has wrought?

But all men will give account of their deeds. “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.” This is a very different thing from being brought into judgment by God. To be judged, a man must be a criminal. It is not always the case when there is an earthly judge, for if the grand jury bring in a true bill, the man, even if innocent, must be brought before the judge, and might even he condemned; but this would be caused by man’s infirmity. There could be no such thought in connection with divine judgment. No believer ever comes into judgment, speaking now of the judgment of the great white throne; and this because he has eternal life, and his sins are forgiven now. Are you rejecting this salvation?

God is now in Christ beseeching, entreating you to be reconciled on the ground of His acceptance of Him who was made sin. Your rejecting Him proves that you are not willing to be saved. He is ready to save you, to pardon here and now. But you have some secret reserve, something you are keeping back from Him. You either wish to serve sin a little longer, or you do not believe that God is as good as He is. You prove that you judge yourself unworthy of eternal life.

No man is saved because he deserves it. I implore you, put it not off, wait not for anything. Christ will not be more of a Savior to-morrow; and are you sure that you will hear His voice to-morrow? Is it not to be feared that you will be less and less inclined to receive Him? He is the Way

and the only way. When we get to heaven we shall not need a way, any more than it was necessary in Eden. All is right there, and no way will be required above. When in heaven there will no longer be responsibility. Here it brings danger, failure, ruin; for now, on the ground of responsibility, as a man, you are lost altogether.

Henceforth it is really a question of faith. Do I rest on Christ, believing in Him? I learn that He has undertaken for me, that God has given me a Savior, and that He commands me to repent and take the place of one that is lost.

When a man tries to become religious, he is denying that he is lost; he sets himself to read and pray, to work out righteousness for himself. He says, David prayed three times a day, and I will pray four times; but will it help him? Do I think lightly of prayer? By no means, but when a man acts like this, he shows that he does not know his sinfulness and lost estate.

Suppose the case of one guilty of high treason and condemned to die. The king might say, “I know the man is guilty, but in my sovereign mercy I grant him a free pardon if he will only come and avail himself of it.” But the man obstinately refuses to come out; he will not credit such goodness, and the king orders the sentence to be carried out. So it is with man. He refuses to believe that God is willing to save, and why? Because he judges of God by himself.

Faith is sure of God as He reveals Himself; and He is not only willing, but He can afford righteously, to save. God saves on the ground of Christ’s redemption. It is not mere mercy. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, for Christ was judged for our sins by God Himself on the cross. Hence He is righteous to forgive; for Christ has paid the penalty. God is not merely justified in forgiving, but glorified also. It brought far more glory to God than if He merely punished all as sinners; for every attribute of His is satisfied—His majesty, His love, His truth, His holiness. All the grace of His character shines out for every soul that comes, bringing out more of the infinite worthiness of His Son.

Be afraid then to stay away from the Savior of sinners, lest to-morrow find you in a more hardened state than to-day. All delays are dangerous; but what is so dangerous as to put off bowing to the Son and accepting God’s free salvation?

W. K.

Notes on John, John 14:5-12, Notes on (14:5-12)

The Lord had laid down the inward conscious knowledge of the disciples, according to God, and the glory of His own person, whom they confessed soon, by redemption and the gift of the Spirit to bloom in full intelligence. But in this they were as yet dull to apprehend His meaning; and he who was remarkable among them for his gloomy thoughts expresses this for all.

“Thomas saith to him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; [and]1 how know we [or can we know]2 the way? Jesus saith to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known3 me, ye would have known4 my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (Vers. 5-7.)

No the thoughts of Thomas limited the Lord to that earthly horizon which formed the boundary of his own hopes of Israel clustering around their Messiah. He could not conceive, any more than the rest, whither the Lord was retiring, now that He had come to the people and the land which, he knew, He was pledged to bless richly and forever. How, then, know the way? His mind was yet earthly. As he had no thought of heaven for the Lord Jesus, so he overlooked the way. But this furnished the opportunity for the Lord to announce, in words as simple as profound, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Much conveyed in them might have been gleaned from testimonies to Him, most from His own previous discourses, as given in this very Gospel, but nowhere so much combined with so brief an expression. It was worthy of Him, and at that moment above all.

A way is a great boon, especially through a wilderness which characteristically has no way. Neither had Eden, or unfallen creation, a way; but then it needed none. For all things everywhere were good, and as long as man ate not of the forbidden tree, there was no straying. All else it was for him to enjoy, giving thanks to God. But sin came in, and death, the harbinger of judgment, and all was changed into a wilderness, and men wandered in all directions, and all of them away from God and irreparably wrong: a wilderness-world truly, a void place, where there is no way. Not that promise did not, less or more, bold out the hope of better things; not that law did not, in due time, thunder and lighten; but God's way was not known, as His grace alone could show it. Now it is; for Christ is the way, the only sure way, for the most erring of sinners, avowedly for the lost, whom He is come to seek and to save; and He is the way to the Father, not to God displayed in power and glory on the earth, as the Jew should expect for the day that is coming, when the rejected Messiah returns as the glorious Son of man. But He is much more, and above all time or change, the deepest rejection only forcing out what was there always, His own personal glory as Son of God superior to every dispensation. And in the fullest consciousness of it, He says to dimly-seeing Thomas, “I am the way.” Why should one wait for the time when the wilderness shall be gladdened by His presence and power? Then, doubtless, the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; and a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. But He is this, and more now, to all that believe in Him, and faith delights to own, as God to make known, all He is, when unbelief disowns and slights and casts Him out. He is accordingly the one divine way; and as there is none other, so is He all, sufficing for him who has no strength or wisdom or worth in any sort. But Christ is the way now for the steps of such as know Him, the wisdom of God in an evil world—Himself the highest and perfect expression of that wisdom, and thus open to the babe in faith, no less than to an apostle.

Further, He is the truth, the full expression of every one and of everything as they are. He tells us in His own person what God is; He shows us the Father, being Himself the Son. But He, not Adam, shows us man. Adam, no doubt, shows us falling, or fallen, man; Christ alone is man according to God, both morally, as once here below, and in counsel, as now risen and in heaven. Moreover, as He shows us holiness and righteousness, so also He brings out sin in its true colors; as He says Himself, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin,

but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth Father also. If I had not done among the works Which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Hence He, and He only, brings out His adversary the devil personally, the prince of this world, but the constant enemy of the Son. Even the law, holy, just, and good as the commandment may be, is not the truth; for it is rather the demand, on God's part, of what a man should do; but Christ tells out, not merely what he ought to be, but what he is. The law claims his duty; Christ declares that all is over, and he is lost. But Christ also shows us a Savior in His own person, and this from God, and with God. Not that He is not the Judge, for He will judge living and dead, as surely as He will appear and set up His kingdom; but He is Savior now and to the uttermost. Indeed it would be impossible to say what of good and glorious He is not, nor from what evil He does not deliver. He is the truth, the exhibition of the true relation of all things with God, and consequently of the departure of any from God. He, and He only, to the challenge, Who art thou? could answer, Absolutely that which I am also saying to you. He is what He says, as no other man was, the truth; and this, as He intimates in the same chapter viii. of our Gospel, because He is not man alone but God.

But He is more than the way and the truth; He is life, and this because He is the Son. In communion with the Father, He quickens. It is not so in judgment; for the Father judges none, but has given every kind of judgment to the Son, and this because He is the Son of man; and as men dishonored Him because He deigned in love to become man, so the Father will have Him honored, not only as God, but as man in judgment. Believers honor Him in a very different and far more excellent way. They bow to Him now, they willingly gladly exalt Him while rejected by the world. They are thus by grace in communion with God, who has set Him on high at His own right hand, and will by-and-by compel every creature to bow and own Him Lord, to His own glory. But those that believe have life in Him now, Which issues, by the Spirit's power, in the practice of good, and hence they will enjoy life-resurrection at His coming; as those that have done evil must be raised to resurrection of judgment in its day.

Thus the believer had Christ for all possible need, and all the blessing that our God and Father can bestow. One cannot have Him as the way and the truth without having Him as the life also, for indeed He is the resurrection and the life; And this life, which we have in Him, the, Son, the Holy Spirit strengthens and exercises, as His word flourishes it, revealing Him afresh to our souls. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord; and as the way in Christ is a path of love and liberty and holiness, so the end also is everlasting life.

Nor is there any other means of blessing: “No one cometh unto the Father but by me,” says the Lord.

There is the surest guarantee, the amplest and the highest good, but it is absolutely exclusive. By none but the Son can one come to the Father; by Him can come any, the proudest Jew, the most debased Gentile. Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father, as says the apostle expressly, when showing the nature of that church which now takes the place of the ancient people of God. And be it observed that it is not to God only in sovereign grace above sin, saving the most guilty and wretched it is to the Father; in that relationship of grace which the Son knew eternally in His own right and title, and none the less, but the more, to His Father's honor, when He glorified Him on earth as the perfectly dependent and obedient man. How wondrous that we should come to the Father, His Father and ours, His God and ours: all glory to Him and His work of redemption, through which alone it could be to us who believe!

Next the Savior lets them know that the knowledge of the Father is inseparable from that of the Son. “If ye knew me, ye would know my Father also; and henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.” He is the image of the invisible God; in the Son is the Father known; and this the disciples are given to learn now objectively.

But there is no capacity in the bright and active-minded disciple to enter into divine things, any more than in the most reserved or sombre one. “Philip saith to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” (Ver. 8.) An excellent wish for one who had not seen Jesus and helped others in their desires to see Jesus. But it was sad unbelief in Philip, especially after the patient gracious words just uttered to lead them on.

“Jesus saith to him, Am I so long with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; [and]5 how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not6 that I [am] in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words which I says to you, I do not speak from myself; but the Father that abideth in me, he doeth the works.7 Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me; but, if not, believe me8 for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works which I do shall he do also; and, greater things than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father"9. (Vers. 9-12.)

The Lord thus poured a flood of light on the perplexity of the disciples. The Messiah Himself was not a mere man, however endowed and honored of God. He was a man, and the lowliest of men, but who was He that was pleased to be born of the virgin? He was the Son—He was God, no less than the Father, and in Him the Father was displaying Himself as such. It was God in grace, forming and fashioning His children by the manifestation of His affections and thoughts and ways in Christ the Son, a man on earth. This they had known, and yet had not known. They were familiar with Him, and the facts of His every-day works and words, little feeling as yet that they were words and works for eternity of the Creator displaying Himself in incomparably deeper fashion than in the wonders of His creation, or of His government in Israel. No one hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. It was for this He came, not only to annul sin by the sacrifice of Himself, but to manifest the eternal life which was with the Father, and this as the Son revealing the Father. How new the order of being, how strange the range of thought, to the disciples! Yet this had Jesus been ever doing here below, occupied with His Father's business long before the beginning of His ministry.

“Believest thou not that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me?” All turned on the glory of His person; and the very unity of the Godhead, the cardinal truth Israel had to testify, makes a difficulty to the reasoning mind of man, unable to rise above its own experience. Not only had law and prophets prepared the way, and John the Baptist's witness, but the words that Jesus said were not as any other man spoke. They were no mere human things, nor independently of His Father. He had been made flesh, but never ceased to be the Word, the Son; and the works He did bore the unmistakable imprint of the same gracious One—the Father. It was He that did the works, or His works. The disciples were therefore called to believe that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him; a state of being only possible in the divine nature, to which the works themselves gave a witness that left the incredulous without excuse.

And this the Lord follows up with His formula of special solemnity in verse 12, wherein He intimates the testimony that would be rendered to the glory of His person when, and because, He was going to the Father, the power which should invest the believer, and enable him to do, not only what they had seen Jesus do, but things greater still, in honor of His name. And this was to the letter fulfilled. For never do we hear of

the Lord's shadow healing the sick, nor were napkins taken from His body (save in lying legends) to cure disease, or expel demons, not to speak of the multitudes which were brought in, far and wide, by apostolic preaching. What greater proof of divine power than to work as He Himself did, and yet more by His servants; and more, again, when He went on high than when He sent them out from His presence on earth! But if the power displayed—if the works were to be greater, who could compare himself with the Lord in self-renouncing love, dependence, and obedience Certainly none that believed on Him.

Notes on John, John: 14:1-4, Notes on (14:1-4)

The way was now opened to bring out the Christian's hope. Death, in its most solemn and most blessed aspect, had been put before the disciples, however little, as yet, able to follow their Master in thought, impossible, then, in deed in any way, as the Lord let the too confident hear, though he learned it not till he proved his own utter powerlessness by the basest denial of Him he loved. How much we have to learn by most painful and humbling experience of ourselves, because we fail in sustained subjection to, and dependence on, our Lord! But now, this cleared, the Savior turns to what is unfailingly light, because it centers in Himself. It is no coming as Son of man to judge, no appearing in glory, to set all that is crooked straight, and govern all righteously. It is His own coming for His beloved ones, that they may be with Him where He is, in the Father's house on high.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe in me also. In my Father's house are mail), mansions: if not so, I would have told you, because1 I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and2 prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am ye also may be. And where I3 go ye know the way.” (Vers. 1-4.)

A greater break with Jewish feeling could not but be than such a hope, a shock, assuredly, as wholly changing all they had expected, but only as supplanting an earthly prospect, however blessed, by a heavenly one incomparably more blessed. If His going away by death, not yet understood, either in its depth of suffering or in its efficacy, but as departure from them on earth, might naturally disturb their heart, He begins to explain its all-importance as making way for faith. He was no longer to be as the Messiah of Israel, according to prophetic intimation, on earth, still less displayed there in indisputable glory and resistless power. He is about to go a man yet to heaven, and there to be an object of faith, as no longer seen, even as God is. “Ye believe in God, believe in me also.” This was a quite new thought about the Messiah, rejected here, glorified in heaven, believed on in earth: simple enough now, but then a. strange sound, and an entirely new order of associations, which set aside for a time all that saints and prophets looked for; not that these were more than postponed, but that those things, altogether unprecedented and unexpected, were to come in by the Lord's going on high after redemption, with just enough in the Old Testament (as in Psa. 110:1) to stop the mouth of a Jew who might pervert the law to deny the gospel.

This, then, is the central fact for the Christian as for the church—Christ not reigning over the earth, but glorified on high, as the fruit of His rejection here below. But it is far from all, though all else be but consequences in divine grace or righteousness. The next thing He proceeds to unfold is that there is room above where He is for the saints who follow their rejected Lord. “In my Father's house are many mansions: if not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you.” He would not have raised a hope incapable of realization for these saints. If He discloses His own bright abode with the Father, there is ample room for them as for Him, and His love, which was giving Himself for them, would keep back nothing else. His love, and the Father's love—for indeed they were one in purpose as in nature—would have them near Himself there. There are many abodes in the Father's house. It is no question of crowns, or cities, or place in the kingdom. There will be reward according to walk, though grace will secure its own sovereign rights. But here differences vanish before the infinite love that will have us with Himself before His Father. Were it too much, or not so, He would have told us, because He goes to prepare a place for us. Love never could, nor does, wittingly disappoint its object.

There is another thing of deep moment contingent on this, but plainly revealed, instead of being left for us to infer. He is coming to fetch His own to heaven. And this was meant to be ever acting on the heart, as we see by the subsequent teaching of the Holy Ghost throughout the rest of the New Testament. Our new place and home is where Christ is, and whither He is to translate us, we know not how soon. Times, dates, signs, circumstances, are purposely excluded. The Christian understands them by a sound intelligence of the word which takes cognizance of all things, but knows nothing of them for his own hope. He reads them about the Jew or the Gentile for the earth; but his are heavenly things, where such measures do not govern. He looks above sun, moon, and stars, where Christ sits at God's right hand, and knows that Christ is coming again, as surely as He went, and this to prepare a place for us. And mark, He is not sending angels to gather us above. This were a great thing, but how immeasurably more the love as well as honor, since He, the Son of God, is coming again, and will receive us to Himself, that, where He is, we also may be. He came for us to die for our sins, to God's glory; He is coming again, to have us with Himself in the same home of divine love and nearness to the Father where He is. He could not do more, He would not do less. There is no love like that of our Lord Jesus; nor is the predicted exaltation for Israel, still less for others, to be compared with it, any more than earth is with heaven.

“And where I go ye know the way.” His own Person, the Son of the Father, in grace and truth, presented to man, and revealing the Father, is the way which could not but lead to heaven. He came from God, and was going to God. No earthly blessedness could adequately express His glory: He might, and would, take it, and glorify God in glory as in humiliation; but the saint constantly feels there is, and must be, more and higher. Heaven is His who could communicate with His Father, and command its resources, though never whilst here abandoning the place of the lowliest of men and servant of all need. Yet, as He was the conscious Son, so the saints knew He must be going to the Father, as He was the way there.

Christ the Life, Christ the Life: Part 2 (14:6)

But let us go back to a Sabbath-day at Nazareth, when our Lord went into the synagogue, and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He read those blessed words of chap. 61, “The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,” etc. He declared that this prophecy was that day fulfilled in their ears, stopping short in the middle of our verse 2, the point then accomplishing, as distinct from the future “day of vengeance of our God” ; for when He had read so far, He shut the book and sat down, with words of grace to all. Did He speak the truth? A great deal turns on this for your souls. Was He really the One foretold by the Spirit of Jehovah, the One that God the Father had sealed? If so, your salvation turns on Him. Do not say that words of grace are hard. What? hard to be saved by God, according to the fullness of His mercy in Christ! The same Lord that saves now will be the judge by-and-by. God “hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained,” the same Jesus whom God hath raised from the dead. It is proof to all. Either you are in Him now, or you must stand before Him then as your judge.

Remember that, when you stand before Him as your judge, there will then be no salvation. He went down into death to bear the judgment of every one that believes on Him. Was not this infinite love? Yes; but it was more, it was righteousness. It was not by power that He met the judgment due to sinners; it was by suffering. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. This explains the way, certainty, and fullness of salvation, which would be all a myth if He were not God as well as man. There is nothing that binds all the truth together if He be not Emmanuel, God with us. The Jews will by-and-by be gathered in a different way, but it will be faith in the same person. There is no gospel that is not grounded on Him as the sacrifice, yet a divine Person; for if He were not also a man, He could not reach me. Jesus, then, came and lived a man that He might do the will of God. What was that life? He lived on account of the Father (John 6:57). It showed itself in unwavering subjection and constant obedience. No man ever has capacity for obedience until he becomes a partaker of that life. Without this life no man can please God in the walk of faith now, or stand in the presence of God; therefore it is of the deepest necessity.

“In this was manifested the love of God.” Is it because He gave the law? No; for this brought in nothing but condemnation on guilty man. Although the law was in itself righteous, at best it made men feel their state. Love was “because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him,” and this brings out the glory of His person. He was the Son of God, above, outside, and beyond all else, both the Increate and the Creator, the eternal Word of God; and the Father would have it known. It was necessary that the testimony should go forth, if man was to live God-ward and be blessed.

And what was the purpose for which this only-begotten Son was sent? “That we might live through him.” We were hateful, and hating, serving divers lusts and pleasures, disobedient, living to ourselves. It was nothing but sin; whenever we do our own will, we sin. Being born thus, we go on accordingly; and what will be the end of it? God's glory? or exclusion from Him, eternal punishment? Ah! we want a new life. Where shall we find it? Not in Adam, but in Christ.

Adam only transmitted his own fallen nature; but in Christ we have One who only did His Father's will, and He is a life-giving Spirit—the Head of a new family. Look thus to Him and live. God declares, that whosoever believes in Him hath everlasting life, and shall be saved. What grace! And this is the sure but the only way. “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

The question, then, resolves itself into this, Do I prefer my own thoughts, or the word of God? Are you now trusting in yourself, or confiding in Him? You ought to know; for if depending on your efforts, you are trusting a most miserable and broken reed. God bids me believe on Him, the only-begotten Son. Is Christ not worthy? Is God not true? He sent His Son into the world for the express purpose that we who believe might have life. Even supposing I show a desire to read His word, to pray to Him, and to do His will, what is to become of all the evil I have done, and the evil which alas! even as a believer I still feel within, and I may still fall into? For I have within me, that is, in the flesh or old nature, the tendency to pride, vanity, selfishness, self-will, temper, etc. How is a soul to be kept from yielding to these? Have you the power because you are converted? Conversion means the turning to God in your heart, mind, and ways, instead of to yourself. But what is to be done with these evil things, not only before, but after conversion, if we fall at times into them? The new life shows itself in dependence on God; and is there anything more suited to man than to look up to God? But with a bad conscience, how can one do so? In the misery of such a state, one is glad of anything that shuts out God—that keeps one from thinking of oneself and of Him.

But the grace of God has provided a remedy in the blood of Christ. The atoning work is done; but the truth is that naturally people do not want to be saved all at once. They would like to go on with the world a little longer. How deeply we need the life of Christ, in order that we may live to God, just as much as His death that our sins may be blotted out! If it were your death for your sins, you were lost forever; if His, and you believe in Him, how blessed! He, the Eternal Life, came to die atoningly; He became a man in order that He might die for our sins. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” He became a man, not only that I might partake of this life, eternal life in Him, but that He might die to take away my sins. It is God's testimony about His Son; it is His declaration of Himself, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Life is given me now in this world that I may live the life of Christ, and not according to my own old life.

The moment we have life in Christ, we have a divine sense of our sins as hateful and intolerable. You know that all you have been doing has its spring in self, in nature. But if you receive the new life, you have also in Him the efficacy of His death to meet your sins; and this is salvation. It is sad shortcoming to preach only the death and not also the life of Christ, to be satisfied with merely showing how sins may be forgiven by the blood, without a word about life in Him. It looks like man taking only what man wants; the negative relief of what clears conscience, not the positive devotedness to God. But this is not enough for the saint, still less for the glory of God. We cannot have part of the blessing, but a whole Christ. God's will is, that every believer should live in and of this new life; that is, the life of every soul who is born again. God is better to Him than his own thoughts. The truth is that it is Christ, and not his own notions, or even conscience, that he must rest on by faith. Endued with natural life as a son of Adam, the believer has just as truly a new divine life in Christ. Is it possible to lose this new life? It is eternal life. What does “eternal” mean? But it is possible and easy to lose the joy of this life.

It is of all moment for a believer to distrust himself; but it is a wrong to God and His word, as well as weakness to self, to doubt His faithfulness, or that Christ's life does not stand forever. If the new life in any way depended on himself, he must soon fall away into irreparable ruin. People talk of “the perseverance of the saints,” as if it were they who held fast, whereas it is really they who are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” It is not then my perseverance, but divine power, that keeps me through faith.

Do you think that God does not look in compassion on the guilty sinner? Come then in the name of Jesus to Him, and confess your sins without extenuation or palliation as you could to none other. Already does He know the very worst of us. I can tell it all out to God, and even

this is no small blessing to my soul, for then, for the first time, one becomes really honest, “without guile,” as says Psalm 32 I need have no reserve, I can or would not keep hack anything from God. Why should I wish it when there is this precious blood and water from the Savior's side, a Savior for all that come, who “suffered once for sins, just for unjust, that he might bring us to God”? This is the word that I would leave with you. How plain it is that the whole practical walk of believers flows from life in Christ, and is based for their peace on the blessed fact that they have been brought to God. The death of Christ takes away my guilt and bonds; but what is to be the spring of new life? How am I to mortify my old life? You may tell the old man to die, but it does not wish to die. God declares that He has given me, if a believer, another nature, new life in Christ. Nicodemus had to learn that he needed to be born afresh, not only to hear what Jesus had to teach. You may be sure that, when a soul really goes to God for its wants, He always receives through the Lord Jesus; whenever a soul asks, in faith, God fails not to give. Grace never sends empty away.

Where is the man who looked to Christ and did not find Him? Does He not say, “I am the way, the truth, and the life”? He is the only way of deliverance from all danger, evil, and sin; His blood, if you believe, brings you now to God without a stain upon you. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” If you have Him you have life in Him. Mere nature is incapable of pleasing God. Faith is the means of life, pardon, peace, strength, everything for the needy; and faith lays hold of what God says and does and gives in Christ, and it is the Spirit of truth which produces faith by our hearing the word. Thus we see the importance of the Spirit applying the word to our souls. But all-important as both the word and the Spirit are, neither could avail for the soul without Christ for life, and Christ's death to take away our sins.

W. K.

(Concluded from page 331)

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Christ the Life, Christ the Life: Part 1 (14:6)

He that spoke these words was the lowliest of men. How then did He come to utter them? Did ever a man since the world began take such a place? “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me”; even as just before He had said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” There was not a word of boasting; it was never the way of Jesus to boast. Transparency was the thing that especially marked Him, and Him alone; and His love was as real as His lowliness. His was a self-sacrificing life continually. As a child it was the same; in the then single fact recorded of Him we have His own words, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” And who was He that so spoke? and what entitled Him so to speak? It was not only that in Him was perfect wisdom and perfect goodness, and that He was the truth, but if He were not God (and I use the word in all its strength), how presumptuous His words!

But He was Son as no one else is son. The word of God speaks of many sons, but Jesus is the only-begotten Son of the Father. He became Captain of salvation. Was He a sinful man? He was the Savior of sinners. How could this be if He were not a divine person? Every one else is a sinful man, every man born into the world; for Adam never had a child till he was fallen. Even Enoch was a sinful man, although in due time translated. Elijah was caught up; but of Jesus it is said that He ascended up. Now, He that ascended, first descended; and He that descended is the same also that ascended up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Of whom else could this be true? Of none but the Lord Jesus Himself.

In Christ the full truth broke in. He came not to display the glory that He had with God; this would not at all have met the need of sinners. He who had the glory gave it up; He first emptied Himself, and then humbled Himself. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to make good the glory of God and the salvation of man. He showed in the world what it was to be here, in the face of all opposition and suffering, only to do God's will; and thus God's will was fully done by a man on the earth, and this not by power, but by obedience in suffering. Adam in Eden was not called to suffer. Jesus was the only holy man that suffered for sin. If you leave out that, you leave out the other grand pillar of the truth, that Jesus is He who was manifest in the flesh. He might have come in divine or in angelic glory, and need not have taken upon Himself the form of a man, by being born of a woman; but then how should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? And, further, if He had not, how could there have been salvation for us? It is of all importance to weigh and hold fast this truth, simple as it is. Man is a sinner, away from God, and knows it in his conscience, and owns it when he is brought face to face with God.

It is not the Bible that makes man a guilty sinner; but the Bible is the only key to all, and explains it fully and worthily. This book alone carries conviction for every heart that is willing to how to God and be saved; but the truth is that people do not want to be saved in God's way. They prefer the full activity of life to be their own, and to enjoy the world as long as they can. They may wish to be saved at the end, but there are many things that they feel unprepared and unwilling to give up yet. They will turn to God on their death-bed. But they feel that if saved, they must be saved to do the will of God, and not their own will; and, if saved, they are the servants of Christ. But do you want to be Satan's servants? Remember, you cannot be your own master. You must either be the servants of God or the slaves of Satan; for a man who does his own will is the slave of Satan. You may not believe this, but it is true; and a time will come when your own conscience will make you feel the truth of it, and that too when it will be the distressing harbinger of still worse distress; perhaps, in the moment of dying. What a terrible reality to wake up then with the awful words ringing in your ears-Too late, too late, too late! But I bless God that I have the happier task of pressing on you now the way that God has opened in Jesus for you, and the truth that God proclaims to the simplest soul.

Into the midst of this world's activities, when the fourth empire was in its power, came Jesus. How did He treat this book, the Bible? As none other; it was the book of books to Him. Scripture was His food and His weapon always. It was not the New Testament yet, for this was not written then. It was the very part that high and low most try to get rid of. Men say it is the writing first of one man, and then of another, sometimes put together by a third one or more. What folly! How then has it such astonishing unity of purpose and mind? It is madness and impiety for men to speak against the book that Jesus treats as the word of God.

He who raises the dead and quickens, does not (as some think, without love) let men slip unwarned into all superstitions. The true God is a God of active love. Scripture allows no such thing as God not caring for what is going on. But you say, “Does He not allow evil?” Certainly; He let angels and men fall; but this in both was the fault of the creature only. Have you not all known, at some time or other of your life, a season when you resolved to repent and to do good? How has it turned out? Did you succeed? or have you not proved that you are had, and can do no good thing? How comes this? Did God make man so? God made the earth and the race without one evil in either; God pronounced everything to be very good; and evil would have been kept out if man had looked to God. But man fell; and since “the world by wisdom knew not God,” the wisdom of the world does not want God. Man wants his own way and will; whereas the glory of one that knows God is to do His will. But how is God's will to be known or done? I am a sinner, know nothing, can do nothing pleasing in His eyes. The Bible read in faith explains, not merely how evil spoiled all, but how Jesus came as the way, the truth, and the life, and how He justifies God in receiving poor sinners. Grace alone can meet the need; and as He came in love to win us, so He died in the fullness of love, to give us a purged conscience, that so, reconciled to God, we might worship and serve Him. If He had left man in rebellion, it would have been a strange proof of love. Where would be grace in giving man food and all things necessary for this life, and then to let him perish forever at last? But no; He gave His Son that the believer should not perish.

The very least thing that God made bears the stamp of His hand; and not only so, but of His mind, of His beneficent goodness. From the first God looked into man's condition, and graciously met it all, unsought and unexpected, in His grace. He sent His Son, His well-beloved, His only-begotten, the One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. This is the One God gave for your salvation. No effort of your own avails. You have neither power nor fitness to get rid of your guilt. Have you not tried? and have you not found out that you cannot? If you have what they call an elastic conscience, you may think that God is not going to be too nice about sin. But such a thought is really a most fatal blow at His holiness and His truth, for He has declared the contrary. But God has done what is far better than slurring over your sins; He spared not His own Son.

And mark the manner of it. The Son became man, the obedient One, the only man who never sought to do his own will. Where was there ever such a sight, such a reality, before? He could say, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.” The very idea of such obedience was as far from every heart till Jesus came, as was God's love to lost sinners. Nor this only. Jesus, when asked, “Who art thou?” could answer, “Absolutely what also I say to you” (John 8:25). Who could ever say this but One? Jesus always was just what He also said. Blessed truth, and how suited for God and for man He Himself was the truth, the perfect truth, sent down, to poor sin-blinded man; so that he has the truth, not only detailed in a book, but embodied in a Person, and this a man in the world tried as nobody ever was. It is everywhere the same truth, and all is perfect harmony with the utmost variety. No doubt there are shades of distinction in many different books of the Bible, but it is surely our ignorance when we find them irreconcilable.

The mere handiwork of God is beyond the wisest of men, and the wisest are precisely those who are most ready to acknowledge their ignorance. The more men really know, the more deeply they feel and own how little they know. Just so with the word of God. What are difficulties to me may not be so to some one more spiritual; and when by faith I see more clearly, the difficulties not only vanish but turn into the strongest confirmation of revealed truth. One person puts everything into its proper place-Christ. If He were not God, He could not bring into relation with God; if not a man, He would have no point of contact with me. Both are necessary for His work. It is He who says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Man feels his weakness, his unworthiness, his unfaithfulness, when he judges himself before God. What life is this that Jesus is? what life did He manifest? Was it the life of Adam? Adam, we read, was made a living soul; but who and what is Christ? A quickening Spirit. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Was it of angels? No; of men. It was not merely for Israel; the pride of the Jew did not like such grace.

[W. K.]

(To be continued)

Notes on John, John 14:25-31, Notes on (14:25-31)

The value of what directs the life, of which it was also the revealing means, cannot be exaggerated; and this we have seen in the commands and words of our Lord Jesus, by which He exercises the life He has given to the believer, as indeed He is their life. But now He adds fresh consolation and blessing in the relation borne by the Advocate, or Paraclete (for so now the Spirit is not only characterized but called). “These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things which I said to you.” (Ver. 26.) How blessed that the same Holy Spirit, who anointed and abode in Him while ministering here below, was to teach the disciples all things, and to give them back all the words of Jesus 1 And so it was fulfilled, and more, as became a divine person who deigned to serve in love, sent by the Father in the name of the Son. It is not here the on asking the Father, and the Father giving, as in verse 16, but the Father sending in the name of the Son the One who could, and would, teach all things, besides recalling all that Jesus said to them. Room is thus left, not only for His reviving in their memory all the injunctions of Christ, but also for His own unlimited teaching.

But there is more than doctrine. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world giveth give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (Ver. 27.) Throughout the Lord supposes His death. This was necessary to peace; His own peace goes farther still. It was the peace He enjoyed while here—a peace unruffled by circumstances, and in unbroken communion with His Father; a peace as far as possible from man's heart, in such a world as this, ignorant of the Father, and on all points at issue with Him. But it characterized the second Man, who gives it to as. In the faith of Him who loves us perfectly and to the end, who has accomplished all to God's glory and for us, we are entitled to it. And the Holy Ghost would have us enjoy it according to His word. He who gives it gave it not away, and had it not the less because we were to receive it. Like all else that He gives, it is enjoyed unimpaired in its own divine fullness, everyone that shares rather adding to it than taking from it. The question is not merely of reality, but of its course and character. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Why, indeed, with His peace, should the heart be confounded or fearful?

But the Lord looks now for hearts purified by faith to delight in His glory. “Ye heard that I said to you, I go away, and come unto you; if ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced that1 I go unto the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe.” (Vers. 28, 29.) Thus, whatever His essential and personal glory, He never forgets that He is man on earth. As such He goes away, and comes back to the disciples. As such He calls upon them to rejoice in His proceeding to the Father. It was no small thing that man in His person should thus enter into glory; and there is almost as much unbelief in Christendom's taking it as a matter of course, in utter indifference to its value, as in Jewish rejection of it as incredible, if not impossible. The Jew, as such, looked for man, that is for himself, to be blessed in the highest degree by God on the earth, and so, doubtless, beyond his thought it will be in the kingdom by-and-by. But the Lord would have the Christian rejoice in the second Man, gone up even now into the paradise of God, the sure pledge of our own following Him there when He comes back again for no. And therefore does He the more impressively call attention, not to the fact only, but to His mention of it then before it came to pass, that when it did, they should believe. Himself in glory is the living object of faith, full of weighty and fruitful consequence for us. It is well to give His death the deepest value. Never can we lose sight of His profound humiliation in self-sacrificing love to glorify God, and to bear our burden of sins and judgment, without incalculable loss to our souls; but we do well to have our eye fixed on Him received up in glory, and ever to wait for Him as about to come and have us there with Himself in the Father's house.

“No longer shall I talk much with you, for the prince of the2 world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded3 me, so I do. Arise, let us go hence.” (Vers. 30, 31.) The Lord thus intimates that He has not much more to talk with them. He had another task on hand; for the enemy was coming, characterized now as the prince of the world which had rejected the Son of God, proving thereby its opposition to the Father, and its subjection to Satan; but, come when he might, he had no more in Christ at the end than at the beginning. Then he would gladly have enticed the Savior out of the path of obedience, by offering gratification; now he strives to fill Him in that path with fear and horror of the death which was before Him; but in vain: “The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?” In us, naturally, there is everything which can afford a handle to Satan; in Christ he had nothing. So it could not but be because of the glory and unsullied perfectness of His person, true God and unblemished Man; and so, it must be for us, if we were to have eternal life in Him, and He to take away our sins, and all this in obedience and to the glory of God His Father. Therefore does He add, “'but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded me, even so I do.” It was indeed the Son's love to the uttermost, it was also unqualified obedience.

Here the Lord ends this part of His communications, and marks it by the closing words, “Arise, let us go hence.”

Notes on John, John 14:20-24, Notes on (14:20-24)

BUT there is more than life, blessed as it is, living because Christ lives, Himself their life, not as Son simply but as risen and gone to heaven. The Spirit is power to see and know, in contrast with flesh and world. And here He is supposed to be given, known, abiding with them and in them. A most solemn thing is His power, where Christ is not the life: unspeakably blessed, where we live of His life.

“In that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (Ver. 20.) It is not here simply the glory of His person as in verses 10, 11. This was true and an object of faith then. “Believed thou not,” said the Lord to Philip, “that I [am] in the Father and the Father is in me?” Words and works both attested it. “Believe me,” He said to all, “that I [am] in the Father and the Father in me.” His being man in no way hindered or lowered His dignity, nor His essential oneness with the Father; and it was and is of all moment to believers unwaveringly to hold it and adoringly. The Son is God, even as the Father. But now more was to be, and to be known, impossible without His personal glory, but dependent on His work and the gift of the Spirit. This we have now, for that day is come. It is not the future glory, but present grace putting us in the closest vital association with Him who has gone into heavenly glory, and yet is one with us here, as we with Him there, by the Spirit given that we might know it all.

In this knowledge saints, true saints of God, are painfully dull, not merely to their privation in countless ways of the utmost moment, but to His dishonor who cannot be duly served or worshipped now but in Spirit and in truth. The day of forms and shadows is closed; the true light now shines in Christ only, of whom His saints are the responsible light-bearers as they hold forth the word of life. But there is more here, though all is bound up with Him. It is not Christ present in the world, and reigning over the land or even all the earth. He is here the despised and rejected of men, but glorified on high. “In that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father” —a relationship and sphere incomparably more glorious than the throne of His father David. It is not only heavenly, but also expressive of infinite nearness to the Father; and this gives its character to Christianity. All its blessedness turns on who and what and where Christ is. Unbelief in saints, walking with the world and numbed by tradition, treats all as lifeless fact, not as truth which by the Spirit forms and guides the soul; unbelief in men learns fast to deny and deride even the fact. So much the more urgent call is there on those who believe by grace, to walk in the heavenly light; and the more so, as we know not only that He is in the Father, but that we are in Him and He in us, as the Lord proceeded to say.

There can scarce be conceived a more striking contrast in position and relationship than of Christ and His own as here described with the Messiah and His people, as those then present had gathered, not from the tradition of the elders, but from the ancient oracles of God. But God is sovereign, though ever wise and never arbitrary. All His ways are good and glorious, as they all turn on Christ His image and their center, the prime object before Him for heaven and earth. On earth government was and will be the aim; for heaven grace reigns, first however suffering to His glory, yet morally and infinitely superior to evil, by-and-by supreme when evil is dealt with and disappears by divine judgment. Between the humiliation of the cross and the coming again is the place of the Son as now known in the Father, as of us in Him and of Aim in us. No Old Testament saint knew or could speak thus; nor did an expectation of it even dawn on a single heart of old! No millennial saint will ever know such a relationship of Christ or of those then on earth. It is wholly and necessarily a part of what God is now intermediately working for the glory of the Lord; and as faith beholds Him in such a height of divine intimacy, so it owns the incomparable grace which has put us in Christ, and gives us to feel the grave responsibility of Christ in us. What can tell out our nearness more than such an identification of new life and nature, and this in power by the Spirit? Truly “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;” and the union is just so much more seal and permanent than natural oneness, as the Spirit is mightier and closer and more abiding than the flesh. But if thus one

with Him and in Him by the Spirit, He is in us by the same Spirit. There is thus alike the highest privilege and the strongest obligation; and we must beware of sundering what the Lord there joins together. If we have life in the Son, we need to remind our souls that Christ lives in us, and that we are to show out Him, not ourselves. Doubtless this demands true and deep and constant self judgment, and the faith that always bears about in the body the dying of Jesus; and God helps us by trials of all sorts, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh. Thus only does Christian practice flow from Christian principle and privilege; and all is of Christ by the Holy Ghost in us. How comforting that our duty as Christians supposes our blessedness! How humbling that the gift of the Spirit makes our failure inexcusable!

But there is meanwhile, and especially connected with Christ being in us, not yet government of the earth by Christ reigning righteously and in power, but moral government of our souls in obedience, which assumes a twofold shape. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; but he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.” (Ver. 21.) To the superficial mind of man it may seem strange that our Lord should speak of having His commandments, not observing them only, as a proof of loving Him; but it is profoundly true. The wicked, the disobedient, the careless do not understand, but the wise, even those whose wisdom ends not, though it begins, with the fear of the Lord. The single eye is full of light. The desire to do His will finds and knows what it is. Thus the loving heart has and keeps His commandments; and loving Him draws down His Father's love, who honors the Son and will not be exalted at His expense. Obedience springing from love is thus the condition of the disciples which ensures the love of Jesus and the manifestation of Himself to us here below.

Such a manifestation took the disciples by surprise; and one of them, Jude, carefully distinguished from the betrayer, could not but ask for explanation. “Judas, not the Iscariot, saith to him, Lord, [and]1 how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make2 an abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my word; and the word which ye have is not mine, but the Father's that sent me.” (Vers. 21-24.) When Messiah manifests Himself to the world as He will, when the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His anointed is come, there will be a feigned obedience rendered by many kept in check by the display of His power and glory. Obedience now that He is absent must be more put to the proof, and is precious to Him as being real; and it should grow as being of life in: the Spirit, as the knowledge of His will becomes better known. Compare Col. 1:9, 10. Hence it deepens from His commandments to His word. His commandments were not grievous, His word is treasured, because He Himself is loved; and so the Lord counts it; and fuller manifestation is enjoyed of the Father and the Son, and more abidingly.

It will be noticed that in verse 28 it is “My word,” not, as in the Authorized Version, “My words.” He that loves the Lord will keep His word as one whole, because it is His; as He adds in verse 24, that he who loves Him not does not keep His words, or sayings. It is not his habit or way to keep any of them in detail. Disobedience betrays absence of love for Jesus; and this is the more serious, because it is not simply the Son who is in question, but the Father that sent Him, whose word is slighted. There is nothing so characteristic of a saint now as obedience. It was so perfectly with our Lord Himself. He came to do the will of God; He did, and suffered it to the uttermost. Thus only is God known growingly by His children, and most intimately as the Lord here declares. We must know Him to do His will, which can only be through knowing Jesus Christ whom He sent; but keeping His word, (as the expression not of His authority alone, though this is dear to us from the first, but of His will,) we grow by the knowledge of God, and this indefinitely while here below, though ever in unsparing judgment of ourselves, and in confiding dependence on Him. And how cheering to the heart the abiding sense of the presence of the Father and the Son with us as thus walking! Would that we knew it better! A manifestation is much, an abode is more.

Notes on John, John 14:13-19, Notes on (14:13-19)

Thus had the Lord guaranteed the solemn and withal cheering promise, that His proceeding to the Father was in no way to stem and dry up the mighty stream of gracious power in which He had wrought here below. The believer in Him was to do what He did, and yet greater things. This He now follows up and explains by the place given to that exercise of faith which issues in prayer, henceforth to have its fullest character in His name who had glorified the Father to the uttermost.

“And whatsoever ye shall ask [or beg] in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask [or beg] anything in my name, I will do it.” (Vers. 13, 14.) The disciples were thus to count on power that could not fail, if sought in His name; for Jesus was no mere man, whose departure must terminate what He used to do when present. Absent, He would prove Himself divine, and none the less interested in their petitions because He was risen from the dead. Whatever they might ask, He would do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son. And, not content with a broad assurance in verse 13, no matter what the difficulty, He repeats it in verse 14, as to any particular petition on their part, with a yet more emphatic pledge of His personal action.

But the Lord adds a great deal more, and of the deepest moment. “If ye love me, keep [or, ye will keep] my commandments; and I will ask my Father, and he will give you another Advocate, that he may be with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it beholdeth him not, nor knoweth him; but ye know him, because he abideth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I am coming unto you. Yet a little, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye also shall live.” (Vers. 15-19.) The way to show their affection and devotedness to their Master would be by obedience; for, whatever His grace, He does not disguise from them His authority. To obey His commandments, then, would prove their love far better than zeal in work or sorrow for His absence. For His absence, however serious in itself, is turned by God's goodness and wisdom, to better blessings and deeper ways for the saints, even as it furnishes the occasion for bringing out the bidden counsels of God to His own infinite glory in Christ. Their place was to obey His commandments, as they loved Him; whilst He would ask His Father, who would send them Another, a Paraclete or Advocate as He Himself had been, One who would undertake and carry through their cause, as a Roman patron of old did for his clients, or a modern solicitor does in his measure and sphere. “Comforter” seems too narrow a word, and separates the Spirit unduly from our Lord, who could hardly be so styled in John 2:1, where Paraclete is applied to His action on high, as here to the Holy Ghost's on earth.

Further, this other Advocate, given by the Father in answer to Christ, was not to be for a brief season, like the Savior here below. “He will give you another Advocate, that he may be with you forever.” This is a truth of the deepest consolation, but most solemn for Christendom. Who

believes it? Certainly not those who boast of evangelical views, yet proclaim their unconscious unbelief by regular prayers at the beginning of every year, that God would pour out afresh His Holy Spirit on His children in their low estate. Is it meant that the self-complacent mass in Christendom, (which utters no such special petitions, but assumes that the Holy Ghost acts, necessarily and infallibly, through popes, or patriarchs, or kindred officials,) are more really believing? Far from it. They are inflated with pride, as if God sustains and sanctions their position, and utter blindness holds their eyes, so that they cannot see their state to be one of departure from God's will and truth and grace. But the opposite pole of an error may he also an error; and the assumption that the Holy Spirit directs Babylon, in her confusion of the world and the church, is not remedied by the practical denial of the abiding presence of the Spirit in the periodical petitions for a fresh outpouring on us.

It were well to ask for a single eye and a spirit of humiliation, that we might cease to do evil, and learn to do well, and this with a truly contrite heart, and a deep sense of whence we have fallen, and of Christ's speedy coming. It were well to judge ourselves by the word of God, not only in our individual walk, but in our corporate ways and worship, to see to it that we neither grieve nor quench the Spirit, to desire earnestly that we be strengthened with power by the Spirit in the inner man, if indeed we do not also need first to be enlightened of Him, so that we should know what is the hope of God's calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are our true wants, even where peace with God is enjoyed individually; for there is nothing in general so little, known to the Christian or the church, as what the Christian and the church really are; and how can the functions or duties be discharged where the relationship is ignored? Now all this turns on the great truths before us in these chapters of our Gospel, the absence of Christ from the world, to take His place as the risen Man in heaven, on the footing of redemption, and the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down to be with the saints forever. Faith, then, shows itself, not surely in imputing to Him failure in abiding, spite of our failure, and praying for a fresh outpouring, as if He had fled in disgust, and needed to be sent down again, but in separating from every evil condemned by the word, and doing the will of God as far as we learn it, counting on the assured presence of the Spirit according to the Savior's promise. Blessing and power follow obedience, even as the Lord puts it here. Nothing can be conceived more false morally than to abide in what we know to be wrong, waiting for power, and then obeying. Not so; more especially, too, as even this hollow excuse denies the distinctive privilege of the Christian, that he has the Spirit already in being a Christian. And so has the church of God; if not, it is some other church, not His, for only by the presence of the Spirit is the church, as such, always and in all things, responsible to he guided of Him, even “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it beholdeth him not, nor knoweth him; but ye know him, because he abideth with you, and shall be in you.”

The Lord herein looked onward to the presence of the Holy Ghost with the saints, not only assuring them that it should be perpetual, but explaining why the world could have no portion in Him, whereas they might behold and know the Messiah objectively, though feebly and in vain for eternal life. But with the Spirit, as now given, what could the world have in common? He could but, by His presence with the saints outside the world, prove sin, righteousness, and judgment; but He is no object of sight or knowledge, and the world has no faith, or it would not be the world; whereas the saints, the Christians henceforth, would be characterized by knowing Him, invisible as He is, “because he abideth with you, and shall be in you.” Not that I think with Euthymius Zigabenus, that His abiding in Jesus who was among them is the meaning, but that, when given, He was to abide with them, instead of it brief sojourn like the Lord's, and that He should not only abide, but be in them, which Messiah, as such, could not be, however companying with them. It was to be a new, special, intimate presence of God in and with the saints, in contrast with the world which had rejected Christ; and there is no surer sign of, or preparation for, the final apostasy, in its complete form than that unbelieving departure from God which binds together the saints and the world, whether in a popish assumption of the Spirit's sanction, or in a Protestant unbelief of His presence, because of their experience of a name to live, with death around and within, which prompts them to cry for the Spirit as if He were gone, instead of quitting all that grieves Him, and hinders the manifestation of His gracious action.

But, said the Lord, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you.” It is not here by His future advent, but by the gift of the Spirit. Thus would He comfort them in His own absence. “Yet a little, and the world beholdeth me no more, but ye behold me: because I live, ye also shall live.” Nothing could be more opposed to their thoughts of, and expectations from, the Messiah of Israel, seen by every eye, though in special nearness to His own people on earth. Now they were by the Holy Ghost to see Him whom the world had rejected and lost, and should see no more, save in judgment. And the saints should not behold Him only, but live of the selfsame life, having Christ living in them, as says the apostle Paul, or as the Lord here, Because I live, ye also shall live. Christ is their life, and this in resurrection-power, to which the future tense may point.

Three Prophetic Gems, Heavenly Hope, The: Part 3 (14:1-3)

But the passage conveys much more, and of surpassing interest. It is not only the all-important distinction of heavenly glory as well as of earthly attached to the divine Person of our Lord. The declaration from His lips that He is the bright, the “Morning Star,” elicits the prompt answer of the bride, the Lamb's wife in title; and not here only but that of the Holy Spirit who had anointed and sealed, and here fittingly guides her. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

Evangelicalism,1 afraid of going too far and disposed to humanize the truth, and thus enfeebling its intrinsic force, would address this cry to man, that he might be brought to Christ for new birth and the remission of his sins. But this is to misapply, darken, and lose what the scripture here imports. For it is Christ announcing Himself as the Morning Star which draws out the heart's answer. His bride, the church animated and directed by the Spirit, thus responds to His love, and bids Him come according to His promise. Long had she waited for Him, and watched earnestly more than those that long for the morning. This in nature is indeed but a passing relief; whereas His coming will be the crowning joy of love and the instant change into glory forever, though not yet its appearing before the world.

At the beginning He had said, I am coming again, and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye also shall be. For He departed, crucified by the world, but on the cross glorifying God as He never had been and never so needs again, glorifying God even as to sin, and thus furnishing to Him, as this only could inaugurate, a new glory. He was therefore glorified by God and in God, and this straightway, as the

basis of the gospel at its fullest as well as of the church of God, Christ's body. In order to do this with other purposes pertaining to the heavenly and new state of things, He departed out of this world unto the Father. But far from abandoning the feeble objects of His grace, it is there and then strenuously declared (John 13:1) that having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end. His love was out-and-out. Besides, the Father sends, and He too sends, the Advocate meanwhile, the Holy Spirit of truth, to abide with and in them forever. But He also assures them of His own coming again to fetch them into the Father's house: there and no less; that they may be with Himself in those many mansions.

When the Lord predicates of Himself “the bright, the morning Star,” it is no mere wish or enthusiastic emotion of nature that bursts forth. The Spirit Himself takes the initiative in the heart of the church. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” The earthly bride does not receive the Spirit till the Lord shall have appeared in glory. There will be true conversion in a godly remnant of Jews long before, in days of sore trial and ever growing evil and danger, some slain for righteousness' sake, and truth as far as known, others preserved to be the nucleus of the generation to come. But the great privilege of the out-poured Spirit from on high is when the King is come, and the wilderness becomes a garden, and a garden is counted a forest. It is the day of Israel's full blessing and of the restitution of all things concurrently. But here every solid reason points to that heavenly bride, who alone has the privilege of the indwelling Spirit2 to give her present communion with Christ in all things before He comes, and here in His coming for her. The form simple as it is has striking beauty, and is as characteristically suitable as full of grace. For He speaks, and she replies intelligently in the love that at once answers to His love.

First there is the normal relation recognized, and the Spirit as competent and graciously prompting the bride. But next many a child of God is quite uninformed and unconscious of his proper association with Christ after this intimate pattern. Yet he does hear His voice, and knows not the voice of strangers. The reality of his divine birth is thus fully owned, while ignorance of the bridal relation is graciously provided against up to (we may say) the last moment that intervenes: “and let him that heareth say, Come.” What is there to fear in His coming, Who for us died and rose and comes again? What love, joy and honor are couched in His coming again to receive us unto Himself, and set us with and like Himself now in the Father's house! Therefore “let him that heareth say, Come.” Is there not everything possible to preclude fear, to fill with delight and confidence?

But to the last the outflow of divinely given compassion for the wretched and lost has its place. The gospel has its glad and urgent message for souls, after Christ and His coming as the nearest of all to the church and to the Christian. Hence the quite distinct turn in the closing half of the verse. The difference is made clear by the necessary and plain omission of “say.” It would be out of the question for any but the bride and the Christian to bid Christ come; those who know Him by faith and are assured of His love can and are called to say so. But it would be madness for any others to join in such a call. Because of their ruin and for their sins they need Him first to save their souls. Till they believe, He could only be their judge. But it is still the day of grace. The word for such accordingly is, “And let him that is athirst come “; nor this only, but “let him that will take life's water freely.”

The thirsty one is indeed invited to come. The church has the spring within, and rivers flowing without; but she calls to Christ. It is His name that avails for all the sinner's need before God. There is no obstacle on His side in the way: God gave and sent His Son for this express purpose. His death, however wicked and destructive might be man's part, only the more met his wants in God's surpassing grace. Let him in all his need “come,” not say, “Come.” Yea “he that will,” however feebly he as yet feels his evil state, shall the more truly feel it, as he by faith apprehends divine love; “let him take life's water freely.” God's grace gives it to him that is only willing, to him that comes just as he is. Is it not indeed a wondrous verse? And it emphatically applies till Christ comes.

It has already been pointed out how ill 2 Peter 1:19 has fared at the hands of the erudite, and how the only real sense is lost by those who either unconsciously or willfully sever “in your heart” from the immediate context. “The morning star” in Rev. 2:28; 22:16, has been put to like torture, through ignorance of the heavenly hope which it figures, and by none more strangely than by the author of “Thoughts on the Apocalypse” (pp. 150, 151). “The glory of the star belongs to distant and unknown worlds; but the sun is a part of our own system, and is set specially to nourish and enlighten it. Consequently when Christ first appears in the fullness of divine glory, in the glory of the Father, His own glory, and the glory of the holy angels, He is symbolized by the star. ‘I am the bright and morning star.' To him that overcometh I will give the morning star, i.e. association with Himself in this high character of glory. It is to flesh and blood terrible glory, and in it he will exercise the destructive judgment whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in. But when He brings in that gracious and benign display of glory, whereby Israel and the earth is to be abidingly blessed, we find Him symbolized by the sun.”

Can one conceive more entire surrender to speculation without an attempt at scriptural proof? It is allowed that the morning star (not “the star” as he puts the case) differs from the sun; but where in the Bible is it ever represented as belonging “to distant and unknown worlds?” Where is Christ symbolized by the star when He “first appears in the fullness of divine glory,” and of His other glories? When Christ in Rev. 2:28 associates the overcomer with Himself in that high character of glory, what ground is there to assume that it is “to flesh and blood terrible glory?” or that “in it He will exercise the destructive judgments whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in?” If “the star” distinctively points to “distant and unknown worlds,” is it consistent to make it the emblem of glory to flesh and blood? is it not incongruous with his own definition to say that in the star glory Christ will exercise “the destructive judgment whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in”? And while the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings for those that fear His name, is he entitled to omit that they shall tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of their feet in that day, for it is to burn as a furnace;. and the proud and all that work wickedness shall be as stubble; and that day shall leave them neither root nor branch. This is hardly “gracious and benign,” though He will fully be so for His own.

Nor is it a casual slip, but deliberate and systematic error. For in pp. 322, 323, the author returns to the same mischievous absurdity on Rev. 22:16. “He has other essential glories of His own. ‘Before Abraham was, I AM.' He is the root and offspring of David, AND the bright and morning star. I have already spoken of the star, as the symbol of distant and unearthly glories derived from high and unknown spheres, into which the eye of man, as man, can never penetrate. It is in such glory, strictly and divine, that Jesus will come. It will be the true light of God's own glory and holiness arising suddenly on the deep darkness of the world's night. It will not be at first the sun arising with healing on His wings (for the day-star precedes the sun), but it will be the sudden visitation of strange and distant glory, suddenly breaking upon the abyss of darkness beneath. He will come as the Son of God in His own glory and in His Father's glory, and in the glory of the holy angels, and it is into such glory that they who are His at His coming are to be taken; for His promise is, To him that overcometh will I give the morning star.'“

Now the simple fact is that the sole use scripture makes of the morning or day star is as the figure of Christ Himself coming for us to make good the heavenly blessedness with Himself promised to the overcomer (as in Rev. 2:28); and the heart getting hold of this hope (as in 2 Peter 1:19). There is not the faintest token of “distant and unknown worlds,” any more than of “destructive judgment” associated with it. The truth of God is as plain as the fiction of Mr. N.'s prophetic system; and even he was compelled, and not here only, to allow that “the day-star precedes the sun,” as of course it does, and that it means taking those that are His at His coming into a glory divine and heavenly far above the earth.

But it may surprise some enamored with this incoherent scheme, that its author has elsewhere to allow that somehow the risen saints “are evidently recognized in the commencement of this chapter [Rev. 19] as being with the Lord in glory.” This witness is true, but incompatible with his most cherished views. He seems to connect it with Rev. 16:15; yet this has no relation with the saints' translation to heaven, but with the Lord's coming judicially. His idea is that there are two distinct acts of Christ's coming for judgment! the unearthly star-like one, in which He deals with the tares and gathers up to heaven the wheat; and the earthly one, when the saints follow Him out of heaven, and He destroys the Beast, the False Prophet, and the apostate hosts.

The whole idea is utterly false. For 2 Thess. 2:8 is sure and plain that when the Lord appears with His saints, His first act is to destroy the lawless one and of course his followers; which Rev. 19:19-21 confirms as well as Rev. 17:14.

Oh! the darkness which fails to see that the bright morning star is His coming in fullness of grace to associate the heavenly saints with Himself, without the smallest sign of judgment if we accept the word of God! How sweet a hope now to arise in our hearts! How glorious and what joy of love when He thus comes to receive us unto Himself for the Father's house! Yes, He announces Himself as the bright, the morning star; and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Destructive judgments! unknown worlds! Nay, but the consummation of His love and ours as one with Him; and this realized in the Father's house: were it not so, He had never raised our hope so high. Did He not say that the Father Himself dearly loves us, because we have dearly loved the Son and have believed that He came from God, yea the Father?

He will do more than display us before every eye in the same glory with our Lord, that the world may know that He loved us as He loved Him; He will gratify His own desire that we shall be with Him, and above the world where no earthly eye can penetrate, that we may behold Christ's glory, for the Father loved Him before the world's foundation. Is not this so light a thing to many saints that they never hear or speak of it? Yet is its spiritual joy far beyond any manifestation before the world however glorious. Weigh it, brethren, that you may learn how much your earthly preoccupation robs you of what should be your proper portion in fellowship with Him above.

Nothing has been said here as yet of what is a great bugbear to certain minds. They regard the “secret rapture” as enough without further proof to condemn the notion when stated. Those who have learned its truth and its importance are content to speak of the rapture of the saints without further adjunct. Yet the morning star, unseen save by those who spiritually watch, lends itself in the readiest way to what other scriptures point. Let us consider these a little more.

In John 14:1-3 it is implied in our Lord's coming again and receiving us unto Himself. Neither time nor season, neither contingent change nor prophetic date, neither general state of the earth nor specific sign of any sort, finds the least place. Infinite love of the Son in communion with the Father elevates us above all such thoughts into an incomparable blessedness above with Christ. Is it conceivable that any Christian mind could doubt that the very manner of it is what the apostle Paul was given to announce in 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, and 2 Thess. 2:1, and 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, with details as to the dead saints and the living ones? Phil. 3:20, 21, and Jude 24 sustain the same heavenly truth. In all it is the same translation of the saints to be with the Lord.

Not one word in these different scriptures teaches visibility to the world. It is the full making good of that sovereign grace which without a displayed signal to the saints, still less to those who are not concerned, has given us the promise of heavenly association with Christ. Here we shall have the hope blessedly accomplished. In all these intimations there is the most marked absence of others then beholding what the Lord is effecting. It flows from that special love of His for His own, which excludes strangers from intermeddling with His joy. But the day of the Lord duly follows when the world shall see both Him and them appearing in glory (John 17:24).

What has misled people is the confounding of the revelation with the rapture. That as distinctly calls for “every eye” to see it, as this excludes it. The Lord will come for His own, will raise those that were put to sleep through Him, will change us the living that remain until then, both in an eye's twinkling at the last trumpet, and thus gather us together to Him, not only into the air to meet Him, but so received to set us in the Father's house before the presence of His glory with exultation. All this is quite above and apart from the ken of man. But the public vindication of Christ and His own before the universe is when He will come forth after the bridals of the Lamb on high, as well as the final judgment on earth of Babylon the great harlot to which God under the seventh vial gave the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath (Rev. 17, 19.).

Then and not till then is the visible display of the Lord and of the glorified saints that follow Him out of the opened heavens, when He smites the nations, shepherds them with iron rod, and treads the winepress of His wrath. It is fittingly and with precision called, not His presence merely, but “the appearing of His presence” (compare 2 Thess. 2:1 with 8), by which the Lord Jesus shall annul the lawless one then revealed as well as the apostate imperial chief, who shall both be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Thus does God render tribulation to the troublers of the saints and repose to the troubled, not at the rapture of the saints, but at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God, and on those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This would have been quite incongruous with all that is said of His coming to change His saints and translate them to heaven. But it is in entire keeping with His appearing, His glorified being with Him, for the double purpose of their enemies paying penalty of everlasting destruction from the Lord's face and from the glory of His might, and of His coming (not to receive but) to be glorified in His saints and marveled at in all that believed in that day. For it will be the day of the Lord then truly present, the saints having been gathered to Him previously.

With this perfectly agrees such a scripture as Rev. 17:14. It is ignored by those who oppose what they call the “secret rapture” and no wonder, for it is utterly incompatible with their hypothesis. Those with the Lamb, when the Beast and the vassal kings make war with Him, are called and chosen and faithful, the first and last of which terms can describe only His accompanying saints, not angels. This is confirmed

irrefragably by the later description in Rev. 19:14, where the symbolic clothing points to the saints, not to angels (compare ver. 8 before); and yet more by the previous marriage of the Lamb above. All concur in proving that the rapture of the saints, unseen by the world, whatever the astonishment produced by the disappearance of the living saints, must have preceded that revelation of the Lord and His saints glorified which is associated with the manifest and awful judgments He will execute on their enemies.

It has already been shown that Col. 3:4 beyond doubt connects the manifestation, not the rapture, of the saints, with the Lord's manifestation in glory, not with His coming or presence simply. They are then, and not before, manifested in glory. Christ is therefore not seen in glory before they are caught up. They shall be manifested together. The scriptures on which men have thought differently refer to the Jews, not to Christians. But these godly Jews will be gathered in the land to Him as their glorious King, instead of being first caught up, and then at a later epoch appearing with Him in the same glory. Compare Matt. 24:31-41, Mark 13:27-31, Luke 21:27-36; also Isa. 24:21-23; 25; 26; 27

It may be, as it has been, alleged that though none of the scriptures which certainly apply to this subject speak of visibility to men, we do hear of the Lord's “shout,” of the archangel's voice, of the trump. But why should any attach loudness of sound to these expressions, solemn and impressive as they undoubtedly are? Why foist in that which appeals to the senses of outside mankind or of the world, when the language employed avoids it? It fully bespeaks the personal and gracious intervention of the Lord Jesus for His own, the faithful summons of God, the acclaim of the archangel, and in Cor. xv. the immediate and final notice to depart; but none of these goes necessarily beyond the persons interested. They directly concern the household of faith, and only the glorified.

Men have compared the Lord's descent for us with Ex. 19, but with singular infelicity. For thunder and lightnings were then, and the voice of a trumpet “exceeding loud,” so that all the people trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, and Jehovah descended upon it in fire, and the smoke from it ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole region quaked greatly. And the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder. All thus was of set purpose minatory, alarming, and awful, as became the ministry of death and condemnation.

Even when the Lord comes in restoring mercy for Israel by-and-by, we read in the prophet that in that day a “great” trumpet shall be blown, and in the evangelist His angels will be sent with a great trumpet, or a great sound of trumpet. This does express what is wholly absent, where scripture tells of His coming in love and majesty to make good His love to the heavenly saints. For His appearing to Israel is bound up with the infliction of judgments on the apostates, Jewish and Gentile, and the punishment of the enemies of His people and of the wicked in general. As with His own ascension, our rapture will be the triumph of grace which leaves the world unmolested for the moment, though the providential inflictions of God soon begin to follow in measured order and increasing degree, till all culminates in the day of the Lord at their close, as detailed in the Book of Revelation.

We have seen that one of the most able and accepted and determined to refuse to discriminate between the Lord's coming for us and our coming with Him, between His presence and the appearing of His presence, was compelled to own that the glorified saints must be caught up to heaven for some time before they with Him emerge from it. For they follow the King of kings who descends to smite the nations with a sharp sword and to shepherd them with iron rod, as well as to tread the winepress of God's exceeding wrath. By B.W.N. they are allowed to have been there from the destruction of Babylon under the seventh vial. This however clashes with his fundamental principle, that God acts for Christ till He appears in person. Now, as all God's vials precede Christ's appearing, He cannot appear before they are poured out. If therefore Christ destroys Babylon and takes up the saints then or before its destruction, so that God is praised above for His judgment of the great Harlot, He must have come for them before the day of His revelation from heaven in chap. 19. for His still more awful judgment of the Beast, &c. This clearly overthrows the system du fond en comble; not only the arguments of others, but his own long considered statement and published defense.

The main question for those who value the truth is, Where or when according to scripture are the saints translated to heaven? Now it is beyond just question that, the book of Revelation opens with the Lord seen in the prophet's vision judging the seven churches in Asia (proconsular). This (1) was what John saw; then (2) “the things which are,” a very notable description of the seven churches as judged by the Lord in His letters to each respectively; and lastly, (3) “the things about to be after these,” or the visions of the future to follow up even into eternity itself.

The third division is the strict prophecy, consisting of two portions (4-11., and 11-22:5), for each opened with a prefatory introduction, and goes on to the end.

Here then may be found, adequate evidence before each series of prophetic visions, when the rapture of the saints takes place. The church-state is adumbrated in the seven churches, “the things that are “: not the actual Asiatic assemblies only, but what they prefigured successively as things would to the hearing ear by what the Spirit says. In Rev. 4, 5 are indicated the glorified saints already symbolized as in heaven, twenty-four elders, chief-priests of the fully numbered courses, crowned and enthroned around God's central throne. This is definite; and they are no longer souls disembodied but changed. Any saints, Jewish or Gentile, called afterward as very many are, add nothing to them: they are complete. During the period that follows no church-state is seen.

In chap. 7 is a numbered complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel, and after that a countless crowd of Gentiles, objects of divine choice and blessing; but they are separate. There is no fusion into one, as the nature of the church requires. God keeps each distinct throughout from first to last. So far it resembles His work in the O.T. Only grace largely works outside Israel and so far like the N.T. But church-state is closed. It is a new condition with abundant mercy; and in the face of idolatry, apostasy, persecution, tribulation, and divine judgments, a people is prepared for the earth under the reign of the Lord personally present and His glorified saints: a reign of righteousness and peace, Satan wholly excluded, and the Holy Spirit poured on all flesh for 1000 years.

That the existing church-state closes on earth at the end of Rev. 3 on the protracted view is as demonstrable, as that the overcomers out of it, with all that were Christ's before them, are thenceforth seen as glorified in heaven from Rev. 4, 5. Nothing but the coming of Christ to gather those that believed to Himself can account for the new company above, the disappearance of recognized churches here below, and the formation of separate companies out of Israel, and the Gentiles thenceforward for the earthly purposes of God during the crisis of evil and His judgments, till the Lord comes from heaven to put down Satan and his agents, and to establish His world-kingdom. It is therefore between Rev. 3 and iv. that the true epoch for the saints' translation best suits; and a transition period ensues, when the church disappears, and grace

works, in presence of solemn chastenings of men, to get ready a nucleus for the Lord's appearing and for the millennial earth, as well as for martyrdom meanwhile.

This conveys the general prefiguration of the steps God takes in judgment, though with dealings of concurrent mercy, to chastise the world, and especially its more favored parts, and to pave the way for investing the Lamb at the fitting time with its direct and supreme government. This ends with Rev. 11:18 for the earthly and the eternal kingdom.

In the fresh section it is not a central throne with enthroned heirs of God and Christ's joint-heirs around, but the temple of God in heaven is opened, and the ark of His covenant seen, not on earth but still above, and yet with added signs of present displeasure. The first great sign seen there is of God's sure promise for Israel's glory. It is not the bride, but the travailing mother of Him who is to tend all the nations with iron rod, arrayed with the sun, the moon under feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Supreme authority is to be here, the sun that rules the day; the changing and reflected light of the old covenant, no longer guiding but under her feet; but also the fullness of human subordinate authority. Meanwhile the child that was born, the Son of might, was caught up to God and to His throne. For the great dragon, another sign, was seen there, having seven heads and ten horns, emblematic of the Roman empire, in deadly opposition to both. War in heaven ensues. The dragon, the devil, is cast out with his angels; woe to the earth and to the sea, if the heavens and those that dwell there (for so it will then be) rejoice greatly! The devil has great rage, knowing he has a short time; and he vents it against the woman and the rest of her seed, the godly remnant.

But these conflicts are regarded in a far deeper way than in the earlier visions. For there are brought to view the counsels of God centering in His Son, and the hostility of Satan in his last efforts during the half-week which has still to run out, before the Lord in person crushes him and his lawless instruments as in Rev. 19-20. It is the import of the woman's seed caught up on high that is insinuated. For in the manner of the prophetic word the apostle intimates in mystic style the translation to heaven of the saints before the dates begin.

We are thus viewed as in Christ who was caught up there, while the woman and the remnant of her seed are objects, not only of Satan's hate, but of God's providential care on the earth. As we shall share Christ's authority when He takes His great power and reigns (Rev. 2:26, 27), so we are symbolically wrapped up in Him in His being caught up out of Satan's way. We are one with Him in this foreseen rapture, as the apostle Paul in Rom. 8:33, 34, applies to the Christian what Isa. 1:8, 9, says of Christ. Thus we again, and in a very different form suited to this part of the prophecy, come round to the still higher promise in Rev. 2:28. We are associated with Christ as the morning Star before the Sun of righteousness introduces the day for all the world, and we too share the glorious reign with Him. If, instead of groundless fancy, we listen to scripture, the bright, the morning star shines not for the slumbering world, but for those who watch during the dark night. It is essentially spiritual, visible to saints only, not to the world which will have to do rather with the Sun of righteousness.

No sober person of intelligence doubts that the Holy Spirit had first to be poured out, and the gospel to be preached to all the creation. But the N. T. attests that this was done during that first generation, and that the saints were then taught by the apostles to wait for Christ habitually and constantly with no revealed event between to precede or intercept. This is what some daring men venture to ridicule as “any-momentism.”

The misapprehension of ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα in Rev. 1:10 is nothing but a senseless incubus, with the still worse absurdity that the seven churches of Rev. “the things that are,” are seven future groups of a Jewish character. They are alike a fanatical folly without a shred of truth. But no trick of controversy can to any effect legitimately attach such nonsense to the heavenly hope of the N. T., or get rid of the undeniable facts, that churches thenceforward disappear from the book of Revelation for the earth; that a new sight of glorified saints was given in heaven; and that the fresh action of God follows, concurrently here below, of a secured complement of Israel, and a blessed and far larger crowd out of all the nations; and this keeping them apart, instead of being baptized in the power of the Spirit into one body as we are, and as the nature of God's church characteristically demands.

Rev. 22:16 is no exception: only an ignoramus could argue so. For from ver. 6 to the end we have simply appeals to John and the churches that then existed, however permanent the profit might be, as the suited conclusion to the visions previously revealed, as well as its introduction. The Lord would have all that preceded testified in the churches, which was soon utterly forgotten and is generally to our day. But this affords no ground for imagining “churches” in the N. T. sense during the entire period of the crisis, or any part of it, from Rev. 6 to 19, or indeed any longer as on the earth.

I presume that in the strange error of the Rev. James Kelly and of Dr. Bullinger, which they got from the Tractarian Drs. Maitland and J. H. Todd, (as they perhaps from the blunder of the famous critic, J. C. Wetstein, in his N. T. Gr. ii. 750), they wanted Jewish churches for the days of the great tribulation, as their opponents, like Dr. West and a crowd of others, interpolate churches during that period by a still more groundless error, if this be possible. At any rate, if we bow to “the words of the book of this prophecy,” there is no basis of revelation for either. Those who contend on scripture alone for the heavenly hope have ever rejected such notions; nor have these errors any real connection with that truth.

But the closing words of the last chapter of the book are to the last degree impressive, as they corroborate the essential difference between the Christian hope, and the wondrous communication that comprises the unfolded visions of what is to befall the earth in judgment as well as mercy from Rev. 6 to 19 inclusively. This latter is in the richest way the prophetic word, as became in God's wisdom and goodness the winding up of the N. T. But, as elsewhere, so the Lord here carefully guards His own from the mistake of confounding it with what is so distinct.

There are to be two successive series of judgment, of a general and of a special character, as in the seven seals, and the seven trumpets. A general securing to Himself out of Israel, and from among all the nations, accompanies the one; and if the Jews in unbelief seek to establish their polity and religion in unbelief, God begins within the other to recognize a godly remnant during those days of sin and sorrow, with an adequate testimony like that of Moses and Elijah, which none can hinder till their work is done. And the Beast is first seen in his deadly antagonism. Martyrdom ensues; and the merry triumph of the enemy is answered, not only by His power in raising the slain and taking them up to heaven in view of their foes, but by a defined overthrow of man's pride on earth. Then follows the end of man left to himself, and the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ is come.

Next, we go back, to let in details of the deepest moment, of which enough has been said. And the kingdom of glory follows, the great white throne, and the eternal scene.

Now none can be so prejudiced as to think that all this can unroll into facts before the Lord comes, though the unbelief of man approaches such an extreme. Yet many saints contend, as we know, for a certain part to intervene before He comes for us. This, however, is what none can show on any legitimate grounds of scriptural evidence. Proof on the contrary has already been given, that the only consistent point for the removal of the saints to heaven is when the churches are no longer seen or heard of on earth, and a new symbolic presence is presented in heaven. After this the steps are revealed by which God chastises the guilty world. In the midst of the great tribulation He calls and forms, not in one body as now but separately, a twofold nucleus of blessed men, Jewish and Gentile, for the earth under the Lord's future reign; as He had already taken to Himself on high those destined to reign with Him when that glorious time arrives, as we see in Rev. 20-22:5.

The fulfillment of the prophecy awaits its sure and varied application when the time arrives for the earthly question to be answered. Now the Lord is occupied with a heavenly work, wherein is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is the all; and in all, quite independently of earthly change, because the end of that work is to be with Him where He is. And thus He concludes, “He that testifies these things saith, Yea, I come quickly. Amen, come, Lord Jesus,” is the divinely supplied reply. The constant waiting, apart from times and seasons, is kept up to the last for him that has an ear to hear.

It is striking to see how careful the Lord is to exclude prophetic events from mingling with our proper portion in His coming for us; and all the more, because the Revelation is in the main the great Christian book of prophecy. Hence, while giving solemn warnings in these concluding appeals, He fixes our hearts on His coming in sovereign grace without a revealed earthly event to intercept it. He precludes any delay on the score of governmental dealings with men on the earth. He allows no room for confusion with intervening changes in the world. “He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly,” to which our graciously provided answer is, “Amen, come, Lord Jesus.” Can any words be simpler, or more effective, for the heart?

No intelligent believer denies that the hopes prevalent in Christendom are baseless, vain, and presumptuous. The gospel was sent to save sinners, and to associate them when saved with Christ, the glorified Head, and thus to constitute them a heavenly body, His body. Its aim is not to gather into one the world, but the children of God that were scattered abroad. The gospel was to be preached everywhere as a testimony, but with no such thought as winning all Israel or the nations while He is on high. It is reserved for the Lord, not for the church, in judicial authority, to take His great power and reign, when His world-kingdom is come: a future and total change from His present seat on His Father's throne. That, not this, coalesces with His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1). It is “the blessed hope” of what God will do for man and the world; and we rejoice anticipatively. There will be no general amelioration for the race till then; and we await it with assurance, love it as redounding not to the blessing of man only but to the glory of our Savior God, and in our measure and place testify to its truth and solemnity. In the Pastoral Epistles, His appearing alone is pressed, because responsibility all round is the point, rather than distinctive privilege; and then, not before, “in that day,” will the issues appear of fidelity or of failure. This in its own time the blessed and only Potentate shall show, the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship.

Before that day of manifestation must be the awful apostasy, and the audacious uprising against God of the man of sin, whom the Lord Jesus will appear to destroy, as in 2 Thess. 2. Before that day, as is made evident in Rev. 19, must be fulfilled the predicted blows of divine chastisement, as revealed from the seals of Rev. 6 to the last vials of God's wrath in Rev. 16, of which the judgment of Babylon in the descriptive appendix of 17, 18 are a concluding part and explanation. Then follows the day of the Lord in Rev. 19, when the glorified follow Him out of heaven to the destruction of His enemies, the binding of Satan, and the thousand years' reign of Christ and the risen saints over the earth, as in Rev. 20. All this is as clear as God's word makes it, whatever be the doubts and difficulties of the learned, or the unbelief of worldly-minded men.

But the still more intimate and proper hope of the Christian is His coming for those that love Him and watch during the night for Him with eyes undimmed by hope deferred, the Morning Star, before the day. And as the apostle corrected the errors of the Thessalonian saints, yet confirmed the constant waiting for Him, carefully joining himself with them and all saints in the same attitude, so here does the Lord guard us all from confounding His coming with that day, and God's necessary antecedent dealings of infliction or of mercy on Israel or the nations.

Meanwhile may “the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.”

(Concluded.)

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Three Prophetic Gems, Heavenly Hope, The: Part 2 (14:1-3)

Before entering on the examination of other testimony, I take the opportunity of noticing the blighting effect of the earthly or Jewish side of the Lord's coming on those who would thereby swamp the heavenly. A dear brother in the Lord from a distant land (whom I have no reason to consider heterodox, only one-sided and enthusiastic and exclusive in seeing nothing higher than the kingdom) broached, when pressed with the hope as set before us in John 14, that there is no future whatever in the opening verses of this chapter. He would have it that it reveals nothing to come, but only what we now enjoy as part of our Christian privilege. He laid stress on “many mansions,” or abiding places, and argued that we have all that is there adduced by our Lord to comfort the disciples fulfilled in the precious fact that we are already in Christ in the heavenlies.

To this one wholly demurs, insisting that the Lord spoke of their being with Him, “that where I am, ye also may be,” not at all here of being in Him. Of this we do hear in the quite different intimation of ver. 20 where, as He said, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye

in me, and I in you." This beyond question is realized to-day; nor need anyone contest that so it is in the context both before and after, where the Lord says, "I will not leave you orphans (or desolate), I am coming unto you" (18), and, "If one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (23). But in ver. 3 there is distinctive care to preclude the confusion, as the word is "I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself." It is not the spiritual coming of the Father and the Son to abide with the obedient saint here, but Christ's personal coming again, to receive us unto Himself, that where He is (that is, in His Father's house of many mansions, in which He even then speaks of Himself as in xvii. 11), we also may be.

Can one conceive of greater havoc done through Judaizing the hope than such an effect on one who sincerely and earnestly loves Christ's appearing? In an experience by no means short and with a heart I trust far from narrow toward the saints, poor or rich, lowly or noble, learned or unlettered in many lands, never have I known any truth as to which the least taught had more hearty communion with the most deeply instructed than in looking onward to be with Christ on high according to this promise of our Lord. What makes its denial more startling is that it came from an active partisan, though neither extreme nor virulent, of a prophetic school which more than most pleads the voice of early tradition for its shade of premillennialism, and certainly with more reason than the historicalists, such as even the late E. B. Elliott. But tradition is an echo of uncertain sound for the truth, and sure to betray its advocates into more or less of human accretion and divine loss. Both the O. T. and the N. T. revelations of God solemnly warn against the danger; as the new nature under the action of His Spirit assuredly repudiates aught but His word for our hope no less than our faith.

Nor did the mischief end with unbelief as to John 14:1-3. It was equally marked when Zech. 14:5 was cited to show that the O. T. recognizes the coming of all the saints at Jehovah's advent and day. But, admitting that the holy angels will be there, it seems strange to question what is so distinctly taught in 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14, 2 Thess. 1:10, Jude 14, Rev. 17:14; 19:14. in some of which texts the accompanying terms exclude angels, though elsewhere these may really be meant. Is it not sad to see how a partial apprehension of the truth works to obliterate what is heavenly? Yet Daniel the prophet does not fail to discriminate the saints of the high or heavenly places (vii. 18, 22, 25, to whom judgment was given as in Rev. 20:4), from their "people," who have the greatness of the kingdom given them "under the whole heaven."

It would however be altogether unfair to put this great defect on a level with a horrid delusion which has lately come to light in a work called "Parousia," by Dr. J. Scott Russell, and cried up in the late Dr. R. Weymouth's Version of the N. T. in Common Speech, as well as in a volume of discourses entitled "Maranatha," by the Rev. F. B. Proctor. Whether such strange doctrine prevails beyond a small admiring circle is not known. Mr. P.'s volume fell under my eyes quite recently, and the version named still more so. But they are evidence enough, that the supposed "great book" of Dr. R. is in truth a mischievous blunder, the revival in spirit of that early imposture of which the apostle speaks in 2 Tim. 2, "that the resurrection is passed already." The assumption of these dreamers is: Christ came finally and so fully at the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, that all scripture about His "parousia" was then exhausted.

None need wonder that in this as in other systems of error, not a little truth, generally overlooked, is interspersed, so as to give a fair color to the lie. These men, like Hymenmus and Philetus of old, overthrow the faith of some; for no lie is of the truth. And this lie denies necessarily the resurrection of the body, the triumphant rapture of the saints to Christ, our future abiding place in the Father's house, no less than the awful judgment of the quick in the day of the Lord, when the Satanic trio condignly suffer, and the displayed world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ shall come in power and glory, to the deliverance of the still groaning creation. Then the purpose of God shall be fulfilled for the administration of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and those on the earth; in Him in whom also we were given inheritance as His joint-heirs.

Take this sample from p. 116. "We believe that a great wrong is done—because it misleads—when we speak of the church of Christ as a Bride mourning her absent Lord; as is done in some of our hymns. The fact is that He is not absent; He has come and is here—a Real Presence abiding with His church forever. We are bound to believe that the Lord did come in or about the year 70, and then fulfilled all His predictions and promises concerning the second coming." Again, in p. 119, G. A. Smith on Isa. 7:14 is cited, "God with us is the one great fact in life," with the comment, "We may add, it is the greatest fact in history. For what else has ever happened to be put in comparison with it?" [Yet the volume opens most inconsistently, with the admission that, not the Incarnation, but the atoning death on the cross, is the true central point, whereon all turns for God's glory, man's salvation, and the reconciliation of all things, though the last needs His future revelation with His saints to give it effect. For in the cross, not before, was sin judged by God on the holy and divine Savior]. "But if so much can be said of His first advent (which was but temporary!), how much is the fact intensified when we apply it to His second coming and abiding Presence, which took place within the life-time of a generation of people who heard Him speak? Which also the apostles constantly recurred to as to a point in history at which a new era would commence."

The error comes out plainly in the remarks on John 11:25, 26 (p. 153, &c.). "Now, this great saying does not mean that resurrection is a matter of course, nor does it speak of a distinct resurrection at some indefinite last day [the very thing our Lord taught unmistakably and four times over in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54!]; least of all does it allude to a graveyard resurrection such as is commonly believed in. But His words mean what they say: Jesus is Himself the resurrection and the life. They are only inherent in the race as in Him."

But this show of truth is as false as Satan can make it. For the real bearing is that Christ is the power of resurrection and life in His person, as being the Son and God; He was therefore able to raise Lazarus there and then to life in the flesh, as He will at the due time raise the dead believers and change the living ones: had Martha this faith? In order to do so, at the last day, consistently with God's nature and our sins, He must Himself die and be raised again. For as John 12:24 tells us, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Life in resurrection power is to have life abundantly. Hence since He rose believers are now quickened, who were dead in offenses and sins, yea, quickened together with Christ, and raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Him.

This in no way supersedes but is rather the ground of our being changed, even our body of humiliation transformed into conformity with His body of glory, when He comes from the heavens as Savior in full, not of the soul only as now, but of the body also at that glorious hour. Life and resurrection are not inherent in the race. The believer has life, but it is in the Son. All depends on Him. We live because He lives; and the life as a believer I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20). But though heavenly as of the Heavenly One, we still bear the image of Adam, the man of dust; when the body is raised in in-corruption, glory, and power at His still

future coming, we shall bear the image of the Second man, the last Adam.

Thus the notion, that the second coming of Christ is come, is a dream which avails itself of truth unknown in the great or the small denominations, to destroy the truth of His next advent and of the resurrection from the dead, which flows from Christ's rising as the foundation of Christianity, and looks on to that bright consummation. The blessed hope is annulled. The kingdom no doubt is already set up in mystery; but their fond fancy, which makes what we now have to be all, annuls what we await. Satan shall then be crushed under our feet, and the power of the Lord so established that not an idol shall remain, nor a blade of grass that shall not flourish under His glory. For then God heads up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth; and we shall share with Him all the inheritance, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. It is a cruel cheat of the enemy, that the day of manifested power and glory is begun, or never to be. Though the Lord is received up in glory, He is hid in God; whereas then He will be manifested, and we too in glory. The world to come is not come, but is surely coming.

It is all well to quote John 5:25, “Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live.” This is not what He wanted in Martha; but it is the faith that must be now, if souls are to be quickened and not perish. But why is not the further truth added of verses 28, 29? “Wonder not at this; for an hour is coming [which now is not] in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: those that have done good unto a resurrection of life; and those that have done ill unto a resurrection of judgment.” Here in the same context is the truth to which the Lord attaches the same solemn mark of divine truth; He affirms the absolute certainty of that which this spurious Parousia school audaciously denies.

It is not that any rise again independently of Christ; for as He is the giver of life eternal, God also gives to Him the prerogative of all judgment, as the despised but glorious Son of man. It is His voice that expressly calls for what is here sneeringly called “a graveyard resurrection;” for “all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice,” just or unjust, well-doers or evil-doers. Hence there are to be two resurrections bodily, as we read prophetically in Rev. 20:4-6, and 11-15: a resurrection of life and reigning with Christ; and a resurrection of judgment and endless woe. We need not wonder at the quickening of the spiritually dead, when the Lord will call from their tombs the actually dead to come forth, the godly and believing who have life in Him now unto a resurrection of life, and the worthless unbelievers unto a resurrection of judgment issuing in the lake of fire.

No wonder that for free thinkers “a translation of translations” should be sometimes preferred to a faithful and close version. No wonder that the Christian's belief in the apostle's warning of ever-growing failure and ruin, till Christ personally arrive for heavenly glory and earthly judgment, is treated as “pessimism,” and as “the Christian's worst enemy.” Christ is not on His own throne to reign yet, but as the world's despised and crucified on the Father's throne. “In the world ye have tribulation,” said the Lord; not a special one, as retributively for Jews and Gentiles at the end of the age, but ever and anon in our pilgrimage, the very apostles the last, though in the church the first, a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. It was the volatile and worldly-minded Corinthian brethren who took the place of filled, and rich, and reigning “without us” (the apostles): “and would that ye did reign, that we might reign with you,” said the large-hearted Paul. But it was a mere delusion.

If we died together with Christ, we shall also live together; if we endure (or suffer patiently), we shall also reign together. As Christians we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. “For I reckon that the sufferings of the now time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed to usward.” Christ is not reigning yet, still less is He administering the affairs of the world. It is a falsehood which these theorizers share with the Papacy on the one hand, and the Mormons on the other, who both seek, and not they only, present power and glory. Even the last time or hour (1 John 2:18-27) is marked by the prevalence, not of Christ but of many antichrists, the sad harbingers of the Antichrist, whom the Lord Jesus shall appear to destroy, as 2 Thess. 2:8 tells us. The Father's kingdom will not arrive for the heavens, nor the Son of man's for the earth, till He shall come to judge the quick, and all lawless ones be cast out of His kingdom into the furnace of fire, and the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

One may not value the tradition through Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, and may incomparably prefer the living and gracious light of the inspired scriptures. But those western chiefs did not destroy either the foundations, or the hope, like these strange fanatics of the misbelieved and perverted “Parousia.” For theirs is an utter misuse of precious truth which leaves nothing but decomposed fruit, the ashes of death, instead of the life, of which they write so glibly and unspiritually and unholily, without a single atom of truth rightly understood or applied. Unbelief of the truth is blind and bad; but how much worse is faith in a lie of Satan that supplants God's mind for faith and hope?

This may suffice here on so unsavory a theme. Let us turn for one's refreshment, and it may be for the profit of others, to the Lord's words in Luke 12:35-39.

It is not here bridesmaids outside with their torches going forth to meet the bridegroom, but servants within the house with their lamps alight. “Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning, and yourselves like men waiting for their own lord whenever he may leave (or return from) the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open to him. Blessed those bondmen whom the Lord on coming shall find on the watch. Verily I say to you, that he will gird himself about, and make these recline, and coming up will serve them.” Believing merely in His second coming in no way meets what our Lord here impresses on His bondmen, but their hearts fixed on His return as the first of their duties. Watching on their part His heart craves. Servants are not unused to seek their pleasure when their lord is away forever so little, some without, others in distant parts of a great house. But He in the most earnest way lays it on them to be as men that wait for their own Master whenever He may return from the nuptial feast, that when He comes and knocks they may without delay open to Him. No delay, no hurry to reach this post, but on the look-out, by the door as it were, that, when His knock is heard, they may forthwith open to Him. “Ye,” yourselves, waiting for Him, characterizes their whole outlook.

On all sides it is eminently in keeping with the place assigned by the Spirit to Luke; who, as he conveys the grace in Christ, demands also the becoming answer of the heart in the saints. The return from the wedding-feast was the best possible figure on the Lord's part, the sympathetic occasion of festive joy, yet when the night might be more or less spent. His return from the wedding as a prophetic event suits not the marriage of the Lamb on high, still less the day when Zion shall be called Hephzibah, and the land Beulah. But as a figure, expressive of a duty suitable to His loving fellowship, filled with bright joy, and excluding all associations of judgment and sadness, what so appropriate? What could so well call out the warm affections of the bondmen to their own Lord? If words were to put the saints into the constancy of

waiting for the coming of Christ, surely none could more powerfully set that hope as the proximate and immediate object before their hearts.

But there is more. What could strengthen it so much as the wondrous grace in the assurance He solemnly adds, what no other lord would think of? He shall gird Himself about—yes, in the glory of heaven, and make them recline at its feast, and come up and serve them. It was the humiliation of love we only conceive faintly, that He, who subsisting in God's form deemed it no object of seizure to be on equality with God, emptied Himself when He took a slave's form and came in likeness of men. Yet He went farther, as love's need required; and when found in fashion as man, He humbled Himself in becoming obedient as far as death (and what must it have been to Him?) yea, death of the cross. It was in that divine love which would secure God's glory and man's blessing at all cost. Now glorified in heaven He continues the work of a slave in the intercession for us, which was symbolized by the washing of the defiled feet of the disciples. But here again His love is to assume a renewed form when we are there glorified when, as His mark of honor for His bondmen that have watched for Him, He will cause them to recline at the heavenly feast, and come up to serve them.

And then let us consider the joy it is, that this the apostolic hope is ours now no less than the apostolic faith and fellowship, if one has ears to hear. “And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find [them] so, blessed are those.” It is thus evident that expecting the Lord certainly at a distant and defined moment is not in the least what He impresses. A prophecy has its own definite character, if not at a fixed time like the Seventy Weeks, and many others of less moment, yet marked by distinct circumstances which shut it up to a well understood time or season. Here it is expressly otherwise. Of purpose it is as uncertain when, as it is certainly to be; and the object is that His bondmen should be always on the watch.

If now the teaching of the apostles is sought, none can find a more direct supply than in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. From 1 Thess. 1 we learn that the great apostle of the Gentiles instructed those saints from their conversion to God, not only to serve Him as a living and true God, but to await His Son from the heavens whom He raised from out of the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath. This waiting is no doubt quite general; and it was wisely so as a first outline for souls just brought out of heathenism. Enough it was for them from the start to be put into this happy condition of waiting for Him who so loved them and had wrought so efficaciously for them now and forever. Details they would have in due time; and not a little in these early letters.

Nor was it less on Paul's side (ii.), who, as he wished no selfish advantage nor present power nor worldly honor, but to be the ready servant of Christ's love and will, looked for his reward in no thing of earth's vain glory. “For what is our hope or joy, or crown of boasting? Are not ye, too, before our Lord Jesus at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy.” But he also most carefully (iii.) urged them to love toward one another and toward all, as was his own affection toward them; in order to confirm their hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. The proud unbelieving fancy of any members of Christ being absent then he would thus efface from every heart.

Disallowing another old fancy, that a saint's death is Christ's coming for him, the apostle seals on the scene of bereavement the joyful certainty (iv.), that God will bring with Christ those put to sleep through Jesus. And he explains, as a new revelation, that the Lord Himself will come for His saints, the dead in Christ, and ourselves then alive and remaining, in order to be all thenceforth forever with Him.

He also points out (v.) the awful character of His day, when sudden destruction comes on the sons of night and darkness whom that day shall overtake as a thief. Every Christian ought to see the distinctness of the Lord's coming to gather His own unto Himself above, from His day of judicial dealing with His and their adversaries: the one a quite fresh revelation of sovereign grace in its triumphant close, the other a well-known theme of all prophecy.

The second Epistle follows up the same truth, but particularly to guard from the delusion, which some palmed on the saints, that the day of the Lord had actually come. Hence it is shown them that the persecution, which seems to have been thus perverted, is not at all the feature of that day. For then the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, awarding both tribulation to their troublers, and rest to His saints. It will be His vengeance in flaming fire on the evil; while He shall have come, not to receive the saints to Himself for the Father's house, but to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that believed, before the world. Therefore in chap. 2 he begs them, for the sake of (or by) His coming and their gathering together to Him, not to be shaken by the false cry that the day of the Lord was present. For before that day (not before His coming for us) two fearful evils must be: the apostasy, and the man of sin revealed who is to be annulled by the appearing of His coming in that day. Lastly, in chap. iii. he prays the Lord to direct their hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ. He waits patiently; and so should we, instead of the idle selfish folly of some.

We may see how the blessed hope is meant to cheer, elevate, and strengthen all the practical life; as the other Epistles still more apply it! No wonder Satan labors incessantly to dim, weaken, and destroy its light and power. Take 1 Corinthians as an instance. Thus in chap. 1:7 we have in strict propriety not exactly the “coming” but the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in ver. 8 “the day “; because only then will be manifested how the saints acquitted themselves as to the use of each gift of grace entrusted to their charge. Whereas in the Lord's Supper (chap. 11:26) they were to announce His death until He come, bringing the affections into the deepest play between the termini of Christian existence and pilgrimage, Christ's death and His coming.

Nor should we omit to note the words of another apostle, bearing on our theme, especially as they are generally and utterly misunderstood. The scene on the holy mount Peter counts as confirming “the prophetic word, to which ye do well in taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a squalid place, until day dawn and [the] day-star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19). “Ye” were the same Christian Jews of the dispersion whom he had addressed in his first Epistle, already familiar with the law. They did well in paying attention to the prophetic word, which he compares to a lamp shining in a squalid place (as this world truly is), over which hang the unsparing judgments of God soon to fall. Like the Hebrews to whom Paul wrote, they were slow in appropriating the fuller light and better hope of Christianity. Who can wonder that can intelligently estimate the less excusable shortcoming of Christians in this respect among (not Romanists, Greeks, Lutherans and Anglicans only, but) the boastful “Free Churches” of Protestants in Britain or the U. S. of America?

How few know of themselves, that “the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins”! How many premillennialists feel, as the late distinguished E B Elliott wrote to me a little before his death, that, if he believed the Lord was coming to-morrow, he himself would be much tried to-night. Where then the constant joyful hope? How fallen from grace and truth are even such leaders as that evangelical man!

The apostle accordingly adds, “until day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts “; i.e. till in your hearts shall have dawned heavenly gospel light, and Christ as morning star arisen there in hope, as now made known by the apostles.

The believing Jews were prone to rest satisfied with “the word of the beginning of Christ” —that Jesus in truth was the Messiah, God's Anointed. They believed the fact of His death, resurrection, ascension, and return; but they feebly apprehended the blessed results both for God and man, and especially for the saints. They were truly born of God and converted; but how little they entered, if at all, by the new and living way into their own nearness, far beyond that even of the Aaronic priesthood! How slow also to cry Abba, Father! With the light of day in the gospel goes also the hope of Christ as morning-star; it is not merely His rising in the day of Jehovah with healing in His wings for Israel, and with treading down as ashes for the wicked.

Here it is the hearts of the saints receiving fully heavenly light as well as the proper Christian hope. But men, and none more than Israelites, were proud of the old wine and unwilling to believe in the superior value of the new; they said, “The old is good.” Hence (as this was a serious wrong to Him who was infinitely more than Messiah, and fresh grace was henceforth brought into the view of faith after His people's rejection of Him) the painstaking by the apostles to lead them onward from the elements into the depths of God now revealed; by Paul elaborately in the Epistle to the Hebrews; by John in the mystic way of his Gospel and the Revelation; and by Peter in the fervent appeals of both his Epistles.

Many dear Christians unconsciously betray their total misapprehension of the apostle's drift by stopping short of what he says, and quoting only “until the day dawn, and the day-star arise,” as if the words “in our hearts” had never been written, or had no meaning, whereas they are essential to the true sense. For the apostle does not here speak of the day of glory come for the earth, and especially Zion's light arrived. On the contrary he desires for the believing remnant of Jews to whom he writes again, that they should not rest content with the lamp of prophecy, good as it is for the squalid place of a world under judgment with divine wrath impending, but have gospel daylight dawning, and the morning-star arising, in their hearts. For this is the special Christian privilege, as to which they might be quite unexercised, like too many saints in our day and for many centuries, who never rise in their anticipations beyond the kingdom and reigning with Christ. It is the realization in their hearts of what Christ entitles to, both as regards present standing and the hope of His coming, which he could not take for granted, but urges on them. If any were possessed of this privilege already, they would know the vantage ground it gave them; if not, he would have them seek it from Him who blesses by faith according to the word of His grace.

It was the lack of understanding the apostle, which led two men of learning in our day to subject his language to a violence repudiated by all the versions ancient and modern of any worth at all known. Both boldly strove to cut the connection of the words which have been specified as giving the true force, but each in a different way: one, by a parenthesis, so as to bring “ye take heed” into line with “in your hearts “; the other, by joining “in your hearts” with “knowing this first.” There is no need to expose particularly the absurdity of either device, which most readers of intelligence will not fail to judge as equally unfounded, as they are due to inability in their authors to enter into the mind of the Spirit in the passage. Nor was that inability confined to those who invented their respective beds of Procrustes for torturing the text into the sense of their preference. One has only to glance over the conflict of opinion among the commentators of note to convince any enquirer that the key was quickly lost; and that neither hoary tradition nor modern pretension offers any satisfactory solution. Loss of the distinctive hope of the Christian was yet wider and more rapid than of the faith; and who can wonder at this who knows the heart, so easily slipping from the marvelous light of God, so dull to suspect its loss, so slow to return with humiliation of spirit to the unfailing source?

A confirmation of no little weight appears in other references. Thus Rev. 2:28 holds out to the overcomer the precious promise of the Lord Jesus, “I will give to him the morning star.” It is presented with the most marked distinctness from the authority the Lord will also give to him over the nations, “and he shall tend them with an iron rod; as vessels of pottery are they broken in pieces, as I also received of my Father.” On the one hand there is the public display of association with Christ when the nations are shattered like potter's ware; on the other our receiving from Him the privilege of having Him before that day of glory breaks, when He is compared to the star that precedes the dawn, and none see save those that wait for Him and watch in the night before the morn.

It is of the more interest when we view the context more closely. For it occurs in what was written to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, the first of the letters which speak of the Lord's coming again, and therefore in principle go on till then. Here it is that the change takes place when “He that hath ear,” instead of preceding the promise, follows it, and thus gives the more emphasis to the individual that overcomes. In what is written here one cannot but discern the prefiguration of the mediaeval state, not only the adulterous and haughty iniquity of Jezebel, or extreme Popery with its claim of infallibility (“who calleth herself prophetess”), but others also of wholly different mind, “My servants,” whom she misled into uncleanness and communion with idol sacrifices, as notably the worship of the host, &c. There is also the striking intimation of a distinct remnant, “to you I say, the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, such as know not the depths of Satan as they say,” that seem to designate witnesses of the pre-Reformation era, like the Waldenses remarkable for their endurance and works of faith: a people singularly simple, devoted, and suffering.

Can we not discern the fitness of such a quasi-prophetic picture drawn by Him who knew the end from the beginning '? The great corruptress, with her children, that sat a queen and should in no wise see grief, is to be cast into a bed, and with her the paramours into great tribulation, to be killed with death. She, by the claim of His name falsely and flagitiously, usurped authority over the nations in His absence, and reigned where and when the true church was called to suffer, yea unto blood, wrestling against sin. For faith follows Christ as He walked here, content and bound to wait till He takes His world-kingdom (Rev. 11:15) and it refuses, as He did, Satan's offer of the habitable world, the reward of paying him homage, and of waiting to share all with Him at His coming. For it is not only that she will reign with Him over the earth, but that He will come to have her with Himself, before (as the sun of righteousness) He shall arise with healing in His wings for those that fear His name, when as an oven the day comes to burn the proud and the wicked as stubble, and leave them neither root nor branch. This honor in a certain sense have all His saints, the risen reigning with Him, those on earth reigned over.

But for the overcomer that keeps His works to the end there is another privilege yet more precious, if not such a display of power. “And I will give to him the morning star.” It is actual association with Himself on high before that day. What else renders definite the meaning of His giving to His own the morning star? It is quite an advance on what the apostle desired in his second epistle (i. 19) for the Christian Jews of the Dispersion. There he distinguishes the lamp of prophecy shining in the world's squalid place, over which judgments impend, from the superior

day-light of the gospel, and the morning star of Christ as the heavenly hope arising within. It was well to heed that lamp; but they should not rest satisfied till they had what was far better even now in their hearts. In Rev. 2 it is not merely realizing the Christian hope as in 2 Peter 1 but the positively imparted promise, when Christ will “give” the morning star. Then shall we that watch be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and so also shall it be manifested in due time. But as yet the world will slumber and sleep, for it is still night; and they that sleep sleep by night, and they that drink drink by night. But we being of day, let us watch and be sober.

In the last chapter of the same book is another application of the same figure when a similar distinction reappears with great power and plainness in the closing words of our Lord. “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the churches.” For it is our privilege to have the Spirit reporting to us what is coming, as well as what glorifies Christ now both here and on high, guiding us in short into all the truth. “I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.” Here we have the witness of His twofold glory. The O. T. bears clear witness as in Isa. 9; 11, &c., that He is the Root and the Offspring of David, the Mighty God, and the child born, the son given. The N. T. alone tells us of Him, whether in hope or in possession, as the Morning star. It is not the sun rising and calling the sons of men to their functions in the day when all shall be ordered aright under the great King, Israel at the head of the nations, and they in their place of subjection as Jehovah ordains for the world to come whereof we speak, no more men that know not God or His designs for peace, and righteousness, and glory here below.

(Continued.)

Three Prophetic Gems, Heavenly Hope, The: Part 1 (14:1-3)

There is another aspect in which scripture presents the coming of the Lord. It is part of that immense change intimated in the Gospel of John, when the public testimony was closed, and the Lord unbosoms Himself to the family of God, before He gave Himself up to the band led by the traitor for His apprehension and death. He had already and publicly announced His crucifixion (John 12:32). The time was come to leave the world.

John 13 introduces the new subject. It is a distinct transfer from earth to heaven. Messianic hopes are wholly eclipsed. The chosen nation are no more in evidence than the city or the sanctuary. It is not the Lord correcting the earthly expectations of the disciples as they drew His attention to the buildings of the temple, or predicting that not one stone should be left upon another, but be broken down. Nor is it the chief disciples coming privately to Him on Olivet and asking, When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy presence, and of the consummation of the age? Here we breathe a wholly different atmosphere; and the Lord by deed and word leads on His own to unprecedented dealings of grace soon to dawn on them, in proper Christian privilege and responsibility, for which the cross as seen in the light of God laid the basis.

“Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus (knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,) having loved his own that were in the world loved them unto the end. And supper being come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot Simon's [son] that he should betray him, He, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and goeth to God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his upper garments, and took a linen towel and girded himself; then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel wherewith he was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou, wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know afterward. Peter saith to him, Never shalt thou wash my feet. Jesus answered him, Unless I wash thee, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not to wash save his feet, but is wholly clean: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew his betrayer: on this account he said, Ye are not all clean” (vers. 1-11).

What could be more impressive? and all the more, if Peter who expressed what all felt had but known that the Lord's washing their feet was in view of His departure, to be with the Father in heavenly glory. This was the truth they had all to learn, the earth being henceforth left behind for things above; not of course absolutely, but now for the Christian, as for Christ. Thus to stoop was a wholly unexpected exercise of His love; and how far was it from being realized yet! He was conscious that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that as He came out from God He was going back to be with God, the unsullied but rejected Holy One of God. From the earth and the earthly people, about to consummate to their own ruin that rejection which their state had implied, He was passing to the Father who ever loved the Son, and now all the more because the evil was only the occasion of proving His entire devotedness at all cost to the Father's will and glory.

If He thus left this world, He would demonstrate His love to His own that were in it, after a sort beyond all thought even of those who had been learning it in every form they then needed and could bear. Associating them while here with Himself for that glory into which He was going, He must and would counteract every defilement of their way inconsistent with that association. Such stains were incompatible with heaven, whither He was going as their forerunner. Of the kingdom they had learned not a little from the O. T., and yet more from Him who added so much that was new to the old things. But the Lord here provides for them a fellowship with Him on high, transcending all previous thoughts, when He should ascend where He was before; and His love would carry them through every need, obstacle, and danger. No wonder that Peter who had confessed His personal glory, revealed to him by the Father that is in the heavens, was lost in astonishment at Christ going down so low to clear away their soils as saints. Yet was he to learn soon afterward that the reality in heaven would enhance the wonder beyond measure.

The Lord on earth sets forth by His action on the disciples what He was about to do for them in heaven. We have an Advocate with the Father if one sin. It is expressly not for the unclean as such, but for those already washed if the feet get defiled. It is untrue that those washed all over do not need to have any subsequent impurity removed; or that, if defiled after the washing of the person, they need this to be renewed. The washing of regeneration abides in all its value, but demands the cleansing of the soiled feet.

It is the glorified Jesus who assures His own of His persistent and all-efficacious love in carrying on this most needful work at God's right hand, acting on His own here below by His Spirit and word; as it is said in Eph. 5:26, purifying by the washing of water by the word, consequent on giving Himself for the church on the cross. The restoration of our communion when interrupted by sin is as essential as the new birth or as justification. He has set Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having made the purification of sins; but this finished and accepted and abiding work, instead of dispensing with further call, makes Him the more solicitous to clear away every inconsistency that would otherwise sully its luster, displease our Father, and leave ourselves in unavailing shame and grief. It is His action of grace on high which gives us to confess the sin and prove how faithful is the God of all grace. “He that is bathed needeth not to wash except his feet.” The blessed relationship of the Christian abides intact; but the Lord, even in the glories of heaven, occupies Himself with every failure to efface it holily, turning it to our needed humiliation but to fresh blessing in His infinite love.

Why is this wondrous grace here enlarged on? It is part of the characteristic blessedness of the Christian, as it was wholly new to the disciples when the Lord set forth its type before their eyes so vividly. It was a necessary provision for them during His absence, which they would soon learn is fraught with far higher privilege than could be possessed or known during the days of His flesh. It would endear Him yet more when they knew it shortly afterward, as they did not and could not know it then. They were aware of His exceeding condescension, and deeply moved that He should do the work of the meanest slave on their behalf; but only after His death, resurrection, and ascension would they learn by the Holy Spirit what His mystic washing of their feet really meant.

But there is another and still more stupendous communication which the Lord made in this chapter. It also is part of our Christian heritage, going far beyond any prophetic account of our Lord's atoning death in the O. T. such as Isa. 53, precious and bright as it is in itself, and as it will be to the generation to come of Israel. The going out of Judas (after Satan entered in) on his awful errand of perfidy gave the occasion. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall glorify him” (vers. 31, 32). No more pregnant revelation of the Savior's death as made sin on the cross is anywhere found, nor one so distinctly lit up with Christian light and result for God's glory now that it is fulfilled.

As Son of God He had glorified His Father in a life of unwavering and absolute obedience: a savor of rest such as had never before risen up to heaven from man on the earth, though all in Him here below was a perfect meal offering. But the exit of Judas was the signal of death on the cross. Would the Holy One of God bow to the bearing of sin, whatever it might cost at God's hand? He had vanquished the living temptations of Satan by obeying the written word. Was He willing through death to annul him that has the might of death, and deliver all those that through fear of death were all their life subject to bondage? Would He take upon Himself the sins and iniquities of God's people, the most loathsome of burdens, to make propitiation for them? Would He by the grace of God taste death for everything, and thus break the yoke of bondage under which all the creation groaned, as well as bring many sons to glory as the author, or leader, of their salvation perfected through sufferings?

The Lord here reveals the deepest and most marvelous contest ever engaged on, wherein the otherwise impossible was achieved, and the insoluble as plainly solved to God's glory and the everlasting deliverance of those that lay under guilt and judgment. Good and evil here strove for decision; and where evil seemed to have all its way, good triumphed to all eternity. Man was seen at his worst, hating the Father and the Son, hating without a cause God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Satan here swayed, not the heathen only but most fatally God's people and above all their religious leaders, scribes, doctors of the law, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, chief priests, and the high priest himself. Roman justice proved shamelessly unjust. Jesus was condemned for His good confession, and for the truth counted imposture and blasphemy. The disciples forsook their Master and fled, one betraying Him for the price of a slave, another and not the least denying Him repeatedly and with oaths. And in the shame and agony of the cross, God, His God, hid His face and forsook Him: the bitterest of all His sorrows, the most intolerable of His sufferings. But so it must be, if He were made sin, and bowed to what it deserved at God's hand, that the divine majesty and holiness might be perfectly vindicated, and salvation come to sinners through their judgment falling on Him, and grace issue in God's righteousness justifying the ungodly who now believed. There and thus only all the attributes of God are brought into mutual harmony. Elsewhere if love pleaded, justice opposed: sin is not canceled so. But here mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other; and this not for earth only but for heaven and all eternity. In the Lord's own words, the Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in Him, where unbelief saw nothing but failure and ignominy. And what was the result? God shall glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him. It is Christ's work seen in God's light, estimated and honored by God Himself on high.

On this Christianity is based, while Israel passes into its long eclipse. Hence flows the gospel of grace to the lost; hence, according to God's secret purpose, the call of the church for union with Christ by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, and baptizing the saints, Jew or Gentile matters not, into one body, Christ's body. Even the apostles were then and afterward full of the earthly hope, and restoring the kingdom to Israel. Not so; instead of the unintelligent confusion of theology also, instead of the throne of David or even the dominion of the Son of man over all the peoples, nations, and languages, Christ was to be glorified, not only in heaven entirely separated from the world, but in God Himself, and this “straightway,” in emphatic contrast with the future kingdom which He will by-and-by receive, and return to put down all adversaries in power and glory. Christianity has heavenly and eternal things revealed to faith now.

With this the hope revealed in chap. 14:1-3 is in perfect keeping. Here the land and the city, the people and the temple, vanish into nothingness. Not a word about misleaders, false Christs, or false prophets. We hear not of wars or rumors of wars, of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, of famine, of earthquakes in places; nor yet of tribulation and murder, or of hatred from all the nations for Christ's name, nor of internal discord and treachery and hatred, as the love of the many decayed, while some would endure throughout, and God would see to it that the glad tidings of the kingdom should be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony unto all the nations. Still less is there room here for the special and awful sign, according to Daniel's prophecy, of an idol standing in the sanctuary, the harbinger of speedy desolation when the godly in Judea must flee immediately to save their lives or yet worse. Not a hint here of the tribulation beyond parallel to fall at the close on a nation of meting on meting and of treading down, whose land the rivers have spoiled.

In our chapter we have a wholly different state; we see souls about to be severed from such anxieties, and elevated by incomparably higher associations, who have no fears of flight in winter or on sabbath, and are in no way warned for themselves against the cry of Messiah here or there, or the great signs and wonders which Satan will be let work in the hour when God retributively sends an energy of error that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Still more complete and manifest is the difference of the Christian hope in John 14 from the Presence of the Son of man in Matt. 24, “As the lightning goeth forth from the east and shineth to the west,” especially with the accompanying words, “wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered.” Beyond mistake this is the Lord coming in the accomplishment of His judgment, not of His love; for the earth, not for the Father's home above. The figures employed point only to His judicial dealings, with which sun, moon, and stars sympathize. For “immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land (or earth) lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.”

Here is no gathering of saints to Christ in heavenly glory, but the Son of man to whom all judgment is committed; and His appearing is as sudden as the lightning flash: where the carcass is, there the birds of prey flock. The governing powers, supreme, derivative, and subordinate, no more do their office; all shall be shaken. The sign is not as before of apostate religion for the godly to flee and escape, but of their Deliverer to destroy those that destroy the earth. The Son of man appearing in heaven is the sign of His speedily coming to the earth to judge the quick and the dead. Hence it is no longer those in Juda, but “all the tribes of the land” (or earth) that lament, and see Him coming; whereas when Christians are concerned, they are manifested, neither after nor before, but in glory with Him. While He is hidden, so are they; when He is manifested, so are they, having been previously caught up. It is His elect of Israel accordingly who are gathered together when He sends forth His angels with a great sound of trumpet and comes in His kingdom.

It is plain that when the Lord presents Himself for the earth and the earthly people, these traits characterize the solemn event: the apostasy, and the man of sin usurping God's prerogatives even in His temple; the desolation and the tribulation that ensue beyond all that ever had been, or that is to be; and the Son of man appearing to take vengeance on the portentous and blasphemous lawlessness, and to deliver Israel by the destruction of their enemies.

Ours is the wholly distinct lot of His coming to receive us to Himself for the place which He is gone to prepare for us in the Father's house, that where He is (and what Christian doubts it?) we may be also. It is the consummation of the sovereign grace which has associated us with Him, so that we are risen with Him even now, one spirit with the Lord, and can say with the beloved apostle that “as He is, so are we in this world.” But we await His coming to be caught up together with the dead in Christ risen first, in clouds to meet the Lord, into the air, and thus to be ever with the Lord. We are not of the world as He is not, and we look for Him to make it good by being taken up to heaven, as He Himself ascended there, not by judicial dealing with our enemies to make the earth the scene of His righteous rule, but by giving us part with Himself in His joy and glory on high, though we shall also reign over the earth when He takes His great power and reigns.

These are the words of the Lord and they are worthy of all heed. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe on (είς) God, believe also on (είς) me. In my Father's house are many abiding-places; were it not so, I would have told you; because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am ye also may be.” Simpler words there could hardly be; but what depth of feeling, and height of glory Jesus was departing, despised of Israel; their beloved Lord, yet one apostle the traitor, another His denier; who could wonder if all the eleven were troubled? Let them be assured that grace would turn all for good and to God's glory. “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe on God” though ye never saw Him. “Believe on me” when I depart unto the Father, and ye cease to see Me. Let your faith rise from its Jewish form to its Christian character and fullness. Compare John 20:29.

Even My earthly people shall yet say, Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah's name. Meanwhile I am re-entering heaven to give you who have fore-hoped in Me the Christ a better portion, even a part with Me on high. Instead of abandoning you, I will as your divine Savior both prepare you for the place as already set before you, and prepare the place for you by going to the Father's house. But My heart is fixed, as is the Father's will, on bringing you there. “In my Father's house are many abiding-places.” No doubt you have never aspired to such a home. You have expected Me to abide forever with you in your house, when I have purged it of all adversaries and evils by the power which I have even to subdue all things to Myself. But there is ample room for you as well as Me in that intimate home of divine love and heavenly glory. “If it were not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye also may be.”

This is a hope far beyond that of the fathers; though they waited for the city that has foundations whose artificer and demiurge is God, and were eager for a better country than Canaan, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. But now to Christians, or saints being called, He is not ashamed to be Christ's Father and our Father, His God and our God. Such since redemption is our association with Christ. And our hope rises proportionately, however unbelief may try to level down, and contend for a monotonous unity which is at total variance with scripture, and God's ways, and above all His counsels.

No truth more sure or important than the love the Father bears the Son, and all the more. when for the glory of God He became man, and died atoningly that the salvation of the lost might be not only of grace but righteous, God's righteousness; and that the same death of Christ might be the basis for all blessing and glory forever in His universe, His unbelieving enemies alone excepted. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I found my complacency” (Matt. 3:17, &c.). “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things [to be] in his hand '' (John 3:35). But the Son Himself tells the Father later before the disciples that He loved the saints as He loved the Son (John 17:23). It is this accounts for their future display in the same glory. But it also accounts for that which was in His hidden purposes still deeper, more tender and intimate, the hope of Christ's coming for the Father's house, and fetching us into the place He prepared for us there, that where He is, we too might be. Thence He passed, out of this world which crucified Him, unto the Father. There God, who was glorified in Him here at infinite cost, glorified Him in Himself. There our life is hid with Him in God. There shall we be introduced when He comes and takes us unto Himself. How bright the glimpse of it we have in John 17:24! “Father, I will (desire) that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the world's foundation.” To those that love Him this far transcends the glory that He gives us and that we share along with Him before every wondering eye of man; when the very world shall know by that display that the Father sent the Son [for how else could we be thus blessed?], and that He loved us as He loved the Lord; for we. appear in the same glory as the standing demonstration of it.

Indeed the facts, that He deigns to prepare a place for us in the Father's house, so much above the hopes of saints and prophets, and that He personally comes into the air for the wondrous meeting there to fetch us into His heavenly house, bespeak love unmeasured. We know how to show honor to our friends, when we do not let them come to us as best they can, but send some trusty person to conduct them, or it may be a member of the family. If greater attention were called for, the wife of the busy head might go. But if the utmost were intended, the head of the family would set aside every hindrance and come to meet the most loved and honored object. O how wondrous, that for us the Son comes thus, as we think of Himself and ourselves! But it is here love beyond all thought or comparison for that supreme moment, and all that follows is in keeping with it. Sovereign grace, known as far as it can be revealed, in its depths for us, lays the ground. Unfailing grace in its faithfulness, notwithstanding every strain through our weakness and unwatchfulness, exposed to the profound spite and the sleepless malice of our—of His—great enemy, guards and preserves us all the way through. Triumphant grace, in its heavenly height, at length consummates the love of Christ. “I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye also may be.”

Besides, there is the context which follows the hope, and confirms the essentially Christian character of these communications the Lord was then giving. For He proceeds to explain to His disciples that gift of the Spirit which is peculiar to the individual and the assembly, as says another apostle: the distinguishing privilege and power since His redemption and ascension to heaven. “For the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Nowhere is the divine personality of that gift more clearly asserted or implied than in these chapters 14, 15, and 16 of this Gospel. It is the other Advocate whom the Father would give and send in His name, whom He Himself would send from the Father to be with them forever and in them; the Advocate who was to come, because Jesus went away to heaven and sent Him unto them to be abidingly with us and in us.

It is extreme prejudice which alone hinders the believer from apprehending that such is the new and characteristic provision for the Christian and the church while the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God. It is in the Spirit that we cry Abba, Father, and are each guided in right dependence. By Him one enjoys the deep things of God, otherwise beyond all comprehension. By Him we walk, witness, and worship. So it is that one is enabled to preach the gospel or teach the truth. Through Him we by faith wait for, not righteousness which we have in Christ, but the hope of righteousness in the coming glory. Again, it is by, or in virtue of, one Spirit that we were all baptized into one body; as we are also builded together for God's habitation in Spirit. Only a part of what we now owe to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit is here passingly alluded to; for in truth He covers and gives a new and divine character to every exercise of the new creation, through the word revealing and glorifying Christ to us. To put honor on Him was the Spirit now sent forth from heaven. Hence it was expedient for us that Christ should go away, great as the loss seemed to the sorrowing and troubled disciples. For if He went not away, the Advocate who was to be expressly our helper in every exigency (and this in the recall of all Jesus had said and been and done, as well as in the revelation of all His glory on high) should not come unto us. But Christ went, and sent Him unto us: the pillars of Christianity.

When the Spirit came, it was the demonstration to the world of its sin in not believing on Jesus; of righteousness, because He is gone to the Father, rejected by the world that sees Him no more as He was, but as the Judge; and of judgment, because this world's ruler who led to His rejection has been judged. The Spirit's presence, outside this world which beholds and knows Him not, can (now that redemption is made) guide the believers into all the truth, taking of Christ's things and reporting them to us, and also the things that are to come.

Now all this wondrous manifestation of the truth to the Christian depends on three things: the period of the Son as come in manhood here below; the accomplishment of His work of reconciliation on the cross; and His ascension as the risen accepted Man according to divine counsels, who has sent the Spirit that we might have this divine Person dwelling with and in us forever to make good subjectively what we behold by faith objectively in the Lord, the blessed image of the invisible God. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; and now that, dead and risen, He is gone on high, we have not only the unique hope beyond all others of His coming again to receive us unto Himself, to be in the Father's house where He is, but we have by the Spirit unfailing power of communion with the Father and the Son, a fountain of blessing within, fresh and perennial, and rivers of living water flowing out, through that Savior living above for them, as they live because He lives.

All is new and Christian truth; the foundation as here made, not merely in view of our need met, but of God glorified as such to our immeasurable blessing; the necessary purifying from every defilement in our walk which Christ effects all the way through for us associated with Him for heaven; the heavenly hope for us destined to be with Him where He is, altogether outside and above the world, whatever else we may share; and meanwhile all the gracious help and power suitable for those so blessed and with such a hope, while we wait for Him in the world which with its ruler is already judged.

It may be added that the allusions to Judas Iscariot in the middle and to Peter at the end of chap. 13 were not without importance for the Christianity about to replace Judaism, as well as to strengthen and comfort those who were to labor, suffer, and share its privileges. The Lord made known to them in presence of the traitor not yet indicated, the awful course he was about to take, that their faith in Himself might be more established, instead of being shaken, and followed it up with His very solemn deliverance: “Verily, verily, I say to you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (20). No mistake was made either in His sending the guilty man or in others receiving him. He was an apostle sent by the Lord. It was a divine message heard from his lips; though he himself had neither saving faith nor life eternal, but was the son of perdition: the sad witness that the greatest external and official nearness to Christ, where that life is not, only exposes to the worst sin and ruin, And John could add at a later day, “Even now are there many antichrists.”

But there was another lesson yet more widely needed by the Christian in Peter's case, not so fatal but most humbling. The Lord, in view of His going soon whither they could not as yet come, presses that new commandment which was an old commandment that they had from the beginning, and was to become true in them as it was in Him, love, love one to another, the love not of a neighbor only, but the deeper love of God's family. Then Peter, confiding in his love, expresses his readiness to follow the Lord into the unknown, to follow Him now, to lay down his life for the Lord's sake, however others might hang back. Was it that he did not truly love Him? He loved Him well; but he was utterly wrong to confide in his love: self-confidence is the feeblest of reeds. And this he was soon after to learn, and walk entirely dependent on Christ as a Christian. But now he must prove that flesh is no better in a saint than in a sinner “Verily, verily, I say to thee, A cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.” And so it was that night, not for his profit only but for every Christian's.

Let us turn to other scriptures, and see whether the Holy Spirit does not present the heavenly apart from earthly admixture, and distinct from the events of prophecy: a hope dependent on nothing but the secret of the Father's purpose, and the Son's faithfulness to His word and love

to us. In 1 Cor. 15:51, 52 is “Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

It is not that the resurrection of the dead is “a mystery,” nor even the resurrection of the righteous as a distinct act from that of men generally. Of the latter we read in Job 14:1-12. “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish as a hireling his day. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? The waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.”

Now the more familiar a believer may be with God's final revelation of things to come unto eternity itself, the more will he see the exact agreement of this early disclosure of resurrection with that latest one of the unjust. It is man, the prey of sorrow, decay, and death, without one ray of divine light till all ends in utter gloom, but not of actual extinction. Yet it is a sleep only broken when “the heavens are no more.” How striking the coincidence with Rev. 20:11! For it is not only after the resurrection of the blessed and holy to reign with Christ, but when the thousand years of their reigning are over, after the last insurrection of released Satan's deceit shall have ended in total destruction. Then is the great white throne for the judgment of guilty unbelieving man. For the portion of men is to die, and after this judgment; in contrast with the believers' portion, which is Christ, once offered to bear the sins of many, appearing a second time apart from sin to those that look for Him unto salvation. For He is the Savior of the body also.

But the resurrection of the saints, which at the last is called “the first resurrection” was not in those early days unknown to the much enduring elder. “O that my words were now written! O that they were inscribed in a roll! That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock forever. For I know that my Redeemer (or Kinsman-vindicator) liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth (or dust) [while the earth and still more the heavens continue]; and after my skin hath been destroyed, yet from (or in) my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another” (Job 19:23-27). Nor can it be denied that the orthodox Jews in N. T. times did confess that there is to be a resurrection both of just and unjust (Acts 24:15).

As this was commonly believed save by the skeptical Sadducees, we may observe how properly the apostle does not speak of a mystery when he discusses the resurrection of the faithful in the earlier part of the chapter, and proves it to be the complement of Christ's own rising from among the dead. He tells them a secret or “mystery,” a N.T. truth now revealed, when he speaks of our being changed, without dying, at Christ's coming. “We shall not all be put to sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” No intimation of this change of the living saints had ever been made, though now that it is, we can see a gleam preparing the way for it in the translation of Enoch in the ante-diluvian world, and in that of Elijah in the world that is now. And we can also read the words of the Lord in the days of His flesh, which were only written down in John 11:25, 26, after the Epistles of Paul. “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he have died, shall live; and everyone that liveth and believeth on me shall never die.” Here we have the grand result at His coming, the dead saints raised, the living believers changed without dying; as the Lord then enunciated, but left to be written and understood at a later day.

It is observable how completely earthly objects are outside the description in 1 Cor. 15 Nothing is named but the resurrection of those that are Christ's, besides the living Christians who are changed if possible more gloriously at the same time, This last it is which involves “the mystery.” It is a superficial mistake to think that the last trump has any reference to the seven trumpets of the Revelation, which are the loud warnings of divine judgments in providence, after the seven seals of more reserved dealings have been opened. At length are poured out the last vials of God's wrath before the Savior appears in personal display of judgment.

“The last trump” seems a figure drawn like others here and elsewhere from the familiar facts of an army at the moment of leaving its encampment. Previous soundings were the known and necessary signals usual among the military. But the Spirit of God avoids more here and concentrates anything answering to them in the “last trump,” when the instant arrives for those that are Christ's to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Nor has error the least place in the scene of heavenly glory, but the gracious power of His resurrection distinctly now proved as the Resurrection of the dead saints and the life of those alive on a scale and pattern altogether transcending the raising of Lazarus or any other during the days of His flesh, to a life in the flesh. The unclothed will be clothed as never before, and the surviving saints clothed upon, that mortality, the mortal in them, might be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. 5:1-4). There is therefore an evident contrast with the awful sound of the trumpet at Sinai, and but one plain link of connection with “the great trumpet” of Isa. 27:13, Matt. 24:31; in that the loud sound accompanies the gathering together His chosen people on the earth, “the holy mount at Jerusalem,” as the trump of God is to gather the changed to the Lord for heaven. One readily understands that the aim, when God was about to speak His ten words to Israel, was to fill sinful trembling man with overwhelming awe, not only by thunders and lightning and thick cloud, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, but Sinai altogether on a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire with blackness and darkness and tempest and a voice more terrible than all. But here it is exclusively the one fashioned, even in the body, in accordance with the likeness of Christ's glory, loved of God as He was loved, and about to be with Him in the Father's house. Solemn grandeur will be there, but not an atom of fear before His perfect love as befits God's glory.

Magnificent results will follow for the earth, for Israel, for all the nations, when Jehovah will destroy “in this mountain” the face of the covering cast over all people and the vail that is spread over all the Gentiles. But the resurrection of the just, the glorification of the family of God for the heavenlies, must precede even the taking away the rebuke of His people from off all the earth. Then indeed Jehovah's hand will accomplish what His mouth promised. A woman may forget her sucking child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb; yet will not Jehovah forget Zion. Behold, He has graven her upon the palms of His hands; and her walls are continually before Him. And kings shall be Zion's nursing fathers, and princesses her nursing mothers; they shall bow down to her with face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet.

But the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with Christ have a place as elevated in the heavens as Israel will surely have on the earth. And this everlasting purpose of His must be made good in sight of the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, before the dealings of God begin to awaken and lead on into blessing the nucleus of His firstborn for the earth, and to put down their Gentile foes in every form and degree. For the secret of His will, now made known to the Christian (never before), according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself is that, for the administration of the fullness of the seasons He will sum, or head, up together in one all things in Christ, both those in the heavens, and those on earth, in Him in whom we were also allotted our inheritance. This we are to share with the Heir of all things; and the final touch He will put to fitting His joint-heirs will be done when He receives them to Himself on high for the Father's house, before the judicial measures begin to chastise the usurpers of the inheritance, and the gracious measures concurrently to prepare a people for the Lord when He with His heavenly ones appears in glory to possess Himself of the earth and fill it with the blessings of His reign.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Feet Washing (13:1-15)

John 13:1-15

The Lord was going on high. Of this He treats henceforth till the closing scenes on earth. It was an immense surprise to the disciples, who looked for His restoring the Kingdom to Israel at that time. His departure to the Father would begin that new order of things which we know as Christianity. " Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son] to betray him, [Jesus] knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a towel girded himself; then he poureth water into the bacon, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and saith to him, What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt come to know hereafter. Peter saith to him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is wholly clean: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that should betray him; on this account he said, Ye are not all clean. When therefore he washed their feet and took his garments, reclining again he said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord; and ye say well, for I am. If I therefore the Lord and the Teacher washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example, that ye should do even as I also did to you " (vers. 1-15).

It was a new and profound testimony to His love—love to the uttermost: not in His work on the cross in suffering once for their sins, but in His provision for His beloved ones against every defilement by the way. In this act of washing the disciples' feet we have mystically His advocacy with the Father if any one should have sinned. Was the devil then goading on the traitor? Our Lord Jesus shows what His love would do in heaven for His failing ones. He would fulfill all the meaning of stooping to wash their feet. The glory conferred on Him, the infinite purity that returned to God as unstained as when He came out from Him, only attested His grace and adequacy to their need and what was due to divine majesty. It was a question of restoring communion interrupted by defilement; and the Lord met it by a way as unfailing for the saint, as His atoning death for the sinner. " This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ."

Here it is not blood but water. As His blood alone could cleanse us from all sin before God, so do we need what the water typifies. According to His mercy God saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Thus are we bathed or washed all over, a new creation in Christ. But this does not dispense with the need of washing for the feet, soiled by walking through this miry world. Only Christ could effect either; and He does effect both through the Holy Spirit and the word. He is the Advocate with the Father.

Saints are apt to misunderstand this, as we see Peter did; and the Lord corrected his hasty thoughts. How much had Peter to learn how much have you? The Lord's gracious work in heaven is as indispensable as His work once for all on the cross. Not that regeneration is repeated. " He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." Peter, who understood little as yet, soon learned what it is to defile his feet, and what it is for the Savior to wash them. For indeed He prayed that Peter's faith should not fail, though his faithfulness did deeply. But His grace restored him, and made him afterward such a strengthener of his brethren as he never was before. When Peter reached the lowest point of the mire, " the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord." What a witness to this service which the Lord now carries on above for His failing ones on earth 1 It is the washing of water by the word, which applies for our regeneration at the start, and for our restoration at every occasion of need. If it were not so, one could have no part with Christ; but this He secures by His constant love in washing our feet when defiled.

O my reader, are you then bathed? Are you regenerate and renewed by the Spirit? If not, there is but one door, but one way. Jesus alone can avail you. Believe God's word concerning Him. This is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. All things, says He, are possible to him that believes. Such are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Otherwise you are still in your sins. If you only profess the Lord's name, but believe not in your heart, so much the more awful is your case.

Abide no longer under the wrath of God, as you do if not subject but disobedient to His Son. He is as willing as He is able. Turn not from His grace. He refuses none, but accepts every one who comes to Him, and will raise him up at the last day. From first to last the Lord Jesus undertakes.for the believer. His sheep, as He declares, shall not perish, nor shall any one seize them out of His hand.

How wonderful it is that we who believe are called to like grace with one another 1 Christ would have us wash one another's feet. Is this our way, or our desire, before our God and Father? It is vain, unless we be spiritual. Such alone can restore a fallen brother in a spirit of meekness. Be it ours thus to seek grace from our God.

The Dealings of God With Peter, Dealings of God With Peter: 6. In the Gospels, The (13:1-11)

(John 13:1-11 Continued)

This then is the great instruction that the Lord was giving His servant at this time. “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit,” every whit; and that cleanness every whit, I repeat, is not merely the effect of being washed with blood. Washed with blood meets what our sins are; what we want as having sinned before God—before God. But it does not meet all that we want as giving us communion with God, and there is where the word comes in, and the importance of the word, and of the Holy Ghost's applying the word. Because God will bring us to a common mind with Himself, and a common hatred with Himself of the evil that characterizes ourselves. God will give us a settled sense of it so that we hate it according to His own hatred of it, and that we, too, consequently, have an entrance into the good into which Christ has gone, because that was the effect of it. It is all founded upon the going in there where there is no evil, and we are brought into association—in short, have a part with Him now—by this very cleansing which deals with every impurity that is contracted every day.

Now this has, as I might almost say, dropped out of Christendom (I dare say there are some here that know a little of what is commonly taught), for I really could not tell, and I have read not a little on these subjects, but I really could not tell of any person, or of any work, that has ever set forward this most important truth. In short, the great mass of God's children at the present day are just where Peter was then; that is, they have not the sense to see, they have not the sense, by the Spirit of God, to see the greatness of the love of Christ in giving them a portion with Himself where He is now. They have no thought of it. Consequently, you find that they are very little fitted for it by and by. This, on the contrary, falls in completely with what we find in the Epistles; that is we are “made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” But supposing there comes in something that is inconsistent. Well there is the washing of the feet.

There is the dealing with whatever is practically inconsistent with it, and bringing our souls back, restoring us to communion, that is, that there should not be an inconsistency between our standing in Christ and our practical walk here below; nay, nor our thoughts or feelings, because there is power. Quite granted that our hearts naturally are a fountain of all evil; but then there is such a thing as the heart being purified by faith. There is such a thing as the Spirit of God filling the inner man with the thoughts of Christ, and it is in this way. It is not by changing the evil, it is not by removing the evil yet—that will be at the coming of Christ; but it is by giving power to the good. It is by strengthening the new man, and feeding and filling the new man with God's grace, God's truth, with Christ, in short, practically. It is all this that fills, and, consequently, strengthens the new man.

And so it is that one is divided, as the apostle says, into “spirit, soul, and body” —constituting the whole man. It is not, I repeat, the extinction of evil, or the disappearance of it, but it is judged. Our old man is crucified with Christ, and a person knows the force of another word of the apostle Paul—that is, if Christ be in you, what then? Why, he tells us that in that case—in the eighth of Romans—there is this treating ourselves as “dead because of sin,” and “alive because of righteousness.” The Spirit is alive, you see, as he says; that is, the body is dead because of sin, and I am entitled to treat it as a mere instrument. If I allow the body to be active, and to have its way, it is always self, because then it guides me, then it takes possession of me, carries me off with itself, so to speak; and that is just what one is not to do if Christ be in you. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.” If I do not act upon my being dead with Christ, but allow it activity as a living thing, then it works its own way and serves sin, because that is not changed. And, on the other hand, if I do treat it thus as dead, the Spirit is life. It is not only that I have got life in Christ, but the Spirit is life. The Holy Ghost acts in practical power, and He is life because of righteousness, and it is only thus that there is this practical working either in the having done with sin or of the righteousness of God below.

Well here, then, we have this great instruction from our Lord Jesus. At the end of the chapter we touch upon what I shall a little unfold from another scripture—the warning. The Lord introduces it after He has brought out His own death. When Judas is gone, the Lord has the whole scene before Him. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” It is not merely the Father, but God, and God, as such, being glorified always supposes sin judged. It brings, therefore, the death of Christ in the judgment of sin—the solemn judgment of sin—before us. “If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him,” which He did by setting Him at His own right hand directly after His death and resurrection when He ascended to heaven. Instead of waiting for the kingdom and bringing in the Jew, He glorified Him straightway. All this, you see, is essentially connected with what is peculiar to Christianity. And then He tells them, “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Peter again, too, quick to speak to the Lord, says, “Whither goest thou?” Jesus answers him, “Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward.” How gracious! How gracious to tell him of his incapacity before His death, and of that following which will be a most sure consequence, brought by the gracious power of God and made true to his soul. “Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.” It was not that he was insincere. I doubt whether there ever was a sincerer soul than Simon Peter. And it is not in our insincerity, it is not there that our folly lies, but the very contrary, because we trust self in some shape or another. “Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.”

I will turn, then, to a further warning—a truth that the Lord presents to us of very great moment —that we may have it fully before us. In the 22nd chapter of Luke, and the 31st verse, “And the Lord said, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee.” You observe the change. “Satan hath desired to have you.” It was not merely Simon, although he addresses Simon, but he desired to have them all. “But I have prayed for thee.” Why “for thee"? Why not merely “for you"? Because Satan was making a dead set at Simon, and what gave Satan the opportunity was this—Simon's self-confidence. Confidence in what, beloved friends? In his natural character? Not at all; no, but in his love for the Lord. If his confidence had been in the Lord's love to him it would have been a very different matter. Had that been actively—been distinctly —before his soul, he would have weighed the Lord's warning; but he really was so sure that he loved the Lord so much, that, no matter what the trial was, he could go through it. He did not believe the others could. We may be tolerably good judges of others, beloved friends; we are very had judges of ourselves. Cannot we see that in Simon? Can we see it in

ourselves? “I have prayed for thee,” said He who had all truth and whose love was going out, and most of all, for the man that was most dishonoring Him. Why so? Was dishonor a light thing? No, but His love was great and most real. And by whom and for whom is love most brought out? Where there is most need—the deepest need. “I have prayed for thee.”

And mark, Simon Peter heard it from His own lips before he went astray. If he had not, we have no right to say that he would have been restored as he was. We know that he was, restored, but God uses means, and one of the great means of restorative power for our souls is the love that we knew before we went astray. There is nothing that gives the heart more of rebound back to the Lord, and of horror at ourselves, than the very fact that the Lord told us so fully, so distinctly, before we went astray. “I have prayed for thee.” Do you think that Peter forgot that— “I have prayed for thee"?—because it would not have done if He had said, “I have prayed for you.” That is all true about you generally, but it is “thee” — “I have prayed for thee.” No, he never forgot it. He never forgot it in the hour of his need. I do not say in the hour of his wanting it; I do not say in the moment of his sin; but I do say that, when the horror of the sin filled his soul with despair, these words would he, and no doubt were, brought up by God's Spirit before his soul. “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Neither did it. His faithfulness did, but not his faith. We have no reason to believe, beloved friends, that he wavered as to the Person, or that he wavered about Christ's great love to him, but—Peter was occupied with man. This we shall see another evening, for I am only going to speak of the warning, to-night.

“That thy faith fail not,” then, is the word; “and when thou art converted,” that is, turned back again to the Lord. It is the very same word that is used about one's first turn, only Scripture does not limit it to that. The word “converted” is very much, in our common language, applied to the first turning to God, but we must remember that in Scripture it has a larger force, and means the turning again, even if one has gone astray, and that is exactly the meaning of it here. This is, therefore, what we commonly term restoration of soul, rather than conversion, but it is the very same word which applies to both. “When thou art turned to me” (if you please, or any word that would express that, just to vary it from our common usage) “strengthen thy brethren.”

The very fact of his being an object of such grace, and that power which drew him back again, would give confidence not only to him, but to them. He would be an instrument suited to the Lord, so little is it true that God does not restore a man—that you are not to trust a man who has once broken down. Why here is the most honored of God. We must not suppose, beloved friends, that saints are like horses. If a horse once falls he breaks his knees, no doubt. But is it possible that I have such a poor conception of divine grace as to think that? I dare say the figure has been very often used just in the opposite way. One would have thought that these words of our blessed Lord would have arrested the lips that said so. Not so; not so. Peter not only broke down then, but he broke down in another sense as seriously, for he failed as completely about the Gentiles after he had had a special commission to open the door to the Gentiles. He failed as completely about that as he failed here about Christ; but, for all that, there was no person—unless it be the apostle Paul himself—that was more used of God in strengthening his brethren. I think it a serious thing to weaken the spring of confidence in a soul that has slipped aside. I do not say that in order to weaken the gravity of slipping aside; but I do say that we must be zealous for the grace of God, and we must be faithful to the word of God; and we must take care that we do not, therefore, enfeeble a manifest truth of God that comes out as, for instance, in this very case. “When thou art converted''—or, restored— “strengthen thy brethren.”

Now that is pre-eminently what we find in the Epistles of Peter—all through them both, I should say. Of course, they are not confined to that, neither does it refer to what he wrought, but it is a general reference to the character of his ministry. It was not only a confirming ministry; it was not only one that converted souls, but, as far as his brethren were concerned, it was one calculated eminently to strengthen, and this most clearly from the way in which God had taught him the grace of the Lord Jesus. No doubt it is a better thing to be strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus, so as not to slip aside; but the next best thing is that we have so profited by a slip, if we have been careless and unwatchful, that we have drunk more deeply into the grace of God than we ever did before. And surely, out of that, we are able to strengthen one another. So it was here. “He said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter” (for here we resume from where I left off in John) “the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip.” It was no longer to be miraculous power, or miraculous opening the door of any one for them. There was no longer to be that. There had been that in their previous testimony. I do not believe that sending them in this new form of testimony was lower ground. There was less of wonder about it, but I do not believe, beloved friends, that the walk of faith is less because it is not clothed with miraculous power.

Why, look at the Corinthians. There were plenty of miracles there. Were they spiritual? Far from it. It is, therefore, a complete delusion to suppose that miracles of themselves show spirituality. I should say, on the contrary, it requires a great deal of grace to carry the power or miracle, so to speak—a great deal of grace—and that is precisely what I should gather from it, and I have no doubt that it is one of the reasons why the Lord did not continue miracles long—because the state of the church would not bear it. He, at the same time, did show that even in that state, a bad state in a particular quarter did not hinder miracle; but certainly it in no way implied spiritual power in the use of miracle. It was, therefore, a very good reason why, and 1 have no doubt there were moral reasons which God, of course, could alone adequately judge of, why He withheld them longer. But, however that may be, now they were to be cast upon God's caring for His people in more ordinary ways. It was to be no longer a going in the name of the great King, and the disciples armed with power in every possible way as the vouchers of the King's presence—the Messiah's presence. They had had that. “But now,” He says, “he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” But to guard against any thought of this being meant in a mere literal way—to show that it was meant only as the sign of the ordinary safeguards and means of daily life—this comes out. “And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.”

Now that very thing shows that He did not mean it literally, because two swords would be a very poor provision or eleven disciples—that is quite evident. If it had been eleven swords one could understand, but the fact of the Lord saying that two swords are enough shows at once that it was quite a mistake to interpret it in the mere literal sense; and we see that those who took it literally made a very bad use of it in a little while, and Peter is the very man.

But that is not what I am going to draw your attention to now, but this—that when the Lord leads them out to the mount of Olives, and the disciples follow Him, when He was at the place He said unto them, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” This is a very serious thing. It is

just as true as another word that we might not be able to put along with it, and that is, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.” No, it is blessed to fall into temptation, but it is never blessed to enter into temptation. There is all the difference between entering into temptation and enduring temptation. And there was exactly what Peter had to learn most bitterly—to enter into temptation. Now the man that endures temptation is the man that prays before the temptation comes. He does not enter into it. When it comes he is blest; he endures. Peter did not. Peter entered; that is to say, that the entrance into temptation shows that there is a want of sense of danger—a want of sense that I need God, that I need God now. No doubt there is. But if the Lord tells me that temptation is at hand, and I do not pray, it is evident that I am not depending upon God; and so, instead of falling into temptation, the temptation, on the contrary, if I may say so, falls upon me, and, more than that, I enter into it instead of enduring it. The endurance of temptation is when the person suffers, and suffers because he does not yield. The entrance into temptation is when he does yield because he does not pray; because he is not in. dependence upon God, for there was exactly what was now coming out. “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” He did not pray, and he did enter into temptation.

How different was it with the Lord! “And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine he done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.” Now there was the Savior — “And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly” the only one that it might have seemed temptation could not affect, temptation could not ensnare. And so it was most true: there was nothing that was assailable by temptation inwardly, nothing whatever; but, for that very reason, He knew what it was to suffer being tempted. Peter did not. Peter, on the contrary, gratified himself, as we shall see, when I come to show his fall; but that must remain for another night. I am only going to speak of the warning, as well as the instruction—the instruction that was so soon before, the warning that so soon followed. I shall show that the fall just as quickly followed, and the restoration in due time. But in the Lord's case there was the depth of entrance—not into the temptation. He did not enter into temptation, but the Lord weighed it all, felt it all. The Lord had all the bitterness, all the sense of it, but a thing outside. And how? Because He took the gravity of it. He felt the reality of it in His own spirit before God. He always did, no matter whether it was a question of a temptation that was presented to Him by the adversary. And He had gone through that before. There had been temptation in the pleasant form. There was the temptation to seek that which God had not given, and the Lord refused. But now there was temptation in a totally different form—the endurance of what was most painful. And what was anything that could befall Peter compared with that which was before the Lord? For it is the greatest mistake to suppose that it was merely death. It was such a death as He alone could know, and the Lord therefore does go through the whole scene in spirit with God.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was at it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow.” But this was not the sorrow of grace: this was really selfish sorrow. They were sorrowing at what they were going to lose; at all this distress that was coming on. It was not the true sorrow of grace that felt the seriousness of the moment, and that took warning from the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. “He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before.”

Now it is not my intention to-night to go farther than that which I have now presented to you; but I believe that we have here the very thing that resulted in the speedy fall of Peter. We shall see the character of that—the way in which grace met and surmounted it, and restored this beloved one to God, and that will close the discourses that I am about to give upon this subject.

[W. K.]

The Dealings of God With Peter, Dealings of God With Peter: 5. In the Gospels, The (13:1-11)

John 13:1-11

What I hope to present to you tonight I may characterize in two or three words, the instruction and the warning. Here we have the instruction—the most weighty, practically, that the Lord had as yet set before Simon Peter. Undoubtedly there was that which was needed previously. His personal glory had been dawning more and more upon his heart. Correction, too, there had been before now, but here it is more the positive instruction that a saint wants as such upon the earth, and Simon Peter gave occasion for the Lord's bringing it out just because he was so ready to give his opinion. Now, our opinions are always wrong. We never rightly can give an opinion, especially when we think to Whom, as in this case, we are giving it. Giving an opinion to Christ! Yet it was really that. No doubt it flowed out of a human sense of what seemed to him the incongruity of the Lord's stooping down to wash his feet; but the truth is that it was always a question of the Lord's stooping down. That was no new thing. That was just what characterized all His work here below. His appearance in the world, His coming here, His presence, His whole action—what was it? It was the service of love. No doubt it was here being brought out in a very distinct and evident manner. The service of love is always in action. It is not always so manifest; and it was the manifesting of it to Peter. Little did he know that he needed it, but. the Lord brought this all out—the depth of the need, and also the character of the need, for there is exceeding instruction in these few words of our Lord Jesus. But then we must have it settled in our souls as the first great lesson that comes out in this instruction of the Lord, and that is, that all our blessing flows from distrusting our thoughts, our words, our notions of what is suitable to Christ. All our blessing, I may say, is in appropriating Christ's words. There is spirit, and there life; and what we are just learning now is to value them principally, to have perfect confidence in them, and to judge, therefore, all that rises from ourselves, all that comes from another, by this only standard.

Well, it is introduced in a way that is exceedingly striking. We see at once that it shows that it is the character of what belonged to the whole ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. “Before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper” —not “being ended,” for it was not begun. We must remember that this is not the thought. I daresay some of you are familiar already with it, but it is well to state it now, for no doubt there are a great many here that have never thought about it or its importance. It is really, “Supper time being come.” That is the true force of the word. Their feet were not washed after supper, but before it. Any one can see that upon the very face of it. It was always the custom, and the Lord did not depart from that. The only thing that was so singular on our Lord's part was not that the

feet were washed, but that He was the washer. That, indeed, was singular—that it should be He. If He had been only the master and they the disciples, it would have been different; but we learn who He was: “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God” —Himself the Holy One, as holy when He went back from a world of sin as when He came into it from God.

And this was just exactly what filled His heart—the last resort of the devil, the last depth into which man's heart could be drawn by sin, being before His eyes. “The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.” There was what Satan was goading on the hapless man to do. But here was what filled Christ at that very time. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.” He was going, but He was going in the same unspotted holiness that belonged to His nature as divine, and which was suitable to the One to whom the Father gave all things; for we have both His intrinsic glory and His conferred. “He riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin.” For you must remember that what is referred to here is the washing of water by the word, and only this. Washing by blood is a most important truth, but it is not here. It is supposed at the end of the chapter at least the work is supposed on which the washing with blood is founded. But in the early part of the chapter there is no allusion to any washing whatever but the washing of water.

Now I dare say that it may, perhaps, have not occurred to all, because we have been too apt to think that there is just a distinction between being washed with blood at the beginning and being washed with water afterward, but that is only part of the truth, for the fact is we are born of water just as much as we are washed with water. When we are first brought to God we are born of water and of the Spirit, and this is alluded to as the groundwork of what the Lord was doing now. Of course, it was not a question for the disciples to be born of water. They were already clean, as the Lord tells them, but not all. There was one that was not born of water; the very one of whom Satan, therefore, took advantage, and the more so because he was so near Christ. For there is nothing that so precipitates man's destruction, who has not got life from God, as being near Christ; for when one ventures into the presence of Christ not to receive life, but to prosecute one's own will, one's own plans, one only becomes the prey of Satan, and in the form too of direct antagonism to the Son of God. That was the case with Judas Iscariot. He had no such intention, but the truth is—man is never master. The very time that man seeks to be his own master is when he is most of all a slave of Satan. It is simply a question of whether God is master of me, or Satan is, but I am never master, never, nor intended to be. Contrary this is, of course, to all truth before a man is converted, but still more that which one's soul abhors when one is converted; because, if I am converted, what is it to do? It is to serve the living and true God. It is to be a servant, no doubt, to be a child, to be a son, but only the better to serve. There is no such service as the service of the child. Here we have it in all its perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ; and so now, out of this intimacy of love and this height of glory, He takes the basin and begins to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

Well, Simon Peter was astonished, but why? Simon Peter, will you never learn? Will you never learn to be quiet? Will you never learn to distrust yourself? Now is not that one of the great things, beloved friends, that we have got to learn? Is it not a thing in which we have constantly to challenge ourselves, because this is the very thing in which we have been so often wrong? Yes, just because we so little know what it is to walk in the consciousness of the presence of God. We are in the presence of God; we are brought there; we are walking in the light; but it does not follow that we are consciously there. And there is just the very difference, and there is where spiritual power depends upon it, because levity in the thought of our being brought into the presence of God to me is much worse than the case of the poor Christian who does not know that he is brought into the presence of God. For a man to take up the idea that to be brought into God's presence and to be walking in the light is just a mere sound, a mere privilege, a mere thing about which to say, “How near I am, and how blest I am!” —what a wretched state! No, it is meant to exercise the soul before God. It is meant to be a thing to recall us to what we are doing, what we are saying, nay, what we think, what we feel, because God necessarily notices all, and God will have us to take notice of all. It is the effect of the light of God consciously felt that we take up for the Lord, in desire for His glory what passes within us.

Was this so with Peter? He had no thought of it. No doubt he is much more excusable than we, because he had no such knowledge, and, as yet, no one had. The fact is that it is redemption that brings to God in the way of which I have been speaking, and it is the Holy Ghost given since redemption that gives us the consciousness of it. “At that time ye shall know,” as the Lord says, “that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” And so it is as to this consciously walking in the light of which I have been speaking.

So Peter, then, turns to the Lord with this word, “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” It did seem such an inversion of all that Peter thought natural. To be sure it is. It is super-natural, and we should get that settled, beloved friends, in our souls; that we are brought into what is supernatural every day, that it is not merely for a little moment on the Lord's day morning, if even then it is realized, but that we are brought into this atmosphere habitually, and that we are intended to be acting upon it when others, perhaps, only know that it is a Christian man acting righteously. But it is not that. A Christian man will not act righteously by merely intending to act righteously. A Christian man only acts according to God when he is acting upon His holy principles. Now it is not merely a question, therefore, of righteousness; it is a question of Christ. A Jew was bound to act righteously, but we—we have Christ, and, more than that, we have the Holy Ghost, now that Christ has died and risen, to give us the consciousness of this association with Him. But Peter did not know this, only it was certainly a forgetfulness. I am bound always to assume that whatever the Lord does, whatever the Lord says, is the only right thing, the only thing that is worthy of Himself, and there was where Peter was wrong. It was not a mere question of intelligence, but surely there ought to have been this, just as in ourselves who are still more inexcusable if we fail. But even Peter ought to have started with this. I do not say it proudly, and God forbid that we should speak disrespectfully of Peter, because you must remember that we are just as much called upon to have respectful feelings and language about the dead as the living. I have not the smallest sympathy with persons that talk slightingly of those that the Lord has put honor upon, no matter where or who they are.

Well now Peter ought to have said, “If the Lord stoops down to wash my feet, it must be because His love is concerned, His glory is concerned, the will of His God and Father is concerned, and, more than that, it is needful for me"; because all our wants only give occasion to bring out the Lord's grace and to manifest His glory, and who, then, would wish to be without that? It is not, therefore, a question of whether it suits me. I am sure I need it, but it is not a question of whether it suits me, but whether it suits Him. “Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered, and said to him, What I do, thou knowest not now.” Peter had not learned his lesson. The Lord was instructing him. “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” But still he is dull, and he is guilty of what is even worse now, for he could not wait. There is where we fail most of all as Christians—that impatience, that haste, and yet, beloved friends, it is not for want of God's telling us. “He

that believeth shall not make haste.” This is not merely a New Testament truth, but an old one that ought to have been very familiar to Peter. It was familiar enough in the scripture, but it was not familiar to his soul. He did not apply it to himself. He forgot it where he ought most to have remembered it; where it was Christ that had him in His presence. He therefore says, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Rash man! Christ—Christ bend down to wash his feet! And Peter say to Christ, “Thou shalt never wash my feet"! Did not the Lord know better? Why should Peter hinder? Did Peter know? Clearly not. The Lord had just told him, “Thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” As a humble man he surely ought to have bowed.

But that is where we fail too, and I do not believe that we judge sufficiently our failure to take in the light of the word of God. For God constantly speaks to us, speaks to us every day it is to be supposed, and we read His word, and what is that but that He is speaking to us in His word, and are we not brought sometimes to this very thing? No doubt it is so, without out uttering words, for we would not say that we find any fault in the word of God, but still, we constantly show our want of reverence for the word by turning away from that which we do not enjoy, instead of looking up and remembering that what we do not know now we shall know hereafter. The Lord is teaching, and the very portions too that we turn from sometimes in our stupidity and want of deference to the Lord—want of confidence and thorough faith in the value of every word He has written—may be the very thing I most want in conflict with Satan. Certainly, it was what Peter wanted, and wanted very soon, as we shall see. He says, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.” At once he turns round, and from having wished that his feet should not be touched by our Lord, should not be washed by Him, Peter now says, in a kind of despair at what he had said, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” But the Lord puts everything in its place in the next few words. “He that is washed” —and He changes the word. This washing is not exactly the same thing as washing his feet. “He that is bathed” (as it is familiarly known), “He that is bathed” (washed all over—the whole person). Now that is when we are born of water and the Spirit: that is the mighty work of God. But when we are converted it is not merely that we receive Christ, or rest upon His blood—that is perfectly true—but the word of God enters our souls and deals with us as altogether unclean before God, and consequently there is a new life that is given that judges the old.

Now that is the bathing that is referred to here. The old man is dead. It is not merely dealing with a particular sin, but it is the whole life of sin; nay, more, it is the whole state of sin. The man is born again. He has got a new life, and this is so true that the old one he is in due time taught to regard not as himself at all. That was himself, but now, “Not I, but Christ.” He is born anew, born afresh, and this so completely that he is entitled to treat the other as a thing only to be dealt with, to be mortified, indeed, to treat himself as dead to it; for you see this word that enters is a quickening word. It is Christ Himself, and not merely Christ's blood. It is Christ Himself judging whatever is of Adam, whatever is of man. It is Christ Himself therefore giving a life that is according to God; that can appreciate, that can understand, God; that can feel according to God. Consequently, it is the root of all that is according to God, on which the Holy Ghost acts afterward in the Christian; that new nature which is begotten of God.

This then is what the Lord refers to here, “He that is washed.” But then He goes farther, “Needeth not save to wash his feet,” and whether it be the bathing of the person, or the washing of the feet, you must remember carefully, and it never was of greater moment than now to remember it, that it is water and not blood. The blood is most true and absolutely necessary, for “this is he that came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood.” The two are most true, but here you have only the bathing on first being brought to God, and next the application of water afterward by the word to deal with whatever impurity there may be acquired in our walking through the world.

Hence this is what our Lord was insisting upon with Peter. Peter took the ground that, because he was of God, he did not need to have his feet washed by Christ. Christ, on the contrary, insisted that unless He washed him—washed his feet, that is, even as a believer, as a disciple, as one that had new life, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” I refer not to the original washing, but to that which is done day by day in our passage through this world; that is, it is not merely a question of life, but of having a portion with Christ. It is not merely a question of having it by and by, but of having it now. He was going on high, and there is one of the wonders of Christianity: it gives the believer a present part with Christ. No doubt that is just the token and loving pledge of an eternal part with Christ; but I do not think that it is merely the eternal that is referred to here. Rather it is the letting us in now, and the making good now of what is eternal in its own character and consequence. And that again is another truth that characterizes Christianity very much more largely than this particular part of it—that is, that we are even now, according to its own nature, associated with Christ before God. He has gone there, but He would not go there till our sins could be forgiven by virtue of His blood.

But more than this, He would secure our having a present enjoyment, a present fellowship and communion with Himself where He is gone into the presence of God. And I do not believe that we ever have the proper measure for our walking, the standard of what we are to cultivate, unless we enter into this, that it is not merely a cleansing for our heart—the Jewish people will have that by and by in the millennium, and will have such a cleansing as will suit them as God's people on the earth; but that is not what characterizes the Christian—it is the practical cleansing, to have communion with Him where He is gone, suitably to God and His presence while we are here on the earth. That is the meaning of the washing of the feet, and the object of it. “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” It is not exactly “a part in me,” for that he had. Life is, as far as that goes, a part in Christ; but the Lord will give us more than that. In virtue of our having life, or along with it at any rate, He will also give us this proof of His own perfect love and desire. For there is nothing that shows the perfection of love more than this—the One that loves us entering the highest and most glorious place that is conceivable, and fitting us for present association with that place where He is gone; and this is what Christ would give us the sense of while we are passing through this world. No wonder Peter could not understand it then. His fault was impatience, not his want of intelligence, but his want of confidence in the Lord and of waiting to learn.

[W. K.]

(To be continued)

Notes on John, John 13:33-38, Notes on (13:33-38)

Not only was His death before the Lord, but His departure from the world—a notion absolutely new to a Jewish mind in connection with the Messiah. The more such an one believed Him to be the promised One, the less could it be conceived that He should quit the scene which He had come to bless. “We have heard out of the law,” answered the people not long before, that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” There too He had intimated to the Jews, not only His death, but what death He should die, and His retirement from their midst. A new creation and heavenly glory were beyond their field of vision. But here the Lord prepares His disciples more fully for what was then coming and is now come—facts simple enough for us who have to do with them every day, but wholly unlooked for in Israel, who expected the kingdom immediately to appear, not the things unseen and eternal, with which our faith is called to be conversant.

“Little children, yet a little I am with you. Ye will seek me; and, as I said to the Jews, where I go away ye cannot come, also to you I say now.” (Ver. 33.) None had passed this way heretofore. It must be a new and living way, and only His death could make it possible, consistently with God or with man. But to His own there is a title of endearment; and if He was to be but a little with them, they were to seek Him. Heaven, however, was in no way accessible to man, like the earth, of whose dust his body was made. Christ came from God, and went to God, as He will come by-and-by and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. But no more is the Christian able to go there than any other man; Christ alone can bring any therein, as He will surely do with His own at His coming.

But He meanwhile lays a characteristic injunction on them here below. “A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another; as I loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love among one another.” (Vers. 34, 35.)

The nation disappears. It is no question of loving one's neighbor, but of Christ's disciples, and their mutual love according to His love. New relationships would come out with increasing plainness when He rose from the dead, and sent down the Holy Spirit; and this new duty, loving one another, would flow out of the new relationship: a convincing proof to all men whose they were, for He alone had shown this throughout His life and death, as also alive again—love unfailing. How far were the Jews from such love! The Gentiles had not even the thought of it. And no wonder. Love is of God, not of man, which accounts for the blank till He came, who, though God, manifested love in man and to man, and was thus, through His death and resurrection, to bear much fruit. Their love was to be, if we may so say, of His own material and mold—to abide, if it did not begin, when He went away. It is not here activity of zeal in quest of sinners, however precious, but the unselfish seeking of the good of saints, as such, in lowliness of mind.

An irrepressible disciple, with a curiosity habitual in him, turns from what the Lord was enjoining to the words before: “Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, where goest thou? Jesus answered him, Where I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterward. Peter saith to him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? My life for thee I will lay down, Jesus answered him, Thy life for me wilt thou lay down? Verily, verily, I say to thee, in no wise shall a cock crow till thou shalt have denied me thrice.” (Vers. 36-38.) Peter knew and really loved the Lord, but how little he as yet knew himself! It was right to feel the Lord's absence; but he should have heeded better the mild, yet grave, admonition, that where Christ was going away he was not able to follow Him now; he should have valued the comforting assurance that He should follow him later. Alas, how much we lose at once, how much we suffer afterward, through not laying to heart the deep truth of Christ's words! We soon see the bitter consequences in Peter's history; but we know, from the further words of our Lord in the close of this Gospel, how grace would ensure in the end the favor compromised by that self-confidence at the beginning, which he is here warned against.

But we are apt to think most highly of ourselves, of our love, wisdom, power, moral courage, and every other good quality, when we least know and judge ourselves in God's presence, as here we see in Peter, who, impatient of the hint already given, breaks forth into the self-confident question, “Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.” Peter, therefore, must learn, as we also, by painful experience what he might have understood even better by subjection of heart, in faith, to the Lord's words. Where He warns, it is rash and wrong for us to question; and rashness of spirit is but the precursor of a fall in fact, whereby we must be taught, if we refuse otherwise. He that slighted the warning when Christ spoke it, lied through fear of a servant-maid. True Christian courage is not presumptuous, but well consorts with fear and trembling; for its confidence is not in the resources of self, or the circumstances of others, but in God, with a due sense of the power of Satan and of our own weakness.

When ignorance slips, as it often does, into presumption, the Lord does not spare rebuke. “Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?” Was this Peter's resolve? Soon would that stout heart quail at the shadow of death. Yet what was death for any saint to compare with Christ's death, when tasting rejection as none ever did, and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, as it was His alone to suffer for them from God!

But ignorance works often in another way. They will not believe their own utter weakness, spite of Christ's plain warning, and want light to prove His truth and their folly. Nor is this all. They assume that if a believer fail once, he must immediately repent in dust and ashes. How little they know themselves, or have profited by scripture! “Verily, verily,” said the all-patient Master, “in no wise shall a cock crow till thou shalt have denied me thrice.” I recall Peter's repeated denial of his Lord, and with oaths too, under the most solemn circumstances, not to lower him but for the profit of our own souls, and to exalt Him who alone is worthy. How infinite the grace which made the measure of his sin to be the signal and means of his repentance, under the Lord's use of His own word, and in His wonder-working mercy! And what He was to Peter, He is, and nothing less, to us.

Notes on John, John 13:31-32, Notes on (13:31-32)

The Lord felt the gravity of the moment, and sew the way and end from the beginning. All the wondrous and everlasting consequences of His death were stretched out before Him, and now that Judas is gone, He gives free expression to the truth in divinely perfect words. “When therefore he was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” (Ver. 31.) His own cross is fully in view, and there was laid the basis for all true abiding glory, not for God only (though assuredly for God, for there can be none really unless He be foremost) but for man also in the person of the Lord, the Son of man, who alone had shown what man should be for God, as He had shown what God is, even the Father, in Himself the Son.

It is indeed a theme of incomparable depth, the Son of man glorified, and God glorified in Him; and no statement elsewhere, though from the same lips, was meant so to present and fathom it, though each was perfect for its own object, as the one before us.

In chapter 12, when certain Greeks came to Philip the apostle, desiring to see Jesus, and Andrew and Philip tell Jesus, He answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified, and forthwith, with His most solemn emphasis, He speaks of His death as the condition of blessing to others. So only should He bear much fruit. Otherwise the grain of wheat abode alone. A living Messiah is the crown of glory to Israel; a rejected One, the Son of man, by death opened the door, for the Gentile even, into heavenly things, and is the pattern thenceforth; so much so that to love life in this world is to lose it, to hate it here is to keep it to life eternal; and hence following Him who died is the way to serve Him, secure the Father's honor, and be with the heavenly Master and Lord. It is by death that He takes the place, not of Son of David, according to promise (though this in grace He does also, according to Paul's gospel), but of Son of man, and thus have all things and all men, Greeks no less than Jews, according to the counsels of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. There was no other for guilt to be taken away, for heaven to be opened and enjoyed by those who were once lost sinners. Thus the heavenly glory follows the moral glory; and every hope, for the Gentile most manifestly, turns on Christ's obedience even unto death, wherein Satan's power was utterly broken, and the judgment of God perfectly satisfied; but if the world was therein judged, and its prince to be cast out, Christ lifted up on the cross becomes the attractive center of grace for all, spite of degradation, darkness, and death.

In chapter 17, the Son looks to the Father whom He had glorified, that the Father might glorify Him in heaven. He was Son before time began; He had therefore, of course, glory with the Father before the world was; but He had taken the place of servant in manhood on earth, and now asks that the Father should glorify Him along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him eternally. A Man to everlasting, He would receive all from the Father, albeit Son from everlasting; and when glorified, it is that He may glorify the Father.

Here, in chapter 13, He speaks of the Son of man glorified, and of God glorified in Him. This has its own peculiar force. The first man was an object of shame and judgment through sin; the second Man, Jesus Christ the righteous, was glorified, and God was glorified in Him. He sees it all summed up in the erode, and so speaks to the disciples, now that the traitor's departure left His heart free to communicate all that filled it. It is not the Father, as such, glorified livingly by His Son in an obedience which knew no limit but His Father's will, but a man, the rejected Messiah, the Son of man, devoting Himself at all cost to the glory of God. This was indeed the Son of man's glory, that God should be, as He was, glorified in Him. Blessed Savior! what a thought, and now a fact and a truth, the truth made known to us, that we might know, not merely God come to us, but ourselves brought to God, and this in peace and joy, because man is glorified in this person of Christ, and God is glorified in Him, a Man, the man Christ Jesus.

And in deed and in truth God is glorified in the cross as nowhere else—His love, His truth, His majesty, His righteousness. Herein, in our case, was manifested the love of God, that God has sent His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. And His truth, majesty, and righteousness have been maintained, no less than His love; for if God threatened guilty man with death and judgment, Jesus bore all, as man never could, that His word might be vindicated fully. Never did man prove his enmity to God, never did Satan prove his power over man, as in that cross where the Son of man gave Himself up, in supreme devotedness and self-sacrificing love, to the glory of God. Nowhere was so demonstrated the holiness of God; the impossibility of His tolerating sin; nowhere such love to God, and such love to the sinner. The Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in Him. When, where, was Jesus so glorified as in stooping to the uttermost when God made sin Him who knew no sin, that we, might become the righteousness of God in Him? where Jesus, feeling the, truth of death and judgment as none ever could, bowed His head, not merely to man's contemptuous hatred and to Satan's wily malice, but to God's indignation against sin-despised of man, abhorred of the nation, abandoned of the disciples, forsaken of God, when most of all needing comfort, doing and suffering His will perfectly in the only unstormed fortress of the enemy's power—to God's glory, and. in His grace? No, there is nothing like it, even where, and where alone, all was perfection, in the life of Christ. This was glorifying the Father as to good in a devotedness and dependence with which none can compare; that, a glorifying God as to evil by an endurance of all that the Holy One of God could suffer from all that God could, and did, inflict in unsparing judgment—both the one and the other, in absolute obedience, and love, and self-renunciation to His glory. And all this, and more than this, blessed be God! we see in Man, the Son of man; that in Him, in that nature which had wrought foul dishonor and rebellion against God from first to last, God might be glorified. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

In that person, and by that work, all was reversed. The foundation was laid, the seed was sown, for an entirely new order of things. Previously God forbore, not only with man, but even with the saints, looking unto Him who should come; and sins were, not remitted exactly, but praeter-mitted (Rom. 3:25), if we would speak with dogmatic propriety. Man was simply and solely a debtor to God's mercy. Nor would we weaken for a moment that man is still a debtor to His mercy, and must ever be. But there is a revelation now in virtue of Christ's death, a new and different and infinite truth, that God is a debtor to the Son of man for glorifying Him as to evil no less than good, not only fulfilling all righteousness, but suffering for all unrighteousness, and this alone in the cross, which constitutes its specific glory, ever fading away from feeble man's eyes, unless filled with light from Christ in glory, never forgotten of God the Father, who, in answer to the cry, “Glorify thy name,” said, “I have both glorified and will glorify it again.” And so He does, and ever will, whatever appearances may for a little while say to the contrary.

His righteousness, once so dreaded a sound, armed (as it could not be without Christ) against us, is now by His death as distinctly for us, as is its spring, the grace which reigns through it unto eternal life. And we boast in hope of His glory, which, without Christ's death, had been instant and everlasting destruction to us, as surely as we have an access by faith into His favor, in which we stand as a present thing. Oh, what has not the death of Christ done for God and for us?

Hence the Lord adds, in verse 32, “If God be glorified in him,1 God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately.” If we may reverently so speak, it is God now who has become debtor for the vindication of His glory to the Man who suffered on the cross. Was He not God, from everlasting to everlasting, no less than the Father? yet did He become most truly man, and as man the Son of man—which Adam was not—brought glory to God, even in the matter of sin. Therefore it is that God, having been glorified in Him, could not but also glorify Him in Himself. This He has done by setting Him (not on David's, but) on His Own throne in heaven, the only adequate answer to the cross. There He alone is sat down, the Son, but a man, on God's throne, and this” immediately.” God could not, would not, did not, wait for the kingdom, which will surely come, and Christ in it, when the due time arrives. But the work of Christ was too precious to admit of delay,

and God had counsels, long hidden, to bring out meanwhile. There should He glorify Christ immediately; and so it is, as we all know now, however strange to Jewish expectation then.

Notes on John, John 13:23-30, Notes on (13:23-30)

The announcement of a traitor among the twelve troubled the disciples and led to anxious thought, as they looked one on another. What a testimony to His perfect grace who had known it all along, and had given no sign of distrust or aversion! How solemn for the saints who have to do with the same unchanging One day by day! Nothing precipitates into the enemy's hands more than grace abused and sin indulged, while outwardly one is in the presence of the only One whose life rebukes it absolutely. Let us look a little into the scene.

“[Now]”1 there was at table one of 2his disciples in the bosom of Jesus whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter then beckoneth to this one and saith to him, 3Tell who it is of whom he speaketh. He then having just fallen back4 on the breast of Jesus saith to him, Lord, who is it? Jesus [then] answereth, That one it is to whom I, having dipped the morsel, shall give [it]. Having then dipped he giveth the morsel to Judas [son] of Simon Iscariot. And after the morsel Satan then entered into him. Jesus then saith to him, What thou doest do more quickly. But no one of those at table knew why he said this to him; for some supposed because Judas had the bag that Jesus saith to him, Buy the things that we have need of for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the morsel went out immediately; and it was night.” (Vers. 23-30.)

Peter and John are often seen together. So here in their perplexity Simon Peter beckons to John as he reclined at table in the bosom of Jesus; for that John and no other was this favored disciple cannot be doubted from chapters 19:26; 20:22; 21:7,20,24. And how truly of the Spirit that one enjoying such favor should describe himself, not as loving Jesus, though indeed he did, but as beloved by Him, and this too as the disciple whom Jesus loved, withholding his name as here and elsewhere of small account, though plainly described at the close, where needed, and named where men might deny the authorship as they have done I It is intimacy with Jesus that gathers secrets, but imparts them, for others' good. Falling back just as he was on the breast of Jesus, John asks who it is; and the Lord answers, not in word only but with a sign, strikingly according to Psa. 41:9, though an even more special mark of intimacy. In Judas' state that token of love only hardened the conscience long seared by secret sin, which shut out from the heart all sense of love. His very familiarity with Christ's passing through the snares and dangers of a hostile world may have suggested that so it would be now with his Master, while he himself might reap the reward of his treachery; the knowledge of His grace, without heart for it, may have led him to hope for mercy he had never known refused to the most guilty. The moment comes when holy love becomes unbearable to him who never relished it; and the sin he preferred blinded his mind and hardened his heart to that which had otherwise touched the most callous. “After the morsel, then Satan entered into him.” The devil had already put it into his heart to deliver the Lord up; now, after receiving without horror or self-judgment the last token of his Master's love the enemy entered. At being thus designated, there may have been irritation, which if retained gives room for the devil, even in ordinary cases, much more in his who had trifled with unfailing grace, and thus forgot wholly His glory, as he had ever been insensible to God's nature and his own sin. Jesus then saith to him, What thou art doing do more quickly, that is, sooner than was indicated by his pretension to share the doubts of the disciples or to join in what was before their hearts.

Never does God thus abandon to Satan poor man, however wretched and sinful, till he rejects His love and holiness and truth, above all shown in the Lord Jesus and this Gospel. There He may and does judicially harden, and this to irretrievable ruin, but only after the heart has steeled itself to the appeals of His most patient goodness. Still judicial hardening is a real thing on God's part, whatever may be argued by those who seem unwilling to allow frankly and fully the activity of God on the one hand and of Satan on the other. Not a whit better is the opposite school which seems to banish from conscience the solemn fact of responsibility, whether in a man or in a Christian, or as here in one who, though in the unremoved darkness of a man, drew so near the Son of God, the personal expression in man of all God's light and love. We have heard already how deeply our Lord felt the sin of Judas as the Moment approached and the design was allowed in his heart. Now the sentence goes forth, which closed the door of life for the earth on the Savior—of everlasting wrath on Judas. Yet did the disciples look on and listen without knowing the awfulness of the issues then pending. Not even John penetrated the meaning of words soon to be clear to all. It was not to buy things needful, but to sell their Lord and Master; it was no preparation for the feast but that to which it, not they, had ever looked onward, the fulfillment of God's mind and purpose in it, though it were the Jews crucifying their own Messiah, by the hand of lawless men; it was not that Judas should give to the poor—the last thing which would occupy his mind, but that He should who was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. It was man's, a disciple's, worst sin; it was God's infinite love, both meeting in the death of the. Lord on the cross; but where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

Judas then having received the morsel immediately wept out. What darkness rested thenceforward on that soul! “It was night,” says our evangelist. And that night deepened in its horrors on the faithless man; given to see his irreparable evil only when done, till it closed on his going to his own place.

Notes on John, John 13:18-22, Notes on (13:18-22)

The hint which closed verse 10 is now expanded into the growingly solemn intimations in word and deed that follow. It is no longer Christ's love caring for His own, either once for all, in atoning self-sacrifice to God for them, everlasting in its efficacy; or in unintermitting cleansing by the word, as for them He died on earth, living for them in heaven, that they might be practically in unison with the relationship of grace into which they had been brought, spite of the defilements of the way. Here it is the faithless indifference of nature, with a conscience increasingly seared by indulgence in a besetting sin, which Satan was about to lure into and blind to high treason against Christ, availing itself of the closest intimacy to sell the Master and Lord, the Son of God, for the paltriest price of a slave—to sell Him into the hands of enemies thirsting for His blood. It may not be the hatred of these; it is utter lovelessness, betraying Him who was at this time more than ever showing and proving His love, not only up to and in death, but in life beyond it evermore. Now the unbelief which, having eyes and heart,

sees not nor feels such love, precipitates, above all, into Satan's deceit and power. This we sorrowfully behold in Judas; and no one felt the sorrow as the Lord.

“I speak not of you all: I know whom1 I chose out, but that the scripture may he fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me [hath]2 lifted up his heel against me. Henceforth I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it hath come to pass, ye may believe that I am [he]. Verily, verily, I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say to you, that one of you shall give me up. The disciples [then]3 looked one on another, doubting of whom he spoke.” (Vers. 18-22.)

The Lord, then, did, and does, look for activity of love among His own. If they were objects of a love which could never fail, He would have them instruments or channels of it one toward another, and this in respect of evil to remove it, whereas legality could only condemn. Himself the Son, yet the servant in love, He would exercise them in the service of love, where defilement otherwise would repel. But as He came to suffer for our sins, so also He was going away to form us while on earth into His own mind and affections, through the truth, and in doing so to cleanse from every way which might grieve the Holy Spirit, whereby we are sealed till the day of redemption. For it is not a question of removing the guilt of a sinner only, but of restoring the communion of a saint, whenever interrupted by allowed evil. And in this last dealing of love, He would have His own caring one for another. But He did not speak of all the disciples then present: sad presage of what was to be far more common in after days! He knew whom He chose out: Judas was not among such, though called to be an apostle. He had never known the Lord—knew nothing truly of His grace or of His mind—was not born of God. Why, then, had he been selected for that place of honor, the apostolate, in immediate and constant attendance on the Lord here below?

It was not that the Lord was unconscious of his character, conduct, or coming catastrophe, but that the scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread [hath] lifted up his heel against Me. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked of old; he forsook God his Master, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. Judas went incomparably farther in his guilty indifference to the Son of God come down in love and humiliation, and in his eagerness to serve himself at all cost, betraying his gracious Master for the merest trifle. Never was such love, never such slight and abuse of it, and this in one of those specially responsible to be faithful. Doubtless it would be through Satan's power; but to this flesh exposes, and so much the more because of nearness outwardly to the Lord who is not believed on to salvation. There comes out, most palpably and fatally, the hard baseness of the unrenewed heart, and this against the grace of the Lord above all. Thus, if the disciples were in danger of being stumbled by such an one's defection, the evident fulfillment of scripture was meant to strengthen their faith in every written word of God. By this man lives Godward: bread, money, anything here below, may be the occasion of his ruin. How wondrous the patience which, knowing all from the beginning, bore all to the end, without a frown or sign of shrinking from the traitor. But so much the more withering must be the sentence of judgment when it comes from His lips, the Lord of glory, the hated and despised of man!

The Lord gives precision to ancient oracles, hitherto applied only to others, as here to David suffering from Ahithophel. But the Holy Spirit wrote of Him preeminently; and He too, before the event, cites the word about to be verified in the treachery toward Himself. Thus did the Lord prove alike His perfect and divine knowledge of what lay yet in the future, while He taught the inestimable worth of scripture, and, not least, of not yet fulfilled prediction, meeting in every form the incredulity of believers as well as of unbelievers. For who knows not the accepted maxims which assume the dark and doubtful character of unfulfilled prophecy, which denies prophecy even to the prophets, still more to the Psalms and to the law? At least men should fear to give the lie to Him who declares Himself the Truth, and spoke as never man did; they have reason to fear, if they turn away from Him to lying vanities, which, far from being able to save their votaries in the day of need, shall themselves be as stubble to burn themselves, and all who trust them. Jesus, on the contrary, is never so transparently the Messiah as when beforehand He points to the word of scripture about to be accomplished in His own rejection and death of the cross, and affords in it a firmer ground of blessing for the poorest of sinners than in all the glories of the kingdom to be fulfilled in their season.

Then, with His usual mark of profound solemnity, the Lord binds the reception of His sent ones with Himself and His Father. “Verily, verily, I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I may send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” This was the more important to be added here, for some might question their standing before God because of the awful doom of Judas, when and where known. The Lord comforts such, and turns from occupation with the fallen servant to the Master who abides forever the same, as does the Father. Did Judas betray the Lord? This sealed his own doom, but touched not the authority any more than the grace of Christ, as of God Himself. If they received one whom Christ sent, be his end even what it might, they received the Son, and so the Father, instead of sharing in the guilt or danger of punishment of the servant who dishonored his Master.

The Lord then, manifesting the deepest emotion, proceeds to urge the sin home, limiting its worst form to one only of the disciples. “Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say to you, that one of. you shall give me up.” It was holiness, it was love, which took thus to heart the impending iniquity of Judas. In every point of view the Lord felt it—in itself, in its contrariety to God, in its bearing on others, as well as on Himself, and in its awfulness for the wretched guilty one. It is not self, but love, which is associated with the truest sensibility; and the Lord expresses it as a testimony also, “Verily, verily, I say to you, one of you shall give me up.” They were all faulty, but one, and only one, thus about to become a prey to Satan, and the tool of his malice against the Lord. Their doubts were as honest, as his place in their midst was now a lie against the truth. If he joined the rest in looking one on another, it was hypocrisy, for he could not really doubt of whom Jesus was speaking. Yet no blush, no paleness, betrayed Judas. The disciples must have recourse to other means of learning the sad truth.

Notes on John, John 13:12-17, Notes on (13:12-17)

It is of capital moment to hold fast along with atonement the washing of water by the word. Else the blood of Christ is diverted from its true aim and effect before God, and practically used as the resource in case of failure. Let us hear Calvin as an influential witness of the error it involves, where he teaches from the word of reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:20 (“Be reconciled to God"), that Paul is here addressing himself to believers, instead of illustrating the message of grace to the world. “He declares to them every day this embassy. Christ therefore did not suffer, merely that He might once expiate our sins, nor was the gospel appointed merely with a view to the pardon of those sins which we

committed previously to baptism, but that, as we daily sin, so we might also by a daily remission be received by God into His favor. For this is a continued embassy, which must be assiduously sounded forth in the church till the end of the world; and the gospel cannot be preached unless remission of sins is promised. We have here an express and suitable declaration for refuting the impious trust of Papists, which calls upon us to seek the remission of sins after baptism from some other source than from the expiation that was effected through the death of Christ. Now this doctrine is commonly held in all the schools of Popery—that, after baptism we merit the remission of sins by penitence through the aid of the keys (Matt. 16:19)—as if baptism itself could confer this upon us without penitence. By the term penitence however, they mean satisfaction. But what does Paul say here? He calls us to go, not less after baptism than before it, to the one expiation made by Christ, that we may know that we always obtain it gratuitously. Further, all their prating as to the administration of the keys is to no purpose, inasmuch as they conceive of keys apart from the gospel, while they are nothing else than that testimony of a gratuitous reconciliation, which is made to us in the gospel." (Comm. Epp. to the Cor. Calvin Soc. ii. 240, 241.) Clearly this teaching is erroneous, not only founded on a misapplication to saints of the gospel ministry to sinners, but consequently unsettling their reconciliation as a great finished fact. It is not true that the apostle declares this embassy to believers every day. He declares on the contrary that the work is done, and the worshippers once purged so as to have no longer any conscience of sins, that is, no question of imputing sins or errors, nor of God's judgment of them by-and-by. The error undermines or excludes the constant relationship of the Christian on the ground of peace made by the blood of Christ's cross, and present and permanent fitness for showing the justice of the saints in light. (Col. 1) The one offering of Christ does not merely once expiate our sins but has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. The Romanist meets the need created by failure after baptism by penitence aided by the keys; the Protestant by fresh approach to the sacrifice of Christ, the one being as ignorant as the other of the washing of the defiled feet by the word in answer to the advocacy of Christ with the Father. The continued embassy is by the Lord's servants in proclaiming the gospel to the world. There is no such thing as God's receiving the believer by a daily remission into His favor. There may be the necessity of removing the uncleanness of flesh or spirit which hinders communion, but this supposes the groundwork of propitiation undisturbed and of the favor in which we stand. That the Christian requires to be reconciled afresh, that the call "be reconciled to God" goes out to failing believers proves that Calvin, able as he was and a saint himself, was ignorant even of the elementary and distinctive truth of the gospel, and opened the door to the opposed error of Arminianism which takes its stand more consistently on the same mistake, that the failing believer has to start afresh, as if eternal life had no meaning, and the blood of Christ lacked everlasting efficacy.

The truth puts everything in its place. The blood of Christ abides in its unchangeable value before God sacrificially and judicially; but the failing believer is inexcusable, and needs to wash his feet. The word must deal with him morally, producing self-judgment and confession; and the Lord looks to it in His ever watchful grace by taking up His cause in living love with the Father. The Spirit too has His own suited function in producing, not the joy of fellowship with Christ in the things of Christ, but grief and shame, pain and humiliation in recalling the man's own ways—haste, levity, pride, vanity, and perhaps corruption or violence; for of what is the flesh unjudged not capable? By that word of truth he was begotten of God, awakened to self-judgment in His sight; by the same word in each defilement judged day by day, making it so much the more painful because He reminds the soul of what Christ suffered for the sins which the flesh feels so light. But far from dissolving the relationship, it is the sense of inconsistency with it, and with the grace which at so much cost and sovereign grace withal conferred it on us, that most of all tries and humbles the erring one. Flesh would like exceedingly to have its way and indulge its pleasures, and the soul begin again; but God holds the believer to a relationship, which if real, is everlasting and makes every delinquency therefore to be so much the deeper sin, because it is against not conscience and righteousness only, but the richest grace God could show Christ. We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. There is no repetition of reconciliation any more than of the new birth. There is complete remission of sins through His blood, and hence no longer a sacrifice for sin. The one and only offering which could avail is made and accepted. But there is, whenever needful, a fresh application of water. And this ever deals with the soul. The word detects whilst it removes the defilement, applying the death of Christ thus to the man, as the blood dealt with the sins before God. Thus is the work carried on holily without weakening the sole foundation for a sinful man's peace as well as for His glory.

"When then he washed their feet and took his garments and reclined again, he said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well, for I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, wash your feet, ye also ought to wash. one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that even as I did to you, ye should also do. Verily, verily, I say to you, A bondman is not greater than his lord, nor yet an apostle greater than be that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (Vers. 12-17.)

Undoubtedly the humility of the Lord was beyond question in His washing the disciples' feet, and that He would have them cultivate it He had solemnly urged on them in the plainest terms, as we see in all the synoptic gospels. But then there is another and deeper instruction. It is the renewal of their defilements in walking through the world which is before His mind, now that He is about to leave them; and about this He would exercise their hearts by the question, "Know ye what I have done to you?" It is His way indeed to teach us afterward the good He has already done us; and as we grow up to Him in the truth we appreciate better what we understand but slightly at first. Grace teaches us, as well as acts on our behalf; and it is humbling to find out how little we have understood while its activity has never staid. But how good and strengthening it is to learn its ways and lessons

The Lord next enforces what He had done by appealing to the titles they habitually gave Him. "Ye call me the teacher and the Lord; and ye say well; for I am." One to obey as well as to instruct, as could not but be where His personal glory is known. If He then stooped in love to wash their feet, what did they not owe one another? It is not only that we should serve the Lord in the gospel. By this shall all men know, He says, later on in this very chapter, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Here however it is a definite call where we are apt most to fail to share His grace, in seeking the restoration of each other where failure has come in. On the one hand it needs faith and self-denial and divine affections. Indifference about it detects our own failure. But on the other hand the righteousness that censures another is as far as possible from washing the feet, resembling rather the scourge than the service of the towel and basin. And assuredly, if grace be needed to bear the washing, a far larger measure must be in action to wash the feet. Hence says the apostle, "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any fault, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in a spirit of meekness." Where flesh was judged, love could act more powerfully and with deeper sense that all is of grace. Self is the greatest hindrance in dealing with another's trespass.

The service of love in every form is the mind which was in Christ. Hence He calls them here to weigh what they had first seen. "For I have given you an example that ye also should do even as I did to you. Verily, verily, I say to you, A bondman is not greater than his lord, nor an apostle greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." The Lord knew the end from the beginning, and how soon His ministry would degenerate into a worldly institution, and become a title of pride, instead of being a work of faith and labor of

love. Hence the need for His solemn formula, as a standing witness to all His own so prone in a world of vain show and selfishness to forget His word and wander from His way. But there His warning abides, to decline His service in washing the feet of His own is to set oneself above the Lord and to claim a greater place than His who sends even an apostle. O for the blessedness of doing as well as knowing these things! It is the fellowship of His love in one of its most intimate forms; and love is of God, and everyone that loveth hath been begotten of God and knoweth God.

Notes on John, John 13:6-11, Notes on (13:6-11)

The Lord proceeds to the work in hand. “He cometh then unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, what I am doing thou knowest not just now, but shalt know afterward. Peter saith to him, In no wise shalt thou wash my feet forever. He answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed [bathed] hath no need to wash [other] than his feet, but is wholly clean; and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that was delivering him up: on this account he said, Ye are not all clean.” (Vers. 6-11.)

In divine things the wisdom of the believer is subjection to Christ and confidence in Him. What He does, we are called to accept with thankfulness of heart, and as Mary said to the servants at the marriage feast, “whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” This Simon Peter did not. For when the Lord approached him “in the form of a servant,” or bondman, he demurred. Was there not faith, working by love in Peter's heart? Both undoubtedly, yet not then in action, but buried under superabundant feeling of a human sort: else he had not allowed his mind to question what the Lord saw fit to do. He had rather bowed to Christ's love and sought to learn, as He might teach, what deep need must be in him and his fellows to draw forth such a lowly yet requisite service from his Master. Ah! he knew not yet that Jesus must go lower down far than stooping to wash the disciples' feet, even to the death of the cross, if God were to be glorified and sinful man to be justified and delivered with an indisputable title. But the grace which was undertaking that infinite work of propitiation, the groundwork for meeting every exigency of the divine nature and majesty and righteousness in view of our guilt, and unto the glory of God, would provide for every step of the way where defilement abounds, that we might enjoy communion, spite of Satan's power and wiles and our own weakness, yea spite of failure be restored to communion with Him in the light and glory of God to which He was going back, and into which we shall in due time follow Him.

Peter did believe, but he did not yet believe “all that the prophets have spoken.” He feebly entered into what He Himself afterward called the sufferings as to Christ, and the glories that should follow them. He continued to regard the Lord too exclusively as Messiah, little estimating till afterward the depths involved in the Son of the living God, though his own lips had thus confessed His glory before. Nature was too little judged in Peter, so that he did not yet appreciate its meaning and application and results as subsequently under divine teaching when the cross manifested its worth or rather worthlessness before God and man. Too self-confident and indeed ignorant not only of himself and the defiling scene around, but of the depths and constancy of Christ's love, Peter says to Him, “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” Granting that he could not know what was not yet revealed, but was it comely in him, was it reverent, to question what the Lord was doing? He may have thought it humility in himself, and honor to the Lord, to decline a service so menial at His hands. But Peter should never have forgotten that as Jesus never said a word, so He never did an act, save worthy of God and demonstrative of the Father; and now more than ever were His words and ways an exhibition of divine grace, as human evil set on by Satan, not only in those outside, but within the innermost circle of His own, called for increased distinctness and intensity.

The truth is that we need to learn from God how to honor Him, and learn to love according to His mind. And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. This too was Peter's mistake. He should have suspected his thoughts and waited in all submissiveness on Him who, as many confessed that knew far less than Peter, “hath done all things well,” and was absolutely what He was saying, truth and love in the same blessed person. The thoughts of man are never as ours; and saints slip into those of man, unless they are taught of God by faith, in detail too as well as in the main; for we cannot, ought not, to trust ourselves in anything. God the Father will have the Son honored; and He is honored most when believed in and followed in His humiliation. Peter therefore was equally astray when he once ventured to rebuke the Lord for speaking of His suffering and death, as now when he asks, “Dost Thou wash my feet?”

But the meek Lord answered in fullness of grace and said to him, “What I am doing thou knowest [οἶδας] not just now, but shalt know [γνώσῃ] afterward.” Was not this a grave but compassionate intimation to Peter, had he been in the mood to learn?

He ought to have gathered from the Lord's words, if he did not at once bow to His act, that there was a meaning worthy of Him who deemed it due to the Father in truest lowliest love to the children to wash their feet; he ought to have gathered more than this, that what he did not know of himself then, he was to learn afterward, I presume, after the things now in progress, His rejection an death, resurrection and ascension, when the Holy Spirit should be given guiding them into all the truth.

But Peter was not yet of those who are guided with the Lord's eye, he did not feel the need of being instructed and taught the way in which he should go. There was too much of the horse or of the mule in him, too much need of being held with bit and bridle; and, failing to receive of the Lord that he should submit now and learn later, he plunges farther and more boldly into error with himself. “In no wise shalt Thou wash my feet forever,” the strongest repudiation of it, and this not merely in this life but for that to come—forever.

It was feeling, it was ignorance, no doubt; but should he have trusted himself to utter words so strong of the gracious way and act of his Master! How blessed that he had, that we have, to do with One who does not hold His peace so as to bind the soul with a bond, who knows when and how to disallow the foolish and even God-dishonoring word, so that it shall not stand and the soul be forgiven! See Num. 30. The Lord made Peter's words utterly void the moment He heard them, as we shall see, in the grace which corrects every fault, and bore all our iniquity.

“Jesus answered, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.” Solemn assurance, not for Peter only, but for all who slight the same gracious provision on His part, who forget or have never apprehended their own need of it. It is a question not so much of life as of fellowship, of a part

with Christ, rather than in Him, though not really separable. Christ was going on high to God, Peter and the rest still on earth and surrounded by defilements in the way. Christ would neither abate His love to His own, nor would He make light of their, failures. Hence the need of washing the disciples' feet, apt to be soiled in walking through the world. And this is carried on by the word applied to the conscience by the Spirit. The believer bows, judges himself, and is practically cleansed. His communion is restored, and He can enjoy the things of Christ. He has part with Him.

Alarmed by the Lord's warning, His servant instantly flies to the opposite extreme: “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” Now Peter cannot have too much. He seeks to be bathed all over, as if all the value of his previous washing could evaporate, and he needed it afresh, no less than if it had never been. But it is never so. To see and enter the kingdom of God, one must be born afresh, born of water and of the Spirit. But this is never repeated. The new birth admits of no such repetition. It was wrong to suppose that, born of God, one needs nothing else, that defilements either cannot befall a believer, or that, if they do, they are of no consequence. What Simon thus thought in his ignorance, a certain school of divinity has formulated in its presumption. But this is not true knowledge of God. If law punishes transgression, grace condemns sin still more deeply. Impossible that any system of religious thought could be of God which slurs over or ignores evil. But Simon Peter convicted of danger on this side falls into another on that side, and, roused to own the needful washing to have part with Christ, claims it all even for the believer as for the natural man. And here too an opposite school presents its corresponding dogma, denies the standing of the believer if unhappily he be yet defiled, and insists that he must begin over again, perhaps many times in his life. Thus eternal life as a present possession in Christ is done away, and the constant responsibility which flows from the constant relationship of a child of God. One might be often lost, often saved spiritually!

The Lord corrects by anticipation both schools in correcting Peter. “He that is washed (λελουμένος) hath no need to wash (νίψασθαι) [other] than his feet, but is wholly clean; and ye are clean, but not all. For He knew him that was delivering him up: on this account he said, Ye are not all clean.” Thus simply, but perfectly does He put each truth in its place and in relation to the truth. Grace is maintained, but so is righteousness. Not a sin is passed over lightly. Not a believer has reason for discouragement; his every failure is an object of fresh concern to the Lord, a fresh proof of love that will not let him go, but bless him, spite of the carelessness which let the Lord go. But He will not go. He washes the feet of him that is already washed all over, that he may be wholly clean. Thus the new birth holds and is never renewed, because it abides true and good; while the failure of him who is born again comes under Christ's active love and advocacy, and the soul is brought to judge himself in order to restored communion. And the case of Judas is not one of losing life, but of manifesting that he never had been born of God, as indeed no scripture ever affirms it. It was not a sheep of Christ becoming unclean, but a dog returning to his vomit, yea far worse, because of such proximity to Him whose intimacy he abused to betray Him for lucre to His enemies.

Notes on John, John 13:1-5, Notes on (13:1-5)

We enter now on a new section of our Gospel—the last communications of the Lord to His disciples, closing with His opening out His heart to the Father about them. The entire drift is in all points and ways to lead His own into a true spiritual understanding of their new place before God the Father, and in the world in contrast with that of Israel. It is not the church, but most fully and distinctively the Christian position.

“Now, before the feast of the passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto his Father, having loved his own that [were] in the world, loved them unto [the] end.” (Ver. 1.) He was the only man whom nothing took by surprise. All was read, and known, and felt in the presence of God His Father. Not only did He know throughout that He was to die, and its form, character, and object in God's purpose, as well as in man's and Satan's malice, but we see here that its immediate proximity was before His mind. Yet in John it is not man's or God's forsaking Him in that bitter hour, but the hour came for His departure out of this world to His Father, instead of staying here as Jews expected according to the Old Testament in their Messiah. As the other Gospels bring out the evidence of His rejection by the people, our evangelist sees Him from the first rejected, and at the end preparing the disciples for the immense change at hand, when the Messiah should be in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down to be in and with His own on earth, the Father too being the relation of God not to Him only, but in due time and way to them also.

Further, He would show His love in fresh and suited forms: “Having loved his own that were in the world,” He loved not merely till the end, but taking up each need, and incurring all labor for them, whatever the draft in it, unremittingly and without wavering. Such is the love of Jesus to His own in the world, where it is constantly wanted. We know what love He expressed to them at that last passover (Luke 22:15) and how infinitely it was proved in His blood and death for them as a lamb without blemish and without spot, foreordained before the foundation of the world, but manifested at the end of the times for their sakes who believed. But now He would show them a love as active for them when He should depart to His Father, as when He fulfilled the passover in dying for them.

“And, supper being come, the devil having already put [it] into the heart of Judas, Simon's [son], Iscariot, that he should deliver him up, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments, and, having taken a towel, girded himself.” (Vers. 2-4.)

The Authorized Version regards the phrase δ. γ. as implying the end of the repast; but I agree with those who take it to mean the arrival of the time for supper, which is confirmed by the wondrous action we are about to hear of. It cannot be doubted that it was usual to have the feet washed before, not after, supper. But if Jesus had ways of love before His heart, the devil had already planted in that of Judas Iscariot the awful treachery to his divine Master, which no rolling ages can erase. So it was with Jesus; the enemy's hate came out most, as the love of God manifested itself in and by Him; but how withering to human pretension it was, the devil working by a man and a disciple, the close personal honored follower of the Lord Jesus! “It was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance.” In that holy companionship he had trifled with sin, with his besetting covetousness; and now the devil prompted the gratification of it by betraying the Son of God. The Lord, as we shall later see, deeply felt it, but here He pursues the design of love with the consciousness of the Father's purposes and plans, with the consciousness, too, that He was going back to God with the same absolute purity in which He had come out from Him. It was no merely Messianic sphere, not even that of Son of man. The Father had given all things into the bands of His Son, and He was going back a man with not a shade over that intrinsic holiness which marked His coming out from God to become a man. He abode ever the Holy One of

God, yet rises from supper, lays aside His garments, takes a towel and girds Himself.

Jesus occupies Himself with a new service, the removal of the defilements of His own in their walk as saints through the world. This is the meaning of what follows. “Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.” (Ver. 5.) Be it carefully observed, that it is a question here of water, not of blood. The reader of John's Gospel will not have overlooked that he makes much of “water” as well as “blood.” So did the Lord in presenting the truth to His own, and no one shows this more than John. His first epistle also characterizes the Lord as “he that came by water and blood; not in water only, but in water and blood.” He purifies as well as atones. He employs the word to cleanse those who are washed from their sins in His blood. The apostles, Paul, Peter, and James insist on this power of the word, as John does. It is disastrous and dangerous in the highest degree to overlook purification by the washing of water by the word. If “the blood” is Godward, though for us, “the water” is saintward to remove impurity in practice as well as to give a new nature, which judges evil according to God and His word, of which it is the sign, adding to it the death of Christ, which gives its measure and force. Out of His pierced side came blood and water. (John 19.)

As to this grave and blessed truth, Christendom remains, I fear, as dark as Peter, when he declined the gracious action of the Lord. Nor did Peter enter into the truth conveyed by that most significant dealing till afterward, that is, when the Holy Spirit came to show them the things of Christ. On the occasion itself he was wrong throughout. And so are men apt to be now, even though light divine has been fully afforded. They still perversely limit its extent to teaching humility. This only Peter saw, and hence his mistake; for he thought it stooping down excessively, that the Lord should wash his feet; and, when alarmed by the Lord's warning, he fell into an opposite error. We are only safe when subject to His word in distrust of ourselves.

The fact is that, since apostolic times, the truth has been either wholly lost, or perverted into a lifeless ordinance. Evangelicals, as the rule, ignore it, or merge it in the blood of Christ. Catholics (Anglican, Roman, Greek, or Oriental) misapply it to baptism. Hence not only do they miss the Lord's special lesson of washing in water, but they enfeeble propitiation. Consequently non-imputation of sins is all but unknown from the earliest fathers till our own day. The Reformers wrought no deliverance in this respect; and the Puritans increased the confusion and darkness by pressing not ordinances, but the law as the rule of life, instead of recalling by the Spirit of the Lord to Christ as the object according to which the Christian is being transformed here below. The Lord suffered once for sins, Just for unjust. The efficacy is as perfect for the believer as is His person; and the unity of this sacrifice is therefore the great argument of Heb. 9; 10, as contrasted with the repetition of Jewish ones. By His one offering we are not only sanctified but perfected in perpetuity. Is there no failure in the saint afterward? Alas, there may be. What then is the provision for such? It is the washing of water by the word which the Spirit applies in answer to the Son's advocacy with the Father.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Christ the Corn of Wheat (12:24)

John 12:24

A very characteristic truth in the Gospel of John is the Son of God come, the Word become flesh, Who is life eternal and gives it to the believer. But nowhere have we a fuller witness to the efficacy of His death. His work is for us as necessary and as blessed in itself and in its effect as His person: God's glory is concerned most nearly in both (chaps. 1:29; 3:14, 15; 6:51-58; 8:28; 10:9-11, 15-18; 11:51, 52; 12:32).

At this point of the Gospel testimony is rendered to Him in three aspects: first, as marked out Son of God in power by resurrection, in chap. 11; secondly, as Messiah, King of Israel, David's Son and David's Lord, in chap. 12:12-16; and lastly, as Son of man with rights over all flesh, yet (as we see in our text) about to die to have others sharing His blessedness and glory. Let us consider this last particular a little more fully.

The Son of God was in the world which He had made; yet the world, boasting of its knowledge, knew Him not, the highest, best, most momentous of all knowledge. He came to His own things, for He was also Messiah, " the born King of the Jews "; yet His own people, if not so ignorant, were more guilty still than the world, and received Him not. Hence, when certain Greeks, of those coming up to worship at the feast of Passover, made known through disciples their desire to see Jesus, He answered, saying, " The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say to you, Except the corn of wheat falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." The entire vista of His humiliation unto death and of its blessed result opens before Him and receives suited expression in these wondrous words.

Have you then heard Him in faith? Are you not nearly and deeply concerned? The rejection of the Son, Who is also Messiah, leads in marvelous grace to the fulfillment and disclosure of God's counsels. The Jews and the world at large were verily evil, openly proved enemies. His speaking to them as He did left them without excuse for their sin; His working among them as none other had done made other sin as nothing in comparison: for, as things were, they had both seen and hated both Him and His Father. Did the Jews by hand of lawless Gentiles crucify and slay the Lord of glory? It was by the grace of God He tasted death for every one. The greatest wrong of man confronted the love of God; which triumphed over sin and Satan in effecting redemption by His blood. Then, in being raised from the dead, He only and now is the Second man and Last Adam, by Whom all that believe are justified. Thereon, when the Jews refused the gospel of Him dead and risen, the word of salvation was sent to the nations or Gentiles. It is here for you now. He came to do God's will in His death as the perfect offering and sacrifice, which sums up yet surpasses all others. And again it is God's will that the glad tidings of remission of sins and life eternal should come to you. " Hear, and your soul shall live." Did not God say, even of old looking onward to Him, " He! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters "? Be reconciled to God.

Where man saw in the cross shame, and the deepest shame, the Savior saw glory. If this was moral glory, heavenly glory is its answer: " Wherefore also God highly exalted Him." " The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." So we read in Psa. 8 If the rejected Messiah of Psa. 2; 8 go down into death (compare Heb. 1; 2), He is the Son of man also crowned with glory and honor on high, though now we see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we by faith see Him in heaven, the pledge that they shall be. This will be when at His coming He raises those that are His to reign with Him, as 1 Cor. 15 declares. And it agrees with what He Himself here says, " Except the corn of wheat

falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." That the victims of sin might be delivered, sin itself judged, Satan vanquished for eternity, God Himself glorified in man, and His love free to bless perfectly, He, the true grain of wheat, fell into the earth and died. Without that atoning death the glory had been His alone. But now what abundant " fruit"! They that are His are cleansed whiter than snow by His blood; they live of His life; they are children of God, and shall never perish. They are sealed by the Spirit. Through Christ they have the entry by one Spirit unto the Father; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

The Greeks, like all Gentiles indeed, were apart from Christ, having no hope, and godless in the world; and it would soon be proved that the Jews, notwithstanding their great privileges, were no better but guiltier and therefore worse: all alike children of wrath. Neither living grace nor almighty power in Jesus could meet the desperate need. Nothing short of atoning death could avail. Without death He abode alone; but dying He bears much fruit in resurrection. And how scripture teems with testimony to this truth! Oh, is it not a great thing to be part of His " much fruit "? How blind, wretched, and sinful, to despise Him Who alone makes it good? What must it be to wake up to the awful evil of unbelief, when it is irretrievable?

Notes on John, John 12:37-50, Notes on (12:37-50)

The close was at hand, and a token even then was given, that the light would not be always there. “Jesus spoke these things and, going away, hid himself from them. But though he had done so many signs before them, they did not believe on him, that the word of Esaias the prophet which he said might be fulfilled. Lord, who believed our report? and to whom was the Lord's arm revealed? On this account they could not believe because Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened1 their heart that they may not see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them. These things said Esaias, because [or 2 when] he saw his glory, and spoke concerning him. Still, however, from among the rulers also many believed on him, but on account of the Pharisees did not confess, that they might not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.” (Vers. 86-48.)

Such was the result of the only absolutely perfect testimony ever rendered in this world, the words, and ways, and signs of the Son of God; and this, not where blank ignorance might be pleaded in extenuation, but where God had done all possible to prepare the way by prophecy, and to arouse attention by miracle in the midst of a people used to divine intervention. But man's unbelief, left to itself and Satan, can shut out every sight and sound from God. So ıt was among the Jews of our Lord's day, and so it continues till this day. It is still “this generation,” which shall not pass away till all God's threats be fulfilled. Of the outward judgments, however, John does not speak, but the synoptic evangelists; John of having Him no more who is all. For what is it to lose the light, to be abandoned to that darkness where he who walks in it knows not where he goes? And this is precisely the state of the Jew; the more aggravated because they had the light for a little among them, and did not believe, so that they failed to become children of light, and the darkness seized on them. Thus was the prince of prophets fulfilled by their unbelief in their own ruin, and this in both the parts of his prophecy, early and late, which speculation vainly seeks to divorce. But we believe the inspired evangelist, not the presumptuous professor, and are as assured that both prophecies are Isaiah's, as that they were divinely given and now fulfilled in the Jew so long incredulous. But as the first citation shows the guilt of rejecting God's testimony, so the second though really earlier points to the solemn fact of judicial blindness, never pronounced, still less executed, of God, till patience has had its perfect work and man has filled up the measure of his guilt beyond measure. Under such a sentence of hardening no doubt they could not believe; but the sentence came because of wickedness consummated in willful rejection of God and His will when they did not believe in spite of the fullest appeals to their hearts and consciences. As the first citation shows utter unbelief when Christ came in humiliation and suffering to do the work of atonement, so the latter conveys the dread word which shut them up in blindness before the light they had so long despised, followed up by the inspired comment that these things said Isaiah when he saw Christ's glory and spoke of Him. It is Jehovah in the prophecy, Christ in the Gospel; but they are one; as indeed Acts 28:25-27 enables us to include the Holy Spirit. How thoroughly confirmed and confirming the still older oracle in Deut. 6:4; “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.” John 12 and Acts 28 weaken it in nothing, but add to its force and expressiveness, as they show out more and more the patience of God and the darkness of the Jew after ages of trifling with His mercy and His menaces alike. And the darkness increased as the light shone out.

But ungodliness shows itself not only in the insubjection of the heart to believe, but in the cowardliness of the soul to confess the Lord (Rev. 21:8); as we see here that “many from among the chief rulers believed on him, but on account of the Pharisees did not confess, that they might not be put out of the synagogue.” And the motive or moral reason is given; they loved glory from men rather than glory from God. They feared the religions world, being keenly sensible of human glory, but dull to that which is from God. But we must not forget that, if with the heart man believes to righteousness, with the mouth confession is made to satiation. God makes much of confession of His Son, nor can we safely own salvation otherwise.

Next, comes the final public testimony of our Lord, given in this Gospel. “But Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me believeth not on me but on him that sent me; and he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that every one that believeth on me may not abide in darkness. And if any one have heard my words and not kept3 [them], I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that slighteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word which I have spoken, that will judge him in the last day, because I did not speak from myself, but the Father who sent me hath himself given4 me commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak; and I know that his commandment is life eternal. What things then I speak, as the Father hath said to me, so I speak.” (Vers. 44-50)

The Lord spoke with earnestness as elsewhere; and it was due to men in His grace, considering the solemn issues at stake, and the divine glory concerned. It was a question of His Father who sent Him, no less than of Himself. To believe on the Son, to behold Him, was to behold and believe on the Father. They were inseparably one, as He had already declared; and he who had the Son had the Father also. Further, the Lord was come as light into the world (for it was no question of Israel only) that every believer on Him might not abide in darkness. He has the light of life, and not life only; He is light in the Lord. It was therefore ruin to have heard and not kept His words; but such was the grace in which He came, that He could add, I judge him not, for I came not that I might judge the world, but that I might save the world. How then would His glory be vindicated in his case who slights Him and receives not His words? He has that which judges him, the word. “The word

which I have spoken, that shall judge him in the last day;" and the more surely, because Jesus spoke not from Himself, as if He sought His own will or glory, but was simply uniformly subject to the Father, who not only sent Him but enjoined what He was to say and speak; the Father's commandment He knew to be life eternal. Jesus was as subject to Him in His utterances as in His doings, being here to declare Him and do His will.

Notes on John, John 12:27-36, Notes on (12:27-36)

The Lord reverts to thoughts of His approaching death. There is no avoidance of contemplating that which it was part of His perfection to feel, as no man ever did. He estimates it rightly and fully as before, instead of braving it as men do who cannot escape. To Him it was no inevitable doom, but divine love, that God might be glorified in a guilty world, that sinners might be saved righteously, that the entire creation in heaven and earth (I say not τὰ καταχθονί, the infernal beings) might be reconciled and blessed forever. He, and He only, had authority to lay down His life (ψυχήν), as He had authority to take it again. As He is the Resurrection and the Life (ζωή), so no one takes the life He had in this world from Him, but He lays it down of Himself, though also in obedience of His Father, and to the everlasting glory of God, as the fullness of His person enabled Him to do. Nonetheless, but the more, did He feel the gravity, humiliation, and suffering of what was before Him. There was the deepest sense of death, not only as man and Messiah, but of its import from man's hand, and from God's judgment. Not an element of grief, and pain, and shame, and horror was absent from His heart, compatible with the perfection of His person and relationship to God.

"Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but on account of this came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy1 name." (Vers. 27, 28.) He was the Life, yet came to die; was light and love, yet rejected and hated as man never knew before, nor will again. The reality of His manhood, the glory of His Godhead, in no way hindered His sorrow: His being who and what He was, and perfect in all, only gave Him infinite capacity to feel and fathom what He endured, none the less because He came to endure it all, and had now before Him in immediate prospect, though none of men saw it but Himself. He had not been perfect man if His soul had not been troubled, so as to feel, "What am I to say?" He had not been Son of God as man, had He not in His soul-trouble prayed, "Father, save me from this hour," and quite as little, "but on this account came I unto this hour," crowned with, "Father, glorify thy name." To have felt and expressed the first petition perfectly suited Him who was man in such circumstances; to have added the second was worthy of Him who is God no less than man in one undivided person; to have said both was perfection in both, in sorrow as in joy, as to death no less than life.

The Father appreciates and answers accordingly. "Then came there a voice out of heaven, I both have glorified and will glorify [it] again. The crowd then2 that stood and heard said that it thundered; others said, An angel hath spoken to him." (Vers. 28, 29.) Augustine and Jerome confound this3 with chapter 17:5, from which it is wholly and demonstrably distinct, but we must never expect spiritual intelligence, sometimes not even common orthodoxy, from the Fathers, so-called. The later passage in our Gospel is the Son requesting the Father that He as the risen Man should be glorified, on the completion of His work, as well as consonantly with the rights of His person, along with the Father Himself in the glory which the Son had along with Him before the world.

The passage before us refers to what had just been, and what was going to be, done in this world; for as the Father had glorified His name in the resurrection of Lazarus, so yet more infinitely would He in the rising from the dead of His own Son. The moderns, such as Dean Alford, fail, in meager, vague, and even erroneous thought, to reach the mark as much, or more, than the ancients. For how poor it is to tell us that διὰ τοῦτο= ἵνα σωθῶ ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταλυτης, that I might be safe from this hour, that is, the going into and exhausting this hour, this cup, is the appointed way of My glorification; or, as Meyer says, that Thy name may be glorified, which is to anticipate what follows. It was really to die, though undoubtedly the glory of the Father by the Son. So again, ἐδόξασα points to something much more definite than "in the manifestation hitherto made of the Son of God, imperfect as it was (see Matt. 16:16, 17); in all Old Testament type and prophecy; in creation, and indeed (Aug. in John 3:4) antequam facerem mundum." Lastly, it is losing the exact force to treat πάλιν as a mere intensification of the δοξάζειν, instead of seeing a distinct and higher display of that resurrection power which marked out the Son of God.

As to the question why some said the voice from heaven was thunder, others the speaking of an angel to the Lord, it seems vain to speculate. It was really speculation on the part of the crowd, who all fell short of the truth. Unbelief of Him can weaken or get rid of all testimony till He come in judgment. Yet was it really in grace to them, for "Jesus answered and said, Not on men's account hath this voice come, but on yours. Now is [the] judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all4 to me. But this he said signifying by what death he was about to die. The crowd [then] answered him, We have heard out of the law that the Christ is to abide forever; and how sayest thou that the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Jesus then said to them, Yet a little time the light is among5 you. Walk while ye have the light, that the darkness may not overtake you; and he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may become sons of light." (Vers. 30-36.)

These words, if any, are surely of the most solemn import, and the more, as Christendom now, as ever, ignores their truth. For men, Christian men, believe nothing less than that "now in the judgment of this world," even while some of them look for the casting out of its prince in due time. The glory of the Son of man is founded on death. The rejection of the Messiah gives occasion for what is thus incomparably larger and more profound; and thus is God's glory immutably secured, and much fruit borne, even the blessing of those otherwise lost, now blessed, not merely by, but with, Christ. But if heaven be thereby opened (for the cross and heaven answers to each other), the world is judged. Before God and to faith now is its judgment, and not only when execution takes place publicly and in power. But now it is judged for him who has the mind of Christ, who shares His rejection and awaits glory with Him on high. A living Messiah should have gathered the twelve tribes of Israel round Himself as their Chief, raised up of God according to promise; but He was to be lifted up out of the earth, crucified, Satan's seeming victory to be but real and everlasting defeat, and so known to faith, while we wait for the day which shall declare it beyond contradiction. Christ on the cross is a very different object from reigning over His people in grace, and abiding forever; yet they should here read it also out of the law, for there it is dimly. But grace makes Him manifest thus lifted up, the attractive center for all, Gentile or Jew, spite of their sins, which He then bore in His own body. A suffering Son of man was, and is, no article of Jewish faith, though certainly revealed in their scriptures. To their expression of ignorance the Lord replies by telling them how brief was the stay of the light, by warning them of the

darkness about to seize on them, and by exhorting them to faith in the light, if they would escape the darkness and have the light to characterize themselves.

Notes on John, John 12:12-26, Notes on (12:12-26)

Mary had not at all misread the position of the Lord. The crisis was at hand. Perfectly did He understand to what point every current was flowing; he knew what was in man, in Satan, and in God, and that as the malice of the creature would thus push to the uttermost in rebellious hatred, God would go farther still in redeeming love, but withal in His most solemn judgment of sin. Of this moral glory how little as yet could any heart conceive!

But the final testimony must be full. Jesus had already shown Himself Son of God in power by raising Lazarus from the grave wherein he had lain a dead man: a testimony characteristic of John's Gospel, and peculiar to it. Men have raised objections, which only prove their own spiritual incapacity; for here it exactly suits, as it would nowhere else, and it was the right place and time too. All was divinely ordered.

The next testimony is to His Messianic title, and fittingly, therefore, given in every one of the Gospels. It could be wanting to none, and we find it as the next fact recorded by our evangelist.

"On the morrow, a great crowd that came unto the feast, having beard that Jesus is coming into Jerusalem, took branches of palm, and went out to meet him, and cried, Hosanna, blessed [is] he that cometh in Jehovah's name, [even] the king of Israel. And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat upon it, as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, thy King cometh, sitting upon an ass's colt.1 These things his disciples knew not at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of him, and they did these things to him. The crowd therefore that was with him bore witness, because2 he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from [the] dead. Therefore also the crowd met him, because they heard that he had done this sign. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Ye behold that ye profit nothing: lo, the world is gone away after him." (Vers. 12-19.)

Thus did the crowd welcome Him as Messiah, applying to Him very justly the language of Psa. 118, which the Lord in Matt. 23 declares shall be said by the repentant remnant who shall see Him when He returns to reign. Till then the house, once hallowed by Jehovah and bearing His name, is but their house, and left unto them desolate, as indeed they had made it a house of merchandise and a den of robbers. Nor was it mere enthusiasm in the crowd, but God at work; and the Lord Himself sat on the young ass, according to the prophecy of Zech. 9. It is remarkable how both Matthew and John omit the clause of the prophet which did not then apply, however sure by-and-by, for He knew well that He was to suffer then, in order to bring salvation when He comes again in glory. It was but a testimony at the time, and in the word to faith; when He comes, having salvation for His own, it will be in destructive judgment of all that oppose. Even His disciples knew not these things at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him and they did these things to Him. He needed not that any should testify either of man or of Himself. Past, present, future, earth and heaven, were open to His gaze. He who made all knew all; as John constantly shows in harmony with the glory of His person, which is everywhere prominent, save what He was pleased, in His capacity of servant, not to know, leaving it in the authority of the Father. (Mark 13) In the light of His glorification the disciples learned the import of the word and of the facts. It was His resurrection power which impressed the crowd so mightily. They did not draw the full lesson of faith, but concluded that He must be the promised Son of David, and met Him as such; while the Pharisees could not but own among themselves that obviously their stand and opposition was in vain, and the world, the prizes of unbelief, gone after Him. Little knew they what is proclaimed just afterward: "Now is the judgment of this world." He sought its salvation, not popularity.

But another scene completes the circle of the testimony here given before the close.

"And there were certain Greeks of those corning up to worship at the feast; these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we desire to see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and3 Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus. But Jesus answered4 them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say to you, except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it,5 and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any one serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there also my servant shall be;6 if any one serve me, him will my Father honor." (Vers. 20-26.)

These were Gentiles, Greeks, and not merely Hellenists, who desired to see the Lord, and Philip and Andrew name it to Him. It was enough. The Lord opens the great truth. It is not now the Son of God quickening or raising the dead, nor the Son of David coming to Sion according to prophecy, but the Son of man glorified. This He explains after the solemn asseveration, so often found in our Gospel, under the well-known figure of death and resurrection in nature. "Verily, verily, except the corn of wheat falling into the ground die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it beareth much fruit." He Himself was the true corn thus to produce fruit abundantly, yet even so only by death and resurrection. This was not, could not be, from defect of power in Him. It was from man's estate that it could not righteously be otherwise before God. Death only can meet the evil, or fill the void, and His death alone. For all others it wore vain, yea, fatal. Death to them must be for themselves to perish. He only could save, but through His death and resurrection; for as He would die, so He could rise, and by the infinite value of His death avail for others so as to raise them righteously. Living even, He must abide alone; dying, He bears much fruit in the energy of His resurrection.

Thus was He the Son of man glorified. It was for sin that God at length might be glorified; and now He was. Sin brought in death; His dying for it, by God's grace and to God's glory, laid the basis for the change of all things, even for the new heavens and earth in the eternal state; how much more for all that believe to be meanwhile blessed in a new life before they are changed into the likeness of His glory, when He comes for them! "He shall see His seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." So said the first of prophets, and this founded on His death— "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," in accordance with His own words here seven centuries after, when approached that wondrous hour and act of man's guilt when he meant pain and ignominy, when God inflicted incomparably worse in His unsparing and unfathomable judgment. To Him the hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified. What perfect self-sacrifice! What devotedness to God! What love to man, even to His bitterest

enemies! Such was Jesus going down to death, yea, death of the cross; and such the fruit unfailing.

The principle, too, becomes a primary one thenceforth, not ease and honor and advancement for self, which is now the greatest loss, but suffering and shame, and, if need be death, now in this world for Christ's sake. Such is practical Christianity. “He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” And what an honor! He assuredly knows what it is, and how to give it. But it is not in self-devised and self-imposed abasements; neither in flagellations of the back, nor in lickings of the dust, nor in like heathenish effort that dishonors the body to the satisfying of the flesh. It is in what the Holy Spirit alone can guide and sustain, in serving Christ—a service inseparable from following Him, its beginning eternal life in the Son, its end the same life in glory with Him, for such will the Father honor. May we be strengthened to discern and do the truth!

Notes on John, John 12:1-11, Notes on (12:1-11)

Such was the testimony God gave to the Lord Jesus as the Son in resurrection power, with the plain result of deadly hatred in those that bowed not in faith. Here, before a fresh witness is given, we are permitted to see Him in the home of those He loved at Bethany, where the Spirit gives us a fresh proof of grace in the recognition of His glory, and this in view of His death.

"Jesus, therefore, six days before the passover, came unto Bethany, where was Lazarus,1 whom Jesus raised from [the] dead. They made there for him a supper and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary then, having taken a pound of ointment of costly pure2 nard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. And3 Judas Iscariot,4 one of his disciples, that was about to give him up, said], Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denaries, and given to poor [persons]? And this he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and, having5 the bag, used to bear what was deposited. Jesus then said, Leave her to have kept it6 for the day of my burial; for the poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always.” (Vers. 1-8.)

In presence of the Lord each comes out in his true colors. Jesus personally, as everywhere, is the object of God, the light which makes all manifest. But He does more. As He had brought life into the scene of death, the witnesses of His power and grace are there in their due place, according to their measure, one only having that special discernment which the love that is of God imparts, though grace may interpret it according to its own power. They made for Him a supper there, Martha serving, Lazarus at table with Him, Mary anointing His feet with the precious spikenard, and the house filled with the odor of the unguent. The Lord felt and explained its meaning, according to His own wisdom and love.

But if one of the blessed family was led by a wisdom above her own, in single-eyed devotedness, to an act most fitting and significant at that time, one of His disciples was not found wanting for the work of the enemy, which makes nothing of Jesus. All of good or evil turns at bottom into a true or false estimate of Him. We may be, and are, slow to learn the lesson, albeit of greater moment than any other; but it is the object of the Spirit in all scripture to teach us it, and nowhere so conspicuously, or more profoundly, than in this Gospel. So Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, that was about to give Him up, says, Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denaries, and given to poor people? He never thought of Jesus! Yet Mary's act might naturally have awakened affection. What was He not to her? Judas coolly calculates the lowest selling price of the nard; he falsely puts poor persons forward, for whom he had no real care; he would have liked that sum added to his unlawful gains. Nothing can be more thoroughly withering, more calmly true, than the comment of the Holy Ghost in verse 6. But what said Jesus? “Leave her to have kept it for the day of My burial: for the poor ye have always, but Me ye have not always."

Here is the truth said in divine love. It was not that Mary had received any prophetic intimation. It was the spiritual instinct of a heart that had found the Son of God in Jesus, of a heart that felt the danger that hung over Him as man. Others might think of His miracles, and hope that murderous intents might pass away at Jerusalem as at Nazareth. Mary was not so easily satisfied, though she had witnessed His resurrection power with as deep feelings as any soul on earth. And she was led of God to do what had a weightier import by far in the Lord's eyes than in her own. The love that had prompted it was of God, and this is above all price. “If a man would give all his substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” So said he who knew above the sons of men the vanity of human love, with the amplest means ever vouchsafed to the head of any house. But what was Mary's unguent, or the love that brought it out (kept as it had been, and now she knew why at that critical moment), compared with His who vindicated her, and was about to die for all, even for Judas?

It is indeed a scene to dwell on, most instructive and affecting, whether one contemplates the family as a whole, or Mary in particular, whether one may think of the disciples (for Matthew and Mark show that all were unappreciative, some even angry), or of the one whose dark influence acted so ill on the rest, and, above all, when one looks and listens to Him whose grace formed Mary's heart according to its own nature and ways.

"A [or, the]7 great crowd of the Jews therefore knew that he was [lit. is] there, and came not on account of Jews only but that they might see Lazarus also whom he raised from [the] dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might kill Lazarus also, because on his account many of the Jews were going away and believing on Jesus.” (Ver. 9-11.) “The Jews,” as often remarked, are not merely Israelites, but men of Judea, and greatly under the influence of the rulers in their hostility to Jesus as in other things. But they are not the rulers, and one sees the difference marked in these verses. The great crowd however seemed influenced quite as much by curiosity as by better motive. To see Lazarus who was raised from the dead is a very different thing from believing God. Still there was reality among some; and hence the deeper and deliberate malice of the chief priests, because many of the Jews were deserting them and believing on Jesus.

Notes on John, John 11:45-57, Notes on (11:45-47)

Mighty as was the work of thus raising Lazarus, we see here, as everywhere, how dependent man is on grace. Sin makes him the slave of Satan, little as he suspects it. His will is against God, in His goodness or in His judgment, in His word or His works; and the greater the mercy, the less he likes what is so contrary to his thoughts, and so humbling to his pride. If many were impressed and believed, some went mischievously to the enemy with their information.

“Many of the Jews, therefore, that came to Mary, and beheld what he did, believed on him; but some of them went unto the Pharisees, and told them what Jesus did. The chief priests, therefore, and the Pharisees gathered together a council, and said, What do we, for this man hath many signs? and if we leave him thus, all will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation. But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest of that year, said to them, Ye know nothing, nor reckon1 that it is profitable for you2 that one man should die for the people, and not the whole nation perish. Now this he said not from himself, but, being high priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that also he should gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. From that day, therefore, they consulted3 that they might kill him. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went away thence into the country near the desert, unto a city called Ephraim, and there he tarried4 with the5 disciples."

(Vers. 45-54.)

The chief priests and the Pharisees are immediately on the alert. They assemble a council; they wonder at their own inactivity in presence of the many signs done by Jesus; they fear that, if left alone, He may become universally acceptable, and that they may provoke the Romans to destroy them, church and state, as men now say. How affecting to see the power of Satan blinding those most who take the highest place in zeal for God after the flesh! It was their desperately wicked purpose to put Him to death, a purpose as desperately effected, which led to the cross, in which He did become the attractive center to men of every class, and nation, and moral condition; and it was their guilt in this especially, though not this alone, which drew on them the wrath of “the king,” who sent his forces, destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city. All righteous blood came upon them, and their house is left desolate unto this day, and this too by the dreaded hand of the Romans, whom they professed to propitiate by the death of Jesus.

And most solemn it is to see that God at the last hardens those who have long hardened themselves against the truth. So He is by-and-by to send men a working of error, that they should believe what is false, that all might be judged who have not believed the truth, but found pleasure in unrighteousness; and this most justly, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. It was He who spoke by Balaam, against his will, to bless His people, though hired of Balak to curse them, and proving afterward, not only by hi& corrupting wiles, but to his own destruction, how little the prophecies then were from himself. It is He who now speaks by Caiaphas, whose high-priesthood in that year gave his words the more official weight. Not that it was an orderly condition that there should be such shiftings of the high priest. But so it was total confusion when the Son of God came here; so, most of all, when He was to die. No wonder that God, long silent, should speak by the high priest of that year. He is sovereign. He can employ evil as well as good—these heartily, those spite of themselves—and if their will be in it, with a sense as wicked as themselves.

So it was here, When Caiaphas said, “Ye know nothing, nor reckon that it is profitable that one man die for the people, and not the whole nation perish.” God was not in his thoughts but self without conscience. The evangelist comments on this, that he said it not from himself, but, being high priest of that year, prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He should also gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. In the heart of Caiaphas it was an unprincipled sentiment; in the mind of the Spirit it was not only most holy, but even the foundation of God's righteousness in Christ, on which is based the future hope of Israel, and the actual gathering of God's scattered children, the church. From that day measures were taken in concert to compass the death of our Lord, who retired to the northern wilderness of Judea, and there abode awhile with the disciples in the city called Ephraim. The hour was coming.

“But the passover of the Jews was near; and many went hp unto Jerusalem out of the country before the passover, that they might purify themselves. They were seeking, therefore, Jesus, and said among themselves, standing in the temple, What think ye? That he will not at all come unto the feast? Now the high priest and the Pharisees had given commandment that if any one knew where he was, he should inform, that they might take him.” (Vers. 55-57.)

Thus the closing scene is at hand; and Jesus pursues His service in retirement during the little interval before the passover, the last so soon to be fulfilled in His death. They went up to purify themselves before the feast, which gives rise to their seeking Him, and surmising as to His not coming. For orders had been given to inform as to His whereabouts, in order to His apprehension. Little did any, friends or foes, anticipate that one would be found among the chosen twelve to indicate the spot whither the Lord was wont to resort; but He knew all that should come upon Him. How far is man suspecting that it is all a question between Satan and God, and that, if evil seems to gain the upper hand, good triumphs even now to faith, as it will in the judgment of evil to every eye ere long!

Notes on John, John 11:30-44, Notes on (11:30-44)

There was not the smallest haste in the movements of our Lord. Indeed we may rather note His calm bearing in presence of the one sister, so quick to go before she was called, and of the other when she was. Jesus abides the same, a man, yet in the quiet dignity of the Son of God.

“Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was in the place where Martha came to meet him. The Jews therefore who were with her in the house, and consoling her, having seen Mary that she quickly rose up, and went out, followed her,1 thinking she goeth unto the tomb, that she may weep there.” (Vers. 30, 31) It was not so, however; but the grace of Christ meant that there He should meet Mary, soon about to behold a bright outshining of the glory of God in her beloved Lord. What strangers to Jesus were those who would console her in vain before death!

Not that Mary was above the pressure of death more than others. She repeats what Martha said; but she was of a different spirit in repeating it. “Mary, therefore, when she came where Jesus was, having seen him, fell at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” (Ver. 32) But if she saw in Him as yet only power to preserve, if she had to learn that He is the resurrection and the life, at least she fell at His feet, as Martha did not; and the Lord, if He says nothing, will soon answer in deed and in truth. But the consciousness of divine glory, and this about to manifest itself superior to death in presence of all, in no way detracted from the sensibilities of His spirit. On the contrary, the very next verses let us know how deep were the emotions of our blessed Lord at this moment.

“Jesus, therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews that came with her weeping, was deeply moved in spirit, and troubled himself, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say to him, Lord, come and see. 2Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this [man] that opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this [man] also should not have died?” (Vers. 33-37.)

The word translated “deeply moved” occurs elsewhere for a “strict,” or stern “charge,” as in Matt. 9:30, Mark 1:13; or an angry speech, as in Mark 14:5. Here it is rather the inward feeling than the expression, approached rather nearly by such use as that in Lucian (Nec. 20), of fretting or groaning. It means the strong, and it may be indignant, feeling the Lord experienced at the power of death over not the Jews only but Mary, wielded, as it still was, by the enemy. This is still farther expressed by the phrase that follows, as well as by verse 38. His tender sympathy appears rather in His weeping (ver. 35), after asking where they had laid Lazarus, and the invitation to come and see. His indignant sense of Satan's power through sin did not interfere in the least with His deep compassion; and what we see here is but the counterpart of His habitual bearing the diseases, and taking the infirmities, which the first gospel applies from Isa. 53:4. Never was it mere power, nor was it only sympathy, but the entrance of His spirit into every case He cured, the bearing of the weight on His heart before God of all that oppressed sin-stricken man. Here it was the still graver ravages of death in the family He loved.

But we may note that in our Lord's case, profound as was His grief, it was His servant. “” He troubled himself.” It did not gain the mastery, as our affections are apt to do with us. Every feeling in Christ was perfect in kind and measure, as well as season. His groaning, His trouble, His weeping—what were they not in God's sight! How precious should they not be to us! Even the Jews could not but say, “Behold how he loved him!” What had they thought had they known He was just going to raise the dead man? If they did not recall His power, it was only the unavailing regret that He who healed the blind had not forefended death in the case of Lazarus. They were utterly at fault about this sickness, as blind to the glory of God as to the way of it, that the Son of God would be glorified thereby. Faith in the glory of His person alone rightly interprets and appreciates in its measure the depth of His love. “Jesus wept.” What a difference these words convey to Him who sees nothing but a man, who knows Him to be the mighty God, the only-begotten Son! Even the unbeliever could not in this case fail to own His love; but how immensely that love is enhanced by His divine dignity, and the consciousness that He was about to act in the power of divine life above death

And it of all consequence that we should believe and know, without doubt, that all that Jesus showed Himself that day on behalf of Lazarus, He is, and far more, for His own, and that He will prose it for every one of us at His coming. For there is now also the fruit of the travail of His soul, and the power of His resurrection, after the fullest judgment of sin in the cross. Hence all His love and power can act unhinderedly on our behalf, as they surely will to the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. What men then beheld was but a testimony, however truly divine; but at His coming the troth will be fully out in power. Now is the time to believe and confess the truth in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation. May we be enabled to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life

“Jesus therefore again, deeply moved in himself, cometh unto the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus saith, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the deceased, 3saith to him, Lord, he already stinketh, for he is four days [dead]. Jesus saith to her, Said I not to thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God They took away, therefore, the stone;4 and Jesus lifted his eyes upward, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thon hearest me always; but on account of the crowd that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me. And having said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And5 the dead came forth, having the feet and the hands bound with graveclothes, and his face was bound round with a handkerchief. Jesus saith to them, Loose him, and let him go.” (Vers. 38-44.)

It was no longer the time for words, and Jesus, again realizing in Himself the power which shut opt God's glory from man; comes to the cave with a stone laid on it, which served for tomb. There the unbelief of Martha ventured (what does it not?) to oppose the Lord's word to remove the stone: He, that all might be clear; she, because His words disappointed her baste, if indeed she expected anything. But if Martha could not rise above the bumbling effects of death, which she would shut out from others, Jesus would not hide what was due to God in grace to man. How quickly the word of the Lord is forgotten in presence of the sad circumstances of human ruin! Faith gives the word heed, and reaps the blessing in due time. Listen to Jesus. He is heard already. He knows beforehand that He has what He asks, heard now; as always. The Father was concerned no less than the Son, and it was said that those who heard might believe that the Father sent Him forth.

And then comes the word of power: “Lazarus, come forth.” He had prayed to the Father, jealous above all for His glory, and never forgetful of the place He had Himself come down to as man. But He was the Son, He could quicken whom He would, and so He does. Yet even in the majesty of this divine display, He intermingles after, as well as before, what drew men's attention, that they might not be faithless but believing. What difficulty was there in the stone? For Himself He needed to remove nothing. It was for their sakes, to see man in the loathsomeness of death before he was raised. And so now what for Him mattered the binding of the graveclothes, or of the handkerchief? The grace of the Lord by both would only give them the better confirmation of what He had wrought. He could have loosed Lazarus as easily as He could have caused the stone to disappear; He could have willed all without crying with a loud voice; but He, who would that we should confide in the power of His word, would have us note the corruption that precedes quickening and the bondage which may follow it now. Liberty is needed well as life, but it is unnatural that one, who is made to live, should be longer bound.

Notes on John, John 11:11-29, Notes on (11:11-29)

THE Lord would exercise the hearts of His own. As His abiding in the same place for two days was not the impulse of human feeling, and His going to the place of deadly hatred was according to the light He walked in and was, so He has more to say which they had to ponder.

“These things said he, and after this he saith to them, Lazarus our friend is fallen asleep; but I go that I may wake him. Therefore said the disciples to him,1 Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover. But Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he was speaking [literally speaketh] of the rest of sleep. Then said Jesus to them plainly, Lazarus is dead; and I rejoice on your account that I was not there, that ye may believe. But let us go unto him. Thomas therefore, that is called Didymus, Said to his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.” (Vers. 11-16.) The Lord begins to disclose what He was about to do; but they were dull to think of death, on the one hand, or of His resurrection power, on the other. The prevention of death, the healing of disease, is far short of triumph over death. The disciples were to be strengthened by the sight of resurrection before He died on the cross.

It is important to note that here, as everywhere, sleep is said of the body. It is the suited word of faith for death: how dark the unbelief that perverts it, as some do, to materialize the soul!

But the Lord, who tries faith, meets the weakness of His disciples, and clears up the difficulty. He tells them plainly” Lazarus is dead,” and expresses His joy on their account that He was not there (that is, merely to heal), in order that they might believe, when they knew better His power to quicken and raise the dead. Gloomy Thomas can see only His rushing into death when He proposed to go to Judea, though his love to the Lord prompts him to say, Let us also go that we may die with Him. How poor are the thoughts of a disciple, even where affection was true to the Master, who was indeed about to die in willing grace for them—yea, for their sins—that they might live forever, justified from all things; but who would prove before He died a sacrifice that He could not only live, but give life to the dead as He would, yet in obedience to, and communion with, His Father! Such is our Savior.

“Jesus therefore, on coming, found that he was four days in the tomb. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem about fifteen furlongs off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary and their company, that they might comfort them concerning their brother. Martha then, when she heard Jesus is coming, met him; but Mary was sitting in the house. Martha then said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And now I know that, whatsoever thou mayest ask of God, God will give thee. Jesus saith to her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to him, I know that he shall rise in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth on me shall never die [literally, shall in no wise die forever]. Believest thou this? She saith to him, Yea, Lord, I do believe [I have believed, and do] that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world. And having said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here, and calleth for thee. When she heard [it], she riseth quickly, and cometh unto him.” (Vers. 17-29.)

The interval since death and burial is carefully stated, as well as the contiguity of the spot to Jerusalem, and the number of Jews who at the moment had joined the company of Martha and Mary, with a view to console them in their sorrow. God was ordering all for a bright testimony to His Son.

Again Martha prompt as ever when she heard of Jesus approaching, went to meet Him, while Mary kept sitting in the house, with a deeper sense of death, but at least as ready to go when summoned. Meanwhile she waits, as the Lord knew well and appreciated. When Martha did meet the Lord, she confesses His power to have warded off death by His presence. She owns Him as the Messiah; and as such she is confident that even now, whatever He may ask of God will be given Him. No doubt she meant this as a strong expression of her faith. But it was to correct this error, to give an incomparably fuller apprehension, that the Lord came now to raise Lazarus. Hence she applies to the Lord language far below His true relation to the Father:,t'cra lip allay Tov OCI;P. Had she said, ipiuTipti TOV w-a7Apa it would have been more becoming. It is all right to use airja, of us, for the place of a suppliant or petitioner becomes us; but the word of more familiar demand, OptoTrite, is suitable to Him. This, however, she, though a believer, had to learn.

When Jesus tells Martha that her brother shall rise again, she replies at once, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. But the Lord was here, not to teach truths known already, but to give what was unknown, and this in the glory of His own person. Therefore said Jesus to Martha, I am the resurrection and the life, and in this order as strictly applicable to the case in hand, Lazarus being dead and buried. He was the resurrection no less than the life, and this in fullness of power. “He that believeth on me, though he should die, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in me shall never die: believest thou this?” It is the superiority of life in Christ over all impediments, to be displayed at His coming. For we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Thus at the coming of the Lord the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain, without passing through death, shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Thus will He be proved the resurrection and the life: the resurrection, because the dead believers immediately arise, obedient to His voice; the life, because every one that lives and believes on Him has mortality swallowed up of life at the same moment.

This tests Martha. To the Lord's inquiry, “Believest thou this?” she can only give the vague reply, Yea, Lord, I have believed, and do believe, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world: a word containing truth, doubtless, but no real answer to the question. She felt the uneasiness usual even to saints, who hear what is beyond their depth; and she thinks of her sister as one that would understand incomparably better than herself; and so, without staying to learn, she hurried off, and called Mary secretly, saying, “The Teacher is here, and calleth thee,” who, when she heard, quickly rises and comes. How sweet the call to her heart!

Notes on John, John 11:1-10, Notes on (11:1-10)

The Lord was rejected, rejected in His words, rejected in His works. Both were perfect, but man felt that God was brought near to them by both; and, an enemy of God, he increasingly musters hatred against His Son, His image.

But the grace of God still waits on guilty man, and would give a fresh, full, and final testimony to Jesus. And here we begin with that which was most of all characteristic of our Gospel, His divine Sonship displayed in resurrection power. All is public now; all near or in Jerusalem. The design of God governs here as everywhere. All the evangelists present the testimony to His Messianic glory, the second of these three testimonies, though none with such fullness of detail as Matthew, whose function it was pre-eminently to show Him as the Son of David according to prophecy, but rejected now, and about to return in power and glory. It was John's place above all to mark Him out as Son of God, and this the Holy Spirit does by giving us through his Gospel the resurrection of Lazarus. He is in resurrection the life-giving Spirit, as contrasted with Adam; but He is the Son eternally, and the Son quickens whom He will, before death no less than after resurrection; and this is here exhibited with all fullness of detail.

"Now there was a certain [man] sick, Lazarus, from Bethany, of the village of Mary and Martha her sister. But Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. The sisters then sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." (Vers. 1-8.) Thus does John introduce the account. It puts us at once in presence of all concerned, the household whither He used to retire from the sterile, but guilty, parties of Jerusalem. Who had not heard of the woman that anointed the Lord with unguent, and wiped His feet with Her hair? Wherever the gospel was preached in the whole world, this was told for a memorial of her. But her name had been withheld till now. It was John's place to mention what so closely touched the person of the Lord. John names others, if he conceals his own name. It was Mary; and she with her sister sent a message to the Lord, reckoning on the promptness of His love. They were not disappointed. His love exceeded all their thought, as His glory was beyond their faith, however real it might be. But their faith was tried, as it always is.

"But when Jesus heard, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When therefore he heard that he was sick, he then remained two days in the place where he was; then after this he saith to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. The disciples say to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours of the day If any one walk in the day, he doth not stumble, because he seeth the light of this world; but if any one walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him." (Vers. 4-10.)

First appearances are ever in this world against the good, and holy, and true. Those who seek occasion against what is according to God, can easily find excuse for their own evil. And the moral object of God, as of His word, tests every soul that comes into contact. So here the Lord knew the end from the beginning, when He said, This sickness is not unto death; but he who was quick to judge by the beginning must inevitably misjudge. What would he have judged who heard Him say, Lazarus, come forth, and saw the dead man come forth from the cave of burial?

Resurrection displays the glorious power of God beyond all else. It arrests, and is intended to arrest, man, who knows too well what sickness is, and how hopelessly death severs him from all his activities. The sickness of Lazarus then, just because it ran up into death, was about to furnish a meet occasion for God's glory, and this, too, in the glorifying of His Son thereby.

There are those who delight in what they call "the reign of law;" but what is the sense of such thoughts or words when brought to the touchstone of resurrection? Does not the raising of the dead prove the supremacy of God's power over that which is a law, if there be an invariable lot appointed to sinful man here below, the law of death? And certainly death is not the cause of resurrection; but the Son is He who wields the power of life. He quickens whom He will, for He is God, but as the Sent One, the dependent and obedient Servant, for He is man. Such was Jesus here in this world, and this manifested most fully a short time before He laid down His life for the sheep.

But man is a poor judge of divine love, and even saints learn it only by faith. Jesus will have us confide in His love. For this is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and proved it in His dying a propitiation for us. Even here, too, how significantly the evangelist says that Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus, just before the mention of His staying two days in the place where He was after the message came. If a mere man, with power to heal, loved another that was sick, how soon he would have healed the patient! And Jesus had already shown His power to heal in the same hour. No matter what the intervening distance, or how unconscious the sufferer, why not speak the word on behalf of Lazarus? Did He love the nobleman of Capernaum and His boy? did He love the Gentile centurion and his servant, better than Lazarus? Assuredly nothing of the sort; but it was for the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified by that very sickness, not arrested, but allowed to work its way.

The Lord was about to raise the dead Lazarus; and this when it had not the appearance of a law, but rather by grace the exemption of one from the law of death. How truly for the glory of God was the result! Not so was the way man would have wrought at once if he could. He who was God, and loved as no man ever did, abode two days where He was, and then calmly said to the disciples, Let us go into Judea again. Then wonder, Did He not know better than they the murderous rancor of the Jews? Had He forgotten their repeated efforts to stone Him? Why, then, did He propose to go thither again? He was here to do the will of His Father; and here was a work to do for His glory. His eye certainly was ever single, His body full of light.

"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours of the day? If any one walk in the day, he stumbleth not., because he seeth the light of the world; but if any one walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him." If it was the will of the Father, it was day, and as Jesus was not only sent by the living Father, but lived on account of Him, so for the disciple He is the light, and the food, and the motive. The known will and word of God is the light of day; to be without it is to walk in the night, and stumbling is the sure consequence. If Christ be before us, the light will be in us, and we stumble not. May we evermore heed His word!

Bible Treasury: Volume N2, Shepherd of the Sheep, The (10:1-6)

John 10:1-6

The similitudes of the Fourth Gospel differ from the parables of the other three, and have another name. They are sayings by the way or proverbial allegories, and like all the doings and sayings of John's Gospel, they set out the Lord personally, the grace and truth which came by Him. Here is the first of the cluster.

“Verily, verily I say to you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up elsewhere, he is a thief and a robber; but be that entereth by the door is shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. And a stranger they will in no wise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. This proverb (or, allegory) spoke Jesus to them; but they understood not what things they were which he spoke to them” (vers. 1-6).

With the solemn formula that occurs so often in this Gospel, the Lord introduces His description, not of the shepherd of the sheep, but of a thief and a robber. He does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up elsewhere. God distinguished the door by plain marks that the sheep might discern the Shepherd, Who came from and was sent by Himself. For they were precious to Him no less than to the Son. And the Son was zealous for the Father's house and would enter by the appointed way and none other. He, the mighty God, deigned to be the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, and so to become the Seed of Abraham, the son of David, and born of the Virgin. Through Micah (v. 2) Jehovah named Bethlehem as the place of His birth. Out of it should He come forth unto Him that was to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Nor was the time left vague. Through Daniel He fixed it by weeks (of years) to elapse, from the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus), after which Messiah should be (not born nor manifested nor reigning, but) “cut off and have nothing.” So also He does not fail to announce in this chapter as in chapter 3:14 too.

Others sought their own things by craft or violence; He came in a love unmistakably of God, in an obedience that left nothing to desire, always doing in an evil world the things that pleased the Father. Prophecy pointed Him out no more plainly than the grace and truth which came by Him, or the signs of beneficent power which studded the path of light that could not be hid. He entered by the door, and “to him the porter openeth.” The Spirit of God deigned to work in this as in all others to glorify the Lord. Notably we perceive this by the testimony of Simeon, and of Anna a prophetess in early days, but above all by John the Baptist the divinely appointed herald of the Messiah, when the time drew near for His public ministry.

It was for him who was but “a voice of one crying in the wilderness” to say, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Nor was it in vain for those given to see according to God. For “the sheep hear his voice;” and as He said in ch. 5:25, “they that hear shall live.” There was faith, without which it is impossible to please God; and with faith life. For life was in Him from everlasting to everlasting. It belonged to His eternal person as the Word and the Son (i. 3, 1 John 5:11); and when He took the place of man, as the Sent One, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, yet not for Himself simply, but that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal, and this in hearing His voice (vers. 24, 25). It might not yet be life in resurrection—, but it was life eternal; for it was in the Son, and the Son has none other for the believer. Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth on Me hath life eternal (John 6:47). There is no exception. A robber just converted, and an apostle behind none, have just the same life. Christ lived in both; and He is the true God and the eternal life.

But what tender care in the Shepherd! “He calleth his own sheep by name.” His love is in the fullest way personal. His interest is in each personally, and He would have all to know it. What could evince it more than His calling His own sheep by name? So the apostle wrote, for those who believe as well as himself, He loved me, and gave Himself for me.

A change is next announced of great moment, especially for Jews. He “leadeth them out.” God had given His ancient people much advantage every way. But they had received not His Son, the Shepherd of Israel, hating Him to the utmost, and about to cry, Crucify Him, crucify Him. And He, knowing the end from the beginning, leadeth His sheep out of the fold, more and more the den of thieves and robbers, already the seat of His enemies. It might be done through the violence of others, as when the blind now seeing was cast out by the reviling Jews. But in effect He leadeth them out, as would be true for all His own in due time.

But there is more; and it is of transcendent importance. “When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice.” Later in the chapter He explains how this was to be. He would give Himself for them. It would be by nothing less than His death and resurrection: such was His love, and such their need. Thus only could they be secured, or fitted for the new place of blessing. For even Caiaphas soon after prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:51, 52)—a yet larger view than ver. 4 presents, and needing ver. 16 to supplement it. And what a safeguard for their difficulties and dangers grace provides the sheep! “They know his voice.” This enables them to “follow him,” as it preserves them from misleaders.

“And a stranger they will in no wise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers.” So the Lord lays down the truth for His own. He does not here state the possible wandering of any sheep, but presents the only way of life. Others might occupy themselves with errors and evils, a pursuit not without danger of defilement. The wisdom of the Christian is to be content with His voice which gave him life from the first, and to delight increasingly in Christ to the last, fleeing from a stranger and knowing not the voice of such.

It was a deep allegory, and looked on to that which was not yet accomplished. We need not, then, wonder that as yet the Savior's words were not understood.

Bible Treasury: Volume 10, Christ the Door of the Sheep (10:1-10)

Being Notes of A Discourse on John 10:1-10.

It is on the latter words of the Lord Jesus in the passage just read I wish to say a little at this time. What did. He mean the souls who then heard, or those who afterward should hear, to gather from the remarkable clause, “I am the door of the sheep"?

There is a change in the employment of the words. In verse 2 He represents Himself as the Shepherd, but does not yet call Himself the good Shepherd. He takes up a well-known figure of the Old Testament in which the kings of Israel were frequently designated their shepherds, the Messiah of course pre-eminently.

In this part of the chapter accordingly speaks of the sheepfold. There is not as yet an allusion as in verse 16 to the sheep which do not belong to the Jewish nation: “them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock [not, as is familiarly known, “one fold"], one shepherd.” Those who conceive (and it is a general error) that there is now a “fold” go back in heart and mind to Judaism. The Lord has really a flock in immediate relationship to Himself. The Jewish sheep, as He tells us, He would lead out, others pot of it He would join with them; and these should form not two companies, but one flock round the one Shepherd.

The chapter begins with telling us how the Lord first in the case of Israel showed He was really the Shepherd. He had come in by the door, in the appointed way, at the proper time, and subject to all divine ordinances. So when to be baptized by John He says, “thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” Afterward He performed the miracles and manifested that character of mission which the prophets had predicted. He had come in by the door as the Shepherd, He only; others might claim it, but they were thieves and robbers. Not that some before the Lord Jesus had not sought the good of Israel. Josiah, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, David, were far from being thieves and robbers; but they were witnesses to the coming Messiah, not usurpers. But those who had claimed the sheep as their own while in truth they were god's, what could they be called but thieves and robbers? And the Messiah was very jealous, as was Jehovah, over Israel, His people reserved for His Shepherd. But now Messiah was come, and they alas! have refused Him. The blind man had been cast out, because he, no longer blind, confessed Him. Some in the same hatred had before this taken up stones to stone the Son of God. In spirit He, rejected Himself, was now leading His sheep out. That murderous prelude on the part of His people was but an anticipation of His own death; and as with him once blind who now saw, so it would be with all who worshipped Him. Jesus would lead His own outside the world's religion. It was no question of staying to improve or reform, as think the infidel school of progress in every age; grace was calling out from what is sentenced to judgment. He was not going to work now as they expected. Israel's blessing and the glory of the earth await another day. A yet deeper task was in hand to be sealed in His blood. Therefore He would lead the sheep out and go before them Himself. He show s Himself as the Shepherd come in the due and long predicted manner which God's word had led them to expect, as the Seed of the woman and of Abraham, as the Son of David and of man. He had seen their hatred of Him and His Father, and this would be soon apparent in His cross. There was no course but one open to Him; and He was not only going outside the fold but about to lead His own out too. The blind man who now saw was cast out by men blinder than himself to be with Jesus.

The sheep follow Him; for they know His voice. A stranger will they not follow; for they know not the voice of strangers. The ears of Israel were heavy; they could not understand. Yet there is not a hard word in what the Lord uttered, Why is it that people, then as now, do not understand the scriptures? Not really because of difficult expressions. It is the truth that grates on the reluctant will of man. This is the source of all unbelief. It is resistance of the will to face the terrible fact of man's ruin; it is the pride that rejects God's grace and will not bend to one's own need of it. Hence the guilt of unbelief, not because man has a feeble understanding, but because he fears not God and believes not His love. Yet is not the truth good in itself and, full of goodness to man spite of his evil? Is it not the only means of blessing, or of salvation? Is it not by the word of God that he is begotten, and nourished, that he can serve, enjoy, or worship God? be happy with Him now and forever? Why then does not man love it? Because he has departed from God and refuses to return in God's way. He indulges himself in the fond delusion that he would like some time if not now to serve God; but he really likes nothing but His own will. Yet if God is to be served at all, it must be according to His will, which alone is holy and good. But there is a deeper question than of his serving God. Some souls before me may flatter themselves that they would rejoice to serve God; but are they willing to take the place of having no good thing in them, of being lost and not merely in danger? not merely that they have done evil in the sight of God, but that they are all wrong before Him? It is a serious thing when the heart of man bows to the solemn sentence of God, when one stands and confesses oneself lost before the God whose love and will have been slighted habitually. What then is to become of the soul? what of the body when resurrection to judgment comes?

Such then was the state of Israel, the fold: the Shepherd was obliged to go outside. The test that any were His own was that they heard and knew His voice. The crisis was at hand: when He has put forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him. It was the sentence of death on the best religion of the earth. The only persons who can boast of divine religion for the nation are the Jews; but here, solemn to say, the Lord virtually sentences the Jews, and their religion. In the fullest love to them already had He gone into the fold; and they would not hear Him; so He goes out and leads His own out after Him. He always takes the first place, in sorrow as in all else; in the deepest of all He suffers for them, just for unjust. Then He goes before His own sheep, whom He knows by name and leads out.

In truth all is in ruins, the world and man; the true Light has been put out, as far as man could. God Himself who came in love is gone. They felt not the sin. They believed neither His glory nor His grace. They could not understand His words; nay how few did even the disciples then understand! It was not merely the Jews who were blind and deaf: the disciples were half Jews and half blind still. Men do not understand what they do not like, not because there is not adequate, yea, abundant light vouchsafed of God, but because their own will is at work, producing darkness in the heart. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” It is an unerring test: with Christ the object, our soul is full of light. Have I darkness as to this or that? If so, and so far, my eye is not single. Why do I say it but because it is the truth, and that you and I may look to Him who alone enlightens and makes us light? In vain look for divine light till you receive Him, and rest on Him, who will show what He is for you and to you in the smallest need of every day, as in the greatest for eternity.

But there is more than this that follows (ver. 7): the Lord Jesus takes an entirely new place now outside Israel. He introduces this truth in the same solemn manner, not the sentence of death on Judaism, but the opening out of life and salvation to sinners. “Verily, verily [says Jesus], I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.... by me if any man, enter in, he shall be saved.” How blessed! He speaks to the same souls. What love! to the souls who could not understand Him! If the true Messiah was going outside His ancient people He would save sinners. Ah! they were sinners, and till the sinner feels that he is a sinner, he feels nothing aright, least of all as to God or His Son.

This is the beginning of wisdom. The first lesson of goodness is that I know and confess my badness. Nothing a man likes so little as to know and own that he is good for nothing before God; the grace that came by Him who is full of grace alone effects it in any. It is most true that I cannot have true faith in Christ unless I repent toward God. Never seek to divorce the one from the other. It is not only a human error but a snare of Satan for simple souls, where they are severed, for God has joined them in receiving the gospel. God would have souls feel and confess their sins. Repentance is when a soul no longer ignores God, cheating itself as to its own evil; he repents who by grace is willing to receive God's sentence on his own sinfulness in the sight of God. What a change! It is a man who abandons himself, because of his evil as judged by God, and looks with horror on himself as before Him,

Christ is the test of this as of all else. Thus in the case before us what could be worse in His sight than the self-will that refused to receive the Messiah? They did not like Him when they knew Him after a sort; they would have liked one to flatter them, and give them power and glory, making them the most exalted people on earth and crushing all their enemies. This will all come in due time from God, who will yet raise Israel from their fallen estate and put them on the pinnacle of greatness. But they as we must be put down first in their own eyes as sinners. By-and-by they will be brought to God; they will then own that they pierced Him, that it was their guilt though by lawless hands of others. In fact no man can have the blessedness of the truth or the grace of God unless he bows to Jesus as himself a sinner. This is the necessary controversy of God with every soul of man as he is. It is not faith to confess truth in an abstract manner, though in this way Satan often cheats souls. They own the forgiveness of sins in a creed, or as a dogma; but are they forgiven? They do not pretend to any such thing; it would be presumptuous on their part! O senseless souls in the face of God's express message! Faith feels the truth about itself more deeply than about others. Unless I believe the reality of God's grace and truth for my own soul, it is worse than a form. It is the hour when God will have reality. (John 4) The Lord had come to the fold, the place of forms; but He has led His own out, and He must have them in the truth. True worshippers, they must worship God in spirit and in truth.

The reason souls are not really saved is that they are not in the truth for their own soul's need. I must meet God about my sins in this world or at the judgment-seat. No man can be saved in the day of judgment. It is in the place of my sins I must find salvation; where I am lost, I must be saved; where I have been an enemy of God, I must be reconciled to Him. The Savior is come, yea is gone again, and the work is done. What would not Israel give to know it! Their eyes are blinded and they see Him not. They are strangers to Him; not His sheep, they did not know His voice. There they remain outside, waiting for the Messiah who is come. They know not that the Victim has been offered, and is accepted on high. We by grace have believed without seeing, and know that, His blood having been shed for sin, He is gone into the holiest of all.

Thus, if the Lord opens a new figure, it is for a new truth. “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Whosoever pretends to bring man to God, to step between God and souls on earth, to claim Israel, the church or any souls as his own, as his people and his flock, is a thief and a robber. What! man stand between souls and God! Is he not himself a sinner? Does he not need salvation? “All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers.” Jesus is the door. He gives us to see what He was about to do after leaving the fold; He would save sinners. Now accordingly the door is open to any. “By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Grace and truth came by Him; man has neither. And the law can only condemn him; for he is a sinner. He needs salvation. It is no longer a question of being schooled even by the law of God; man is too far gone. As long as there is life, he will tell you, there is hope. But man has not life toward God. Earthly religion may try to remedy the disease by keeping up hopes before mankind; but it is all vain; for the patient is dead. There is no hope, no life for man in his natural state; and he has proved it by rejecting the Son of God. But if His death be the great sin man has done, it is the infinite grace of God there to meet him in the gospel. “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” There is more than hope now, there is present salvation in Christ. There is in Him everlasting life. Those who believe, as He declares, shall never perish.

Do you draw back fearing this is too great grace? Who then, and what are you to give God the lie? If you are a great sinner, is not the Son of God a far greater Savior? Are you afraid to trust Him? Afraid to trust your soul in the hands of Him who died for sinners and rose again? It is the express mission of the Son of man to seek and to save that which is lost. Granted that man is dead; but is not Jesus the quickener of the dead? By-and-by He will raise the body. Now it is the hour of quickening the dead who hear His voice. He quickens the soul, and brings salvation. When He comes again, He will change the body into the likeness of His glorious body; Now He blesses the soul. How proper is the order! How blessed for those who repent and believe the gospel; but how dreadful for sinners to be raised sinners, raised for eternal judgment, raised to be cast into the lake of fire! But He is now come to save, having done the work needful for it.

Thus is Christ the door; and now, thanks be to God, you are invited to enter. Will you not come in? He is calling; do you not hear His voice? He may have much for you to do when you enter. He gives each of His servants his work. He leads even now into more and deeper blessing. But if you have not come in, this is not what you want. The sinner cannot serve the Lord till He has served the sinner—till He has saved him. Why then do you hesitate? To delay is most dangerous. It is now loss incalculable; it may be ruin irretrievable.

I do call on you to weigh with all seriousness these words of Jesus which evidently apply after He left the Jewish fold. He speaks as the rejected Son, He was going to the cross. He knew all that was coming, He required no prophecy about Himself, or God, or man. “Lord,” said Peter, “thou knowest all things;” and so He did—all things; excepting only, where as servant He waited for the word of His Father. (Mark 13:32.)

I invite and urge you then to believe in His name on God's testimony. He is the Savior, the only Savior of sinners; and you need a Savior. Believe Him to be what He is. Rest on the work He has done. The Savior and work will perfectly suit your need, as they do the glory of God. Were He one hair's breadth less than He is, I could not trust Him for either. He could neither have glorified God nor save sinners. But the truth is that there is an infinite distance between Him and the highest of creatures, were it Gabriel and Michael themselves. For they are creatures and He is the Creator. He is God, even as the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead; whatever be the difference of person and of function, scripture is plain. Man is blind and unbelieving; and the worse, the less he suspects it.

Such then is the Savior: can you trust Him? Seeing that the Creator of all the world came to save from sin, yea became Himself a man to save them righteously by His death for their sins on the cross, do you hesitate? Had it been only man, there could be no salvation, as far as such an one was concerned; but He that was God became man in order to it. No doubt He was Messiah and rejected. But God turns His rejection to our salvation, and opens the door to sinners. It is no question now of a Messiah for the Jew, but of a Savior. And are there not some here

awakening to His voice, some souls that answer to Jesus? Is He not now saying, “By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved?” For what is He as the door? Does He refuse any? Not one. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” He invites you. “By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” He is not looking for qualities of which He approves, but for sinners that need Him to save them; and there is no man now who hears His voice and remains outside but because of the self-will that refuses to bow to His word. Salvation and every other needed blessing are in Him. The first call of God, the first obligation of man is to believe in Him; the first blessing for my soul is to have life in Him and be saved.

Shall I tell you why men say no man can know that he is saved? They think that God is such an one as themselves. They attenuate Christ's glory, seeing neither His person nor His work. When He bore God's judgment of sin on the cross, did He procure an uncertain salvation? Let none say so who fear God or honor Jesus. How could a divine person fail? It is His glory, at all cost to Himself, to bring in perfect salvation, and this He now gives freely to the believer. To bless is what God loves. Only sin made Him a judge. He does not judge His counsels, nor salvation, nor the saved. Judgment has been borne by Christ for the believer. And the Spirit seals them, instead of doubting them. Thus does He fill the heavens even now with due praise and adoration. God is love and light, not a judge, in His own nature; but He will deal with all that is contrary to His nature, and so much the more solemnly with those who prefer self and sin to Christ. Judgment will be Christ's vindication on the unbeliever and ungodly, whatever grace may do at the end of this age.

In point of fact, if an unconverted man were brought to heaven, no place would be so irksome to him. It is so now to be where others sing of Christ and pray, and you are anxious above all to get away and have done with it. What would heaven be to you with not one feeling in harmony with Him whom all praise there? No place could be so unsuited to the sinner.

How can one then be fitted for heaven? “By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” What is implied in salvation? Two things at least, whatever more may be: a new and eternal life, and a propitiation for my sins. That life you cannot win, and no creature can give it you. Shame on those besotted enough to say, even if they do not believe, that water sprinkled on one can give life? Do they not accept a fiction as baseless, and if it be rested on quite as ruinous as his wafer-god is to the poor papist? If the one trifles with the Lord Jesus, the other surely does with the Holy Spirit. But no: in Christ is life. Here is the Shepherd, here is the door, here is salvation. The only boast then is in Him and His cross. And no wonder; for He is the alone worthy One and your Savior. We hear and know His voice, we know not the voice of strangers, nor follow them. The propitiation too is once for all in the Savior's blood. The mass, or anything equivalent, is Satan's cheat for it.

Oh fear not, doubting one, to trust in what He has shed to blot out every sin. Are you not hindered by those around you who believe not? Do you not slip into their thoughts and words? To have the dead with the living is a dreadful combination. It was so in the Jewish fold; but Jesus led His own out. Go not back to that which He has left forever. You that have come out to Him, cleave to Him; know that the only security is Himself, the one joy of saints is to be with Him. He not only has life in His own person, but He died that He might give that life to sinners. Sin must have been an everlasting barrier, but He died for it. Here is the One to look to and confide in; and He invites you. “By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” There is no question as to the result; you have the positive word of Jesus for it. Do you believe in Him? Can you not trust the testimony of God who sent Him and raised Him from the dead? This is the One I commend to you. Rest all your weight on what He is; you can trust Him. He has suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust (without this all were vain), that He might bring us to God. This blessing comes not when we die but now in this world when we believe the gospel.

Ineffable blessedness! to be brought to the God I dreaded, left, and was cast out from! And is every barrier removed? It is, God says so, and who knows as He? But again, if I believe, there is nobody that I know like God, not even my wife or my child, He alone has told me all His heart; and I am sure of God, not of any other: my best friend may fail me, He never will. And Christ makes Him know He is the One God calls me to confide all to. He gives life to me; He died for me: the moment you believe, life in Him is yours. It is altogether wrong to think life-giving is a process, though the conviction of it may be. But to have life eternal is the simple consequence of faith in Christ. How do I know? He says it Himself, and there is nothing so good or true or sure as the word of Jesus. It is most humbling too, for it makes everything of Him and nothing of me or of any other child of Adam. Is not this as it should be? Or are you not prepared for it? Beware of dishonoring Him.

Man likes to be occupied with himself. If I receive life, propitiation, salvation, yea, all in Christ, is it not the annihilation of self? He is faithful too, and will make all real and living in the soul of the believer. Let your heart then be occupied with Him. It is a false gospel that sends you to look at yourself for proof of life. If God tells me to look at myself, it is to humble me. It is reversing the gospel, to judge of His grace or of my standing by myself. If God gives blessing, He wishes it to be enjoyed. People in this world seem to grudge what they do for others. Indeed it was the Greek or heathen idea of God, that He was jealous of man's happiness. The true God delights in the happiness of those He has called; and though men have sinned irreparably in the death of Christ by their lawless hands, it is by that death He blesses any in His own mercy, and this righteously. The moment I look to Jesus and His blood at God's word, my sins are gone. And this is only the beginning of the Christian's career.

But, besides salvation, there is another rich blessing— “he shall go in and out.” The truth makes free, the Son makes free. It is the essence of Christianity-liberty to do as God likes. It supposes responsibility to Christ. I am Christ's bondsman, but free to serve Him. You who look to Jesus, are not you at liberty also? Do you say that you are still tied and bound with the chain of your sins? Such is not the Christian state but rather a denial of it. “He shall go in and out.” This is the liberty in which we ought to stand fast: so says the apostle to the Galatians who had let it slip. Anything short of it is not Christianity, though it may be the state of souls born of God. It is not merely your gain or loss that is in question, but the Lord's glory. For God has Christ before Him, and He blesses you by leading you to think of Christ as He does. Nor can you duly serve as Christ's bondsman unless you know what it is to be His freeman. It is liberty to please the Lord, no longer like the Israelite under law, still less bound to the world or its conventionalities, its hopes or its fears, its pursuits or its pleasures. We are free to serve Christ, delighting in Him now. Having heard His voice, we shall serve Him in a changed body on high, as well as in these bodies made the temple of God by the Spirit dwelling in them.

But the Lord adds that the believer shall “find pasture.” He will feed us according to His own heart. “For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” We need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But He will surely see to it and does. What a blessing to have such an One to care for us! This is the Savior I call on you to believe in and to confess. You that confide in the Christ of God, will you not confess Him? There is not for a starting-point a sound from a man's heart so sweet as a poor sinner's confession of the Savior

when he casts himself upon His grace and God's free justification through His blood.

May the Lord make it yours even now. His forever, may we serve Him, seeking only to do His will: He will show you how, for you will hear His voice, as you follow Him. He will care for you, as He binds Himself to give not only salvation but liberty and pasture. “He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.”

Christian Truth: Volume 14, Christ the Door of the Sheep (10:1-10)

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." John 10:7.

What did the Lord mean, that the souls who then heard, or those who afterward should hear, were to gather from the remarkable clause, "I am the door of the sheep"?

There is a change in the employment of the words. In verse 2 He represents Himself as the Shepherd, but does not yet call Himself the good Shepherd. He takes up a well-known figure of the Old Testament in which the kings of Israel were frequently designated their shepherds, the Messiah of course pre-eminently.

In this part of the chapter, accordingly, He speaks of the sheepfold. There is not as yet an allusion, as in verse 16, to the sheep which do not belong to the Jewish nation: "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock [not, as is familiarly known, "one fold"], and one shepherd." Those who conceive (and it is a general error) that there is now a "fold" go back in heart and mind to Judaism. The Lord has really a flock in immediate relationship to Himself. The Jewish sheep, as He tells us, He would lead out; others not of it He would join with them; and these should form not two companies, but one flock around the one Shepherd.

The chapter begins with telling us how He was really the Shepherd of Israel. He had come in by the door, in the appointed way, at the proper time, and subject to all divine ordinances. So when He was to be baptized by John, He says, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Afterward He performed the miracles and manifested that character of mission which the prophets had predicted. He had come in by the door as the Shepherd-He only. Others might claim it, but they were thieves and robbers. Not that some before the Lord Jesus had not sought the good of Israel-Josiah, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, David, were far from being thieves and robbers-but they were witnesses to the coming Messiah, not usurpers. But those who had claimed the sheep as their own, while in truth they were God's, what could they be called but thieves and robbers? And the Messiah was very jealous, as was Jehovah, over Israel, His people reserved for His Shepherd.

But now Messiah was come, and they, alas! refused Him. The blind man had been cast out, because he, no longer blind, confessed Him. Some in the same hatred had before this taken up stones to stone the Son of God. In spirit He, rejected Himself, was now leading His sheep out. That murderous prelude on the part of His people was but an anticipation of His own death; and as with him once blind who now saw, so it would be with all who worshiped Him. Jesus would lead His own outside the world's religion. It was no question of staying to improve or reform, as the infidel school of progress thinks in every age. Grace was calling out from what is sentenced to judgment. He was not going to work now as they expected. Israel's blessing and the glory of the earth await another day.

A yet deeper task was in hand to be sealed in His blood. Therefore He would lead the sheep out and go before them Himself. He shows Himself as the Shepherd come in the due and long-predicted manner which God's Word had led them to expect, as the Seed of the woman and of Abraham, as the Son of David and of man. He had seen their hatred of Him and. His Father, and this would be soon apparent in His cross. There was no course now but one open to Him; and He was not only going outside the fold but about to lead His own out too. The blind man who now saw, was cast out by men blinder than himself, to be with Jesus.

The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. The ears of Israel were heavy; they could not understand. Yet there is not a difficult word in what the Lord uttered. Why is it that people, then as now, do not understand the Scriptures? Not really because of difficult expressions. It is the truth that grates on the reluctant will of man. This is the source of all unbelief. It is the resistance of the will to face the terrible fact of man's ruin; it is the pride that rejects God's grace and will not bend to one's own need of it. Hence the guilt of unbelief, not because man has a feeble understanding, but because he fears not God and believes not His love. Yet is not the truth good in itself, and full of goodness to man, in spite of his evil? Is it not the only means of blessing or of salvation? Is it not by the word of God that he is begotten, and nourished, that he can serve, enjoy, or worship God? be happy with Him now and forever? Why then does not man love it? Because he has departed from God and refuses to return in God's way. He indulges himself in the fond delusion that he would like some Lime, if not now, to serve God; but he really likes nothing but his own will. Yet if God is to be served at all, it must be according to His will which alone is holy and good.

But there is a deeper question than of man's serving God. Some people may flatter themselves that they would rejoice to serve God; but are they willing to take the place of having no good thing in them, of being lost and not merely in danger? Not merely that they have done evil in the sight of God, but that they are all wrong before Him? It is a serious thing when the heart of man bows to the solemn sentence of God, when one stands and confesses oneself lost be fore the God whose love and will have been slighted habitually. What then is to become of the soul? What of the body when resurrection to judgment comes?

Such then was the state of Israel, the fold; the Shepherd was obliged to go outside. The test that any were His own was that they heard and knew His voice. The crisis was at hand; when He has put forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him. It was the sentence of death on the best religion of the earth. The only persons who can boast of divine religion for their nation are the Jews; but here, solemn to say, the Lord virtually sentences the Jews and their religion. In the fullest love to them already had He gone into the fold, and they would not hear Him; so He goes out and leads His own out after Him. He always takes the first place, in sorrow as in all else-in the deepest of

all He suffers for them, Just for unjust. Then He goes before His own sheep, whom He knows by name and leads out.

In truth all is in ruins, the world and man; the true Light has been put out, as far as man could do it. God Himself who came in love is gone. They felt not the sin. They believed neither His glory nor His grace. They could not understand His words; how few did even the disciples then understand! It was not merely the Jews who were blind and deaf; the disciples were half Jews and half blind still. Men do not understand what they do not like, not because there is not adequate, yea, abundant light vouchsafed of God, but because their own will is at work, producing darkness in the heart.

"If... thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." It is an unerring test; with Christ the object, our soul is full of light. Have I darkness as to this or that? If so, and so far, my eye is not single. Why do I say it but because it is the truth, and that you and I may look to Him who alone enlightens and makes us light? In vain look for divine light till you receive Him, and rest on Him, who will show you what He is for you and to you in the smallest need of every day, as in the greatest for eternity.

But there is more than this that follows (v. 7); the Lord Jesus takes an entirely new place now outside Israel. He introduces this truth in the same solemn manner, not the sentence of death on Judaism, but the opening out of life and salvation to sinners. "Verily, verily," says Jesus, "I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.... By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." How blessed! He speaks to the same souls. What love to the souls who could not understand Him! If the true Messiah was going outside His ancient people, He would save sinners. Ah! they were sinners, and till the sinner feels that he is a sinner, he feels nothing aright, least of all as to God or His Son.

This is the beginning of wisdom. The first lesson of goodness is that I know and confess my badness. There is nothing a man likes so little as to know and own that he is good for nothing before God; the grace that came by Him who is full of grace alone effects it in any. It is most true that I cannot have true faith in Christ unless I repent toward God. Never seek to divorce the one from the other. It is not only a human error but a snare of Satan for simple souls, where they are severed, for God has joined them in receiving the gospel. God would have souls feel and confess their sins. Repentance is when a soul no longer ignores God, cheating itself as to its own evil; he repents who by grace is willing to receive God's sentence on his own sinfulness in the sight of God. What a change! It is a man who abandons himself because of his evil as judged by God, and looks with horror on himself as before Him.

Christ is the test of this as of all else. Thus in the case before us, what could be worse in His sight than the self-will that refused to receive the Messiah? They did not like Him when they knew Him after a sort; they would have liked one to flatter them, and give them power and glory, making them the most exalted people on earth, and crushing all their enemies. This will all come in due time from God, who will yet raise Israel from their fallen estate and put them on the pinnacle of greatness. But they, as we, must be put down first in their own eyes as sinners. By-and-by they will be brought to God; they will then own that they pierced Him, that it was their guilt, though by lawless hands of others. In fact, no man can have the blessedness of the truth or the grace of God unless he bows and confesses himself to be a sinner. This is the necessary controversy of God with every soul of man as he is.

It is not faith to confess truth in an abstract manner, though in this way Satan often cheats souls. They own the forgiveness of sins in a creed, or as a dogma; but are they forgiven? They do not pretend to any such thing; it would be presumptuous on their part, they say. O senseless souls in the face of God's express message! Faith feels the truth about itself more deeply than about others. Unless I believe the reality of God's grace and truth for my own soul, it is worse than a form. This is the hour when God will have reality (John 4). The Lord had come to the fold, the place of forms; but He has led His own out of it, and He must have them in the truth. True worshipers, they must worship God in spirit and in truth.

The reason souls are not really saved is that they are not in the truth for their own soul's need. I must meet God about my sins in this world or at the judgment seat. No man can be saved in the day of judgment. It is in the place of my sins I must find salvation; where I am lost, I must be saved; where I have been an enemy of God, I must be reconciled to Him. The Savior is come, yea, is gone again; and the work is done. But Israel's eyes are blinded, and they see Him not. They are strangers to Him-not His sheep-they did not know His voice. There they remain outside, waiting for the Messiah who is come. They know not that the victim has been offered and is accepted on high. We by grace have believed without seeing, and know that, His blood having been shed for sin, He is gone into the holiest of all.

Thus, if the Lord opens a new figure, it is for a new truth. "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Whosoever pretends to bring man to God, to step between God and souls on earth, to claim Israel, the church or any souls as his own, as his people and his flock, is a thief and a robber. What! man stand between souls and God? Is he not himself a sinner? Does he not need salvation? "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers." Jesus is the door. He gives us to see what He was about to do after leaving the fold. He would save sinners.

Now, accordingly, the door is open to any. "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Grace and truth came by Him; man has neither. And the law can only condemn him, for he is a sinner. He needs salvation. It is no longer a question of being schooled even by the law of God; man is too far gone. As long as there is life, he will tell you, there is hope. But man has not life toward God. Earthly religion may try to remedy the disease by keeping up hopes before mankind; but it is all vain, for the patient is dead. There is no hope, no life for man in his natural state; and he has proved it by rejecting the Son of God. But if His death be the great sin man has done, it is the infinite grace of God there to meet him in the gospel. "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." There is more than hope now; there is present salvation in Christ. There is in Him life everlasting. Those who believe, as He declares, shall never perish.

Do you draw back, fearing this is too great grace? Then are you to give God the lie? If you are a great sinner, is not the Son of God a far greater Savior? Are you afraid to trust Him? Afraid to

trust your soul in the hands of Him who died for sinners and rose again? It is the express mission of the Son of man to seek and to save that which is lost. Granted that man is dead, but is not Jesus the quickener of the dead? By-and-by He will raise the body. Now it is the hour of quickening the dead who hear His voice. He quickens the soul and brings salvation. When He comes again He will change the body into the likeness of His glorious body; now He blesses the soul. How proper is the order! How blessed for those who repent and believe the gospel; but how dreadful for sinners to be raised sinners, raised for eternal judgment, raised to be cast into the lake of fire! But He is now come to save,

having done the work needful for it.

Thus is Christ the door; and now, thanks be to God, you are invited to enter. Will you not come in? He is calling; do you not hear His voice? He may have much for you to do when you enter. He gives each of His servants his work. He leads even now into more and deeper blessing. But if you have not come in, this is not what you want. The sinner cannot serve the Lord till He has served the sinner-till He has saved him. Why then do you hesitate? To delay is most dangerous. It is now loss incalculable; it may be ruin irretrievable.

I do call on you to weigh with all seriousness these words of Jesus which evidently apply after He left the Jewish fold. He speaks as the rejected Son; He was going to the cross. He knew all that was coming; He required no prophecy about Himself, or God, or man. "Lord," said Peter, "Thou knowest all things"; and so He did-all things-excepting only, where as servant He waited for the word of His Father (Mark 13:32).

I invite and urge you then to believe in His name on God's testimony. He is the Savior, the only Savior of sinners; and you need a Savior. Believe Him to be what He is. Rest on the work He has done. The Savior and His work will perfectly suit your need, as they do the glory of God. Were He one hair's breadth less than He is, I could not trust Him for either. He could neither have glorified God nor save sinners. But the truth is that there is an infinite distance between Him and the highest of creatures, were they Gabriel and Michael themselves.

For they are creatures, and He is the Creator. He is God, even as the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead; whatever be the difference of person and of function, Scripture is plain. Man is blind and unbelieving, and the worse, the less he suspects it.

Such then is the Savior; can you trust Him? Seeing that the Creator of all the world came to save from sin, yea, became Himself a man to save them righteously by His death for their sins on the cross, do you hesitate? Had He been only man, there could be no salvation, as far as such a one was concerned; but He that was God became man in order to do it. No doubt He was Messiah, and rejected. But God turns His rejection to our salvation, and opens the door to sinners. It is no question now of a Messiah for the Jew, but of a Savior. "By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved." He is not looking for qualities of which He approves but for sinners that need Him to save them; and there is no man now who hears His voice and remains outside but because of the self-will that refuses to bow to His word. Salvation and every other needed blessing are in Him. The first call of God, the first obligation of man is to believe in Him; the first blessing for my soul is to have life in Him and be saved.

Shall I tell you why men say no man can know that he is saved? They think that God is such a one as themselves. They attenuate Christ's glory, seeing neither His Person nor His work. When He bore God's judgment of sin on the cross, did He procure an uncertain salvation? Let none say so who fear God or honor Jesus. How could a divine person fail? It is His glory, at all cost to Himself, to bring in perfect salvation; and this He now gives freely to the believer. To bless is what God loves. Only sin made Him a judge. He does not judge His counsels, nor salvation, nor the saved. Judgment has been borne by Christ for the believer. And the Spirit seals them, instead of doubting them. Thus does He fill the heavens even now with due praise and adoration. God is love and light, not a judge, in His own nature; but He will deal with all that is contrary to His nature, and all the more solemnly with those who prefer self and sin to Christ. Judgment will be Christ's vindication on the unbeliever and ungodly.

If an unconverted man were brought to heaven, no place would be so irksome to him. What would heaven be to one with no feeling in harmony with Him whom all praise there? No place could be so unsuited to the sinner.

How can one then be fitted for heaven? "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." What is implied in salvation? Two things at least, whatever more there may be- a new and eternal life, and a propitiation for my sins. That life you cannot win, and no creature can give it to you. Shame on those besotted enough to say, even if they do not believe, that water sprinkled on one can give life. Do they not accept a fiction as baseless and, if it be rested on, quite as ruinous as his wafer-god is to some? We hear and know His voice; we know not the voice of strangers, nor do we follow them. The propitiation too is once for all in the Savior's blood. The mass, or anything equivalent, is Satan's cheat for it.

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Liberty to do as God likes is the essence of Christianity. It supposes responsibility to Christ, I am Christ's bondman, but free to serve Him. You who look to Jesus, are you not at liberty also? Do you say that you are still tied and bound with the chain of your sins? Such is not the Christian state but rather a denial of it. "He shall go in and out." This is the liberty in which we ought to stand fast; So, says the Apostle to the Galatians who had let it slip. Anything short of it is not Christianity, though it may be the state of souls born again. It is not merely your gain or loss that is in question, but the Lord's glory. For God has Christ before Him, and. He blesses one by leading him to think of Christ as He does. Nor can you duly serve as Christ's bondman unless you know what it is to be His freedman. It is liberty to please the Lord, no longer like the Israelite under law, still less bound to the world or its conventionalities, its hopes or its fears, its pursuits or its pleasures. We are free to serve Christ, delighting in Him now. Having heard His voice, we shall serve Him in a changed body on high, as well as here in these bodies made the temple of God by the Spirit's dwelling in them.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Good Shepherd (10:11-18)

John 10:11-18

Very direct are these words of the Lord. What blessing to receive them in faith! what guilt and ruin to despise Him and them I

" I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf seizeth them and scattereth. Now the hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall be one flock, one shepherd. On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again: this commandment I received of my Father " (vers. 11-18).

In Isa. 40:11, of the Lord Jehovah it is said, " He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom-shall gently lead those that give suck." Here He Himself goes much farther. He proves Himself the Good Shepherd by laying down His life for the sheep: none other would, nor, if any other be conceived, could it avail with God or for man.

Rejected He was, with hatred for His love; but nothing turned Him from His purpose of grace. He was the Good Shepherd; and as such He lays down His life for the sheep. Such love bespoke itself divine; it characterized His person and God's nature, but in man, which alone made it possible. Beyond doubt only thus could they he, only thus were they, reconciled to God; but here His laying down His life is the evidence and acme of devoted love in Him Who acts freely and never was more consciously God than in His atoning death.

What a contrast with him who is a hireling and not a shepherd; whose own the sheep are not! Beholding the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees, while the wolf seizes and scatters them; and so it is, because a hireling he is and careth not for the sheep.

But Jesus only is the Good Shepherd here. Others there have been who love the sheep in their measure, and so feed and tend them. But here where He is thus introduced, they have no mention but must vanish away. They were not entitled to call theirs the sheep, which in fact are " the flock of God." The sheep were Christ's own. Even if the wolf should catch any, not even the wolf shall catch them (the same word) out of Christ's hand. To kill the wolf would have been incomparably easier than to lay down life for them; and this He did, Who had no sin but love, no fear any more than selfish object, Who always did the things pleasing to His Father. And as the Good Shepherd He could say, " I know mine own, and mine own know me; even as my Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." It is the fullest evidence of His devotedness in love for them. His knowledge of them, and theirs of Him, He compared with the Father's knowing Him and His knowing the Father. What can be conceived so satisfying and perfect?

Gracious and powerful is the love the O.T. reveals in Messiah for His flock, " His beautiful flock " as it will surely be. But what is even that to a loving and mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep, so intimate that it could only be matched by the Father's and the Son's knowledge of one another I In this case is absolute and intrinsic excellence beyond thought or question; in the other, oh I what and how many faults on our side I But love in Him never fails; and we are entitled to count on it in our knowledge of Him as in His of us. This is grace divine, superior to all that it finds, and everlasting.

Such is the depth of the Good Shepherd's love; but He intimates a width far beyond His disciples' thoughts. " And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring [or, lead], and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become [or, be] one flock, one shepherd."

Thus He points to the call of Gentiles by the gospel. If most of the Jews turned a deaf ear, many Gentiles have heard and do hear. For no criterion is truer than this. As He deigns to lead them also, " they shall hear my voice."

O my reader, how is this with you? His voice is not of one crying in the wilderness like His herald. He, when here, frequented not the wilderness only but the hillside, and the riverside, and the villages, and the towns, and the cities. He preached the gospel to the poor emphatically; and when His work here was done, He charged His servants to preach the gospel to all the nations, the whole creation. Had Jerusalem been most guilty? To all, said He, " beginning with Jerusalem."

Is not this glad tidings to you, whoever you are, whatever you may have been? Redemption depends on the Redeemer, not on the redeemed, save that they " hear His voice." Oh I then repent and believe the gospel. Never can you truly worship or serve Him, till you receive Him, believing on His name. In vain is every other resource; nay, to trust any ordinance, in order to reconciliation with God, dishonors both the Father and the Son. When you have Him as your life, they find their place.

Of one great added privilege the Savior speaks here. " They shall (Jews and Gentiles) be one flock, one Shepherd." It was a quite new thing from God: " one flock " (not " fold " as formerly), " one Shepherd." Oh, how sad the change man has made and how guilty the excuse to cloak it as one flock consisting of many folds! Why do Christians thus defraud the Lord, disguise or corrupt the word, and forfeit their own fidelity and their own fuller blessing? Not so. To set up a fold now is no better than Judaizing. There is, as the Lord's will and truth, but one flock, as there is but one Shepherd in the supreme sense. And every Christian is bound to own this One and no other rival. In Him all the fullness dwells.

But let us hear also His own wondrous words. " On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." Christ here omits " for the sheep " and presents His death as in itself furnishing a motive to the Father's love. None but He could; none but His divine person. As such He declares, " no one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power [or, title] to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." None but the One Who is both God and man in one person could thus speak; and so while He speaks as divine, He does not fail to remember the place of sent One and servant He had taken. " This commandment I received from my Father."

Thus did the Lord assume and imply divine glory as His, no less than the Father's, spite of the place of man de had taken in the humiliation of love, in order to undo the works of the devil, and deliver guilty sinners who hear His voice from the bondage o: sin and God's most righteous judgment. This roused again the murderous hatred of His hearers.

“The Jews therefore again took stones, that they might stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works I showed you from the Father: for which work of them do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” (Vers. 31-33.)

Alas for the will and self-confidence of man! They were right in saying that Jesus was a man; they were not wrong in understanding that He claimed to be God. But it was the insinuation of Satan working on man's unbelief of all beyond his senses and mind, that He who was God would not deign, in love to men and for the divine glory, to become man, in order to accomplish redemption. Was it incredible that God should stoop so low for these most worthy ends? And had not Jesus given adequate evidence of His glory and relation to the Father, in power and goodness, as well as truth? A life of purity unknown, of dependence on God beyond parallel, of active goodness untiring,, of humility and of suffering the more surprising, because in evident command of power unlimited in testimony to the Father, and this in accomplishment of the entire chain of scripture types and prophecy, combine to hurl back the imputation of imposture on the old serpent, the liar and father of it, whose great lie is to oust God from being the object of man's faith and service and worship for false objects, or no object but self, which however little suspected is really Satan's service.

Nothing therefore so rouses Satan as God thus presented in and by the Lord Jesus, who displays His own perfect meekness and man's enmity by no intervention of power to save Him from insult and injury. “First he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation” —a generation which goes on still morally, and will, till He returns in glory to judge. They therefore took stones to stone Him; for Satan is a murderer as well as a liar, and nothing so awakens violence, even to death, as the truth which condemns men pretending to religion. To their blinded and infuriated minds it was blasphemy for Him to say that He gave His followers eternal life beyond the weakness or the power of the creature—blasphemy to assert that He and the Father were one; whereas it is the truth, so vital and necessary that none who reject it can be saved. His words were as good as His works, and even more momentous to man; while both were of the Father. He that God sent, as John testified, spoke the words of God. It was they who blasphemed, denying Him to be God who, in grace to them, condescended to become man.

But He meets them on their own ground by an a fortiori argument, which left His personal glory un touched. “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?” (Vers. 34-36.)

Thus does He reason most conclusively from the less to the greater; for every Jew knew that their inspired books, as for instance Psa. 82, calls judges Elohim (gods), as commissioned by God and responsible to judge in His name. If such a title could be used of a mere magistrate in scripture (and its authority is indissoluble), how unreasonable to tax with blasphemy Him whom the Father set apart,1 and sent into the world, because He said He was God's Son! He is not affirming or demonstrating what He is in this, but simply convicting them of their perverseness on the ground of their law.

“If I do not the works of my Father, believe not; but if I do, even if ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may perceive and [believe, or] know that the Father is in me, and I in him.” (Vers. 87, 88.) There was no denying the irresistible force of this appeal. The character of the works bore testimony, not only to divine power, but to this in the fullness of love. Think as they might of Him, the works were unmistakable, that they might learn and come to know the unity of the Father and the Son. It is not that He enfeebles the dignity of His person, or the truth of His words; but He was pleading with them, and dealing with their consciences, by those works which attested not more the power than the grace of God, and consequently His glory who wrought them. But self-will holds out against all proofs.

“They sought, therefore, again to seize him, and he departed out of their hand. And he went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was at first baptizing, and abode there. And many came unto him and said, John did no sign, but all things whatsoever John said about him were true. And many believed on him there.” (Vers. 39-42.) Thus it was not that their unbelief was incomplete, but that His time was not yet come. The Lord therefore retires till the moment appointed of God, and meanwhile goes to the scene of John's work at the first, and there abode, where grace wins many a soul that recognized in Him the truth of John's testimony.

These wondrous words were not without effect even then among the Jews. Love unknown before, the lowliness of a servant, the dignity of One consciously divine, wrought in some consciences, while they roused others to a deeper hatred. So it is, and must be, in a world of sinful men, where God and Satan are both at work in the momentous conflict of good and evil.

“There was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings; but many of them said, He hath a demon, and is mad: why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of one possessed by a demon: can a demon open blind [men's] eyes?” (Vers. 19-21.) The greater the grace, and the deeper the truth, the less does the natural mind appreciate Christ. He is indeed the test of every soul that hears His word. But if some imputed what was infinitely above man to a demon, and to the raving consequent on such a possession, others there were who felt how far the words were from those of a demoniac, and who bowed to the divine power which sealed them. The words and the works to their consciences had another character and import.

"Now it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem, [and] it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in the porch of Solomon. The Jews therefore surrounded him, and said to him, How long dost thou hold our soul in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us openly. Jesus answered, I told you, and ye believe not. The works which I do in the name of my Father, these bear witness of me; but ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall in no wise ever perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand. My Father who hath given to me is greater than all, and no one is able to seize out of the hand of my Father. I and my Father are one." (Vers. 22-80.)

We are many of us familiar with the effort to sustain tradition and human authority in divine things by such a passage as the opening of verse 22. But it is really futile. For here we learn nothing of our Lord's participation in any observances of men, whatever they may have been, but of His being then in Jerusalem, winter as it was, and walking in Solomon's porch, when the Jews came round, and kept saying to Him, Till when (or How long) dost thou excite our soul (or keep it in suspense)? Wretched and guilty as their unbelief was, the Jews drew no such inference from His presence then and there. They were uneasy, spite of their opposition to Him. "If thou art the Christ, tell us openly." But the fatal hour was at hand, and the power of darkness; and the light was about to pass away from them after its full manifestation in their midst. "Jesus answered, I told you, and ye believe not." Take only His words recorded in John 5; 7, and 8. A plainer and richer testimony could not be. But testimony does not always last. It is given freely, fully, patiently, and may then be turned aside from those who reject to such as hear. Thus is God wont to act, and so does the Lord answer on this occasion. "I told you, and ye believe not."

But there was more than words, however truly divine, words of grace and truth according to His person. There were works of similar character; and the Jews were accustomed to look for a sign. If they sought honestly, they might see signs beyond man's numbering or estimate. "The works which I do in the name of my Father, they bear witness of me." What could account for such hardness in any heart? "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." Solemn solution of a difficulty, of a resistance to truth, of a rejection of Christ, as true now as ever!

Men trust to themselves, to their own feelings, to their own judgments. Have these never played them false? Have they ever been true before God? What suicidal folly not to distrust themselves, and look to God, cry to God, ask of God, what is His way, His truth, His Son! But no, this were to believe and be saved, and they will not. They are too proud. They will not bow to the word that arraigns them as sinners, even though it sends them the message of remission of sins on their faith. They feel that such grace on God's part supposes utter guilt and ruin on theirs, and this they are too hard, too proud, to own. They believe not; they are not of the Savior's sheep. Criminals, heathen, perhaps, may need a Savior; not decent, moral, religious men like themselves! They do not, will not, believe, and are lost, not because they are too great sinners for Christ, but because they refuse Christ as the Savior, and deny their ruin as sinners. They prefer to go on as they are, as the great mass of men: God, they think, is too merciful, and they hope to improve some day if they feel not quite right to-day. Thus are they lost. Such is the way and end of many an unbeliever now, as of the Jews then.

How, then, are Christ's sheep characterized? We need not hesitate to receive the answer, for here is His own account of them. "My sheep hear my voice:" a quality incomparably better than doing this, or that, or all things without it. It is the obedience of faith, the holy parent of all holy issues. Without faith it is impossible to please God; and this is the present characteristic of those who are of faith; they hear the voice of Christ. It is not self-assertion, nor the forgetfulness of their own sinfulness and of His glory. It is the truest owning of His grace, and of their own need; and thus only are souls blessed to God's glory.

This, however, is not their only privilege. "And I know them," says the Savior. It is not here said that they know Christ, however true by grace. But He knows them, all their thoughts and feelings, their words and ways, their dangers and difficulties, their past, present, and future. He knows themselves, in short, perfectly, and in perfect love. How infinite the favor and the blessing!

But there is more. The sheep not only hear Christ's voice, but, says He, "they follow me." For faith is living and practical, or worse than useless. And as it is due to Christ that His own should follow Him, so they need it, exposed as they are to countless foes, seen and unseen. It is their security, whatever the circumstances they pass through: Christ who leads the sheep cannot fail, and, as He knows them, so they follow Him.

"And I give them life eternal, and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand." Thus the Lord guarantees His own life to them, not the life of Adam, who brought in death, and died, and left the sad inheritance to all his offspring; whereas the second Man and last Adam, being Son of God, quickens whom He will, and quickens with and to life everlasting. Is it said, however, that the sheep are weak? Unquestionably; but here He excludes fear and anxiety for all who believe in Him, for He immediately adds that "they shall in no wise ever be lost." No intrinsic weakness, therefore, shall compromise their safety for a moment. Nor shall hostile force or wiles jeopard them; for "no one shall seize them out of my hand." (Vers. 27, 28.)

Could love assure its objects of more? His love would impart to them the certainty of His own deepest joy, His Father's love, as sure as His own; and so He closes His communication with it. "My Father who hath given to me is greater than all, and no one is able to seize out of the hand of my Father. I and my Father are one." (Vers. 29, 30.) Here we rise into that height of holy love and infinite power of which none could speak but the Son; and He speaks of the secrets of Godhead with the intimate familiarity proper to the Only-begotten who is in the Father's bosom. He needed none to testify of man, for He knew what was in man, being Himself God; and He knew what was in God for the self-same reason. Heaven or earth made no difference, time or eternity. Not a creature is unapparent before Him, but all things are naked and laid bare in His eyes with whom we have to do. And He declares that the Father who had made the gift resists all that can threaten harm, and as He has given to Christ, so He is greater than all, and none can seize out of His hand. Indeed the Son and the Father are one, not one person (which ἐσμέν, with every other scripture bearing on it, refutes), but one thing, ἕν, one divine nature or essence (as other scriptures equally prove). The lowliest of men, the Shepherd of the sheep, He is the Son of the Father, true God and eternal life. And He and the Father are not more truly one in divine essence than in the fellowship of divine love for the sheep.

Notes on John, John 10:11-18, Notes on (10:11-18)

The Lord next presents Himself in the beautiful character of the good Shepherd; a most affecting and expressive proof of His lowly love, when we think who He is, and what we are.

“I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. [But]1 he that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming,2 and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth; and the hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and no care hath he for the sheep.” (Vers. 11-13.)

This indeed is love; not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and died in propitiation for our sins. The giving up of life, in any case, for others would have been the fullest manifestation of love: how much more in His to whom the sheep belonged, who had been from of old promised to stand and feed in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God Greatness to the ends of the earth is a little thing compared with the good Shepherd's laying down His life for the sheep. It is the same Messiah; but how incalculably greater the testimony to His love in thus dying, than in reigning ever so gloriously, however suitable and due to Himself as well as to God's glory, and blessed for man when the kingdom comes!

Another phase of human pretension in divine things next appears, not thieves and robbers, as before, but the “hireling,” the man who meddles with the sheep, without higher motive than his own pelf or greed. “The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,” as sung one of our own poets, and not untruly; but here the Lord first describes not their trials, but his character who claims what is not his own but Christ's, and so deserts them openly in the hour of danger. He “beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth.” It is the adversary, by whatever means or instruments he may work. Then follows the peril they incur, and the actual injury done. “And the wolf snatched them, and scattereth, because he is a hireling, and no care hath he for the sheep.” As divine love wrought in God's purpose and will, so in Christ's death; nor is there anything good or acceptable where love is not the motive. It is the true and only right spring of service; even as the Lord intimated to the servant, now fully restored and reinstated, after his denial of Himself, “Feed my lambs—my sheep.” Not that He does not propose rewards the most glorious to encourage the servant who is already in the path of Christ, and apt to be cast down by its difficulties; but love alone is recognized as that which constrains him to serve. Christ was the perfection of self-sacrificing love; and it is Satan who, as the wolf, seizes and scatters what is so precious to Him, through the selfishness of such as abandon the sheep in their greatest peril, the mercenary having no care for the sheep. The character of man and Satan is as plain as that of Christ, which last comes out in other traits in the next verses. From Him self was wholly absent, love only was there.

(Footnote that has no corresponding marker: This clause ὁ δὲ μισθωτὸς φεύγει is not given in à(A is somewhat uncertain) B D L some cursives, ancient versions, &c., but a dozen uncials of inferior age and weight, with most cursives and some of the old versions insert as in Text. Rec.)

“I am the good Shepherd, and know mine, and mine know me,3 even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (Vers. 14, 15.)

Here it is in the mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep that His goodness is shown, and this, wondrous to say, after the pattern of the Father's knowledge of the Son, and the Son's of the Father. It is a knowledge after a divine sort, and as true in His absence as in His presence. It was not such sheltering care as the Messiah might and will extend to His people, however tender; for He too shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. But there had never been such transparent intimacy as between Him while on earth and His Father; and after this pattern, and none other, was it to be between Him on high and the sheep here below. This mutuality of knowledge disappears almost entirely in the Authorized Version through the unhappy full stop between verses 14, 15, and the consequent mistranslation of the earlier clause of verse 15.

The Lord returns to His laying down His life for the sheep. Nor can we wonder; for as He could give no greater proof of love, so there is nothing which is so strengthening, as well as humbling, to our souls, nothing that so glorifies God, and no other turning-point for the blessing of the universe. At this point, however, it is the good Shepherd's love for the sheep.

Here the Lord can speak distinctly for the first time of other objects of His love. He might come minister of the circumcision for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But His love could not be so circumscribed, when His death opens the floodgates. The mention of His death leads Him to speak of what was quite outside Israel. “And other sheep I have which were not of this fold” —not of the Jewish people within their enclosure of law and ordinance...,” them also I must lead, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be4 one flock, one Shepherd.” (Ver. 16.)

It is not, as in the English Bible and others, following the Vulgate, “one fold,” but “one flock.” God owns no such thing now as a fold. It is exclusively Jewish; and the idea came in among Christians through the Judaizing of the church, while the truth of the church, when seen, makes such a thought or word, as applied to itself, intolerable. The truth is, as we have heard, that the Lord was to put forth all His own, He going before them, and the sheep following. So it was with the Jewish fold. But other sheep He had which were not of it. “Them also I must lead; and they shall hear my voice.” It was to be from among the Gentiles; and the believers there hear His voice, believe the gospel. But they form no new enclosure, fenced in by law, like the fold of Israel. The liberty of Christ is of the essence of Christianity, not only life and pardon, but freedom as well as food. For if Christ be all, what lack can there be? The Jewish sheep have been led out, the Gentile sheep are gathered, and both compose one flock, as truly as there is one Shepherd.

One cause that has done as much as anything to dull the saints to the perception of the truth here is the fact of so many denominational enclosures in which they find themselves. It seems hard to say that such a state of things, built up by Reformers and others of peculiar energy since the Reformation, is unauthorized. But what saith the scripture, our only standard? “One flock, one Shepherd.” How painful to find one so prejudiced as to say, “Many folds, but one flock “! But this is to pervert the word of God, which admits of no fold now, rather than to expound it.

Another element which has wrought powerfully in favor of “one fold” is the mischievous confusion of the church with Israel, Zion, &c., which runs through not only common theology but even the headings of the Authorized Version, and constantly therefore is before all eyes. Hence, if we are now so identified with the ancient people of God, that we are warranted to interpret all that is said of them in the Old Testament as

our present portion, one cannot be surprised that this should tend to a similar result in the New.

But Christ's death has an aspect towards His Father of the deepest delight and complacency, besides being the basis of redemption and of Christianity. “On this account the Father loveth me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again: this commandment I received from my Father.” (Vers. 17, 18.) The Lord does not add here “for the sheep,” nor should we limit His death to ourselves. He lets us see the value His own laying down His life had in itself. It was a fresh motive for the Father's love; and no wonder, if it were only as the unfathomable depth to which His own devotedness could go down. But in deed none but the Father knows what He found in it of love, confidence in Him, self-abandonment, and moral excellence in every way, crowned by the personal dignity of Him who, standing in ineffably near relationship to the Father himself, was thus pleased to die. Hence it could not but be that the Son would take His life again, not now in connection with the earth and man living on it, but risen from the dead, and so the power and pattern of Christianity.

In this profound humiliation, to which the Lord submitted in grace, there is the utmost care to guard against the least suspicion that could lower His glory as the Son and God. It is not, as in Matthew (where He is viewed as the rejected Messiah, but Son of man, not merely the destined head of all nations and tribes and tongues, but in command of the holy angels, His angels): He had only to call on His Father, who would furnish Him more than twelve legions of angels. And what would have availed all Rome's legions against those heavenly beings, mighty in strength, that do His word? But how then, He blessedly adds, could the scriptures, be fulfilled that thus it must be? Divine person though He was, He had come to die; the Life Eternal which was with the Father before there was either man or earth, He had deigned to become man, that He might thus lay down His life and take it again. But here He speaks not more in lowly love than as consciously God: “No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again: this commandment I received from my Father.” On the one hand there is the calm assertion of the right as well as power to lay down His life and to take it again; and as none but the Creator could do the latter, so no creature is entitled to do the former. None but God has power and title to do both, and the Word, without of course ceasing to be divine (which indeed could not be), became flesh that He might thus die and rise. On the other hand, even in this, which might have been justly deemed the most strictly personal of all acts, He abides the obedient man, and would do only the will of His Father. He had come to do the will of God. This is perfection, and found in Jesus alone. Well may we adore Him with the Father who gave Him! He is worthy.

Notes on John, John 10:1-10, Notes on (10:1-10)

The Lord proceeds to set forth the consequences of His rejection, spite of His dignity, under a variety of forms. It is the disclosure of His grace to and for the sheep, from His humiliation as man and servant even to the laying down His life in all its intrinsic excellency, and of His glory as one with the Father.

“Verily, verily, I say to you, he that entereth not through the door into the fold of the sheep but climbeth up otherwise, he is a thief and a robber; but he that entereth through the door is shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth1 his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.2 When he hath put forth all3 his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice; but a stranger they will in nowise follow, but will, flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. This proverb said Jesus to them; but they knew not what things they were which he was speaking to them.” (Vers. 1-6.)

It is an allegorical mode of speech, departing so far from ordinary language, but adopting a figure very familiar to the law, the psalms, and the prophets. (Gen. 49; Psa. 80; Isa. 40; Ezekiel xxxiv.; Zech. 11; 13) The application to pastors of the church is ridiculously out of place and. time. It is the Shepherd of Israel in contrast with those who claimed to guide the ancient people of God. Even He, albeit a divine person, entered in the appointed way. Others who had no competency were no less destitute of title or commission. The woman's Seed, the virgin's Son, the Seed of Abraham, the Son of David, the mighty God, the Father of the age to come, coming forth out of Bethlehem, from of old, from everlasting, yet to be cut off after sixty-nine of Daniel's seventy weeks, the righteous Servant abased beyond all yet to be exalted above all, what did not meet to point Him out and exclude every rival? Yes, the rejected Christ is He that entered through the door, Shepherd of the sheep—none but He.

All others sought to mount some other way. Theudas might boast to be somebody, Judas draw away people after him, Pharisees love the first seats, scribes and doctors of law lay heavy burdens on men; but the, sheep, taught of God, hear His voice, not theirs; even as the porter, the Spirit, in His care for the glory of God, opened to Him only, as we see from the beginning in the Simeons and Annas and all who waited for redemption in Jerusalem. The others, small or great, orderly or revolutionary, had no right to the sheep; they were nothing better than thieves or robbers. He only is Shepherd, and the sheep hear His voice. They are His own, and He calls them as such by name. Who could, who would, but Himself? He knows and loves them, making them feel that He has an interest in them, such as God alone could have.

Again, Christ entered in, but He leads out. Judaism is doomed. The Israel of God follow Him outside. It was no question now of gathering back into the land the outcasts of Israel, or the dispersed of Judah; this must await another day. Now He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. “When He shall have put forth all His own” —for if such were the principle of His action now, still it was to be the necessary effect of His death on the cross—He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice. It is the wisdom of God for the simple.

Precious word of God, the hearing of His voice! It is due to His person, it is the fruit of His grace, it is their true and only safeguard. And a stranger will they in no wise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. The “stranger” has nothing to do with them; however he might seek it, what have they to do with him? Their wisdom is to follow Jesus, whose they are, whose voice they hear and know. How simple, were we but simple! How honoring to the Son! This too best pleases the Father. It is through faith we are kept, not by discerning shades of skepticism or superstition, though this may be for some a duty or call of love for others.

But such words are powerless to the men of either reason or tradition. For they seek their own honor, they give or receive it one of another. Jesus came in the Father's name, and Him they receive not. They avow themselves strangers to Him; they deny that any can know His voice. Had they heard it themselves, they would not doubt it could be known. They prefer and follow a stranger. The superstitious exalt their church: were it God's church, it would repudiate such exaltation at the expense of Christ. The skeptical exalt man as he is. But both agree in ignoring the Shepherd's voice. So it is now, and so it was then.

“This proverb said Jesus to them, but they knew not what things they were which he was speaking to them.” (Ver. 6.) His sayings are as Himself: if He is valued, so are they; if He is not believed on, neither are they understood. He is the light and the truth. All that He says depends on faith in Him for its apprehension. And therefore it is that in 1 John 2 the very babes of the family of God are said to know all things. Knowing Christ, they have an unction from the Holy One. It is not by learning, but by the possession of Christ, that they refuse errors which have ensnared unnumbered doctors of divinity. They are thus kept bright and fresh, simple and secure, because dependent on Him. These who count themselves wise venture to judge for themselves, and perish in their unbelieving presumption. To hear His voice is the humblest thing in the world, yet has it the power and wisdom of God with it. What they heard from the beginning abides in them, but for the stranger they have no ear nor heart. They are satisfied with Christ's voice. They know the truth in Him, and that no lie is of the truth. They are glad of every help which reminds them of His words, and brings them home to their souls. A stranger's voice they distrust, and flee from him. They are right—God would have us value no other voice.

“Therefore said Jesus4 again to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All as many as came [before me]5 are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: through me if any one have entered, he will be saved, and will go in and will go out, and will find pasture. The thief cometh not unless that he may steal and slaughter and destroy; I came that they might have life, and have abundantly.” (Vers. 7-10.)

In the former allegory the Lord speaks of Himself generally as Shepherd of the sheep, and this to put them forth, going at the head of them as they follow Him. Now He employs a different figure of Himself in direct terms, and with no less solemnity: “Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.” There is no confusion with the former relation. It is not a question now of the sheepfold. This He had entered, with every proof suited to man by God—proofs personal, moral, ministerial, miraculous, and prophetic; but the carnal mind is invincible in its unbelief, and withal being enmity against God, it is if possible less subject to His grace (which it understands not, but suspects) than to His law, which conscience feels to be just and right. When bowed or broken in the sense of sin against God, how sweet to hear the voice of Jesus! “I am the door of the sheep” —not of the fold, but of such as are of God, who yearn after the knowledge of Him, and deliverance from self. “All, as many as came.... are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.” They were not sent, but came without warrant; they sought their own things, not those of Jesus Christ, not of others therefore; corrupt or violent, how could they avail, either for the sheep, or for God's glory? To them the porter did not open, and, if the adversary deceived, the sheep listened not; these were guarded, however tried.

But now another was here. “I am the door: through me if any have entered, he will be saved, and will go in and will go out, and will find pasture.” How striking, yet perfectly simple, the fullness of grace touched in His words! It is no longer the narrow enclosure, but in principle for “any one” to enter; and if one shall have entered through Christ, there is salvation, liberty, and food—the sure, free, and rich blessing of Christianity. All turns on His glorious person. Grace bringing salvation to any, to all, has appeared. When law shut up a people from the depravities of a rebellious and idolatrous race, when it schooled those who heeded it, we can see why the wisdom of God chose a single nation for this great moral experiment. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we (the sheep of the fold) might receive sonship. But because ye are sons (the Gentiles that believe the gospel) God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. (Gal. 4) The gift was too precious, the boon too efficacious, to be pent up in the strait limits of Israel, especially as the Light manifested the darkness universal around.

Whoever then has entered through Christ will be saved, will go in and will go out, and will find all he lacks. God that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? The law condemned the sinner, placed him in bondage, and sentenced him to die. The Unchanging One changes all for the believer, be he who he may. This is grace as well as truth, and both came through and in Christ the Lord. What a Savior! How worthy of the God who gave and sent Him, His only-begotten Son, into the world, that we might live through Him

Outside Christ is sin and misery. Such is the world; and of all the world no part so delusive, so selfish, so fatal to itself and all governed by it, as the religious world and its leaders, the leaders now of infidelity as well as of superstition. Here is the testimony of Christ, of Him who is the truth; “the thief cometh not unless that he may steal, and slaughter, and destroy.” No creature can rise above its level: what then can the creature do that is steeped in unremoved evil and selfishness? It may sink indefinitely; it cannot possibly rise above itself. The world's hatred may become more deadly, its darkness more dense; but no ideas, no feelings, no helps, no ordinances, can change its nature, though the pretension to be of God when it is not, may, and must, precipitate into the depths of avarice and cruelty—the more destructive, because the false claim of His name shuts up every avenue of ordinary human pity, and the reality of what is of God provokes in the unreal the determination to get rid of what condemns itself.

How blessed the contrast of Christ! “I came that they might have life, and have abundantly.” He was the life, and life was in Him, not light only but life. All outside Him lay in darkness and death. He not only was sent of the Father but came and came that the sheep might have life; and He would give it abundantly, as was most due to His personal glory and His work, a work ever before Him here. Hence it was only in resurrection that He breathed on the disciples. As Jehovah God breathed on Adam, and the man became a living soul, after a different sort from every other living thing on earth, so did He who was alike the risen Man and true God breathe a better life on those who believed in Him. It is life eternal, and this after all question of sin and law was settled for faith by His death.

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