

THE EPISTLES OF PETER

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FOREWORD

THE Epistles of Peter expound and enforce those moral and spiritual principles which are incumbent upon all the disciples of Christ for the government of their conduct, irrespective of the special responsibilities which also devolve upon them if they are members of the body of Christ.

Paul in his Epistles expatiates upon the dignity and privileges of the present heavenly calling of the assembly of Christ, but Peter dwells upon the nature and resources of the pilgrimage of faith, particularly in that form which the pilgrimage assumes in consequence of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus (i. 17 ; ii. 11 ; iv. 16 ; v. 10). Owing to the character of their contents, these two Epistles will have a special application to the believing remnant of the Jews after the rapture of the church.

After even a cursory perusal, it will be remarked that Peter who, as one of the twelve, could not bear to be told of the sufferings and death of his Master (Matt. xv. 22) here labours, as it were, to impress upon his readers the supreme importance of that egrat historical fact, from the thought of which he, as a natural man, once recoiled. He

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shows that upon the tree of cursing Christ bore our sins in His own body, while His sufferings for our sins has brought us even now to God (1 Pet. ii. 24 ; iii. 18). Moreover, Christ Jesus was the suffering Servant of Jehovah to whom Isaiah bore such ample witness (Isa. liii). Further, since believers are the servants of the Christ who suffered pre-eminently, though perfect and unblemished among men, we are called to "follow His steps," and with resignation and joyfulness to endure suffering also.

In chapters II and III of the First Epistle, the apostle speaks of believers suffering for righteousness' sake, while in the two chapters that follow (iv, v) he indicates that suffering for Christ's sake is inseparable from faithful discipleship to Him. Both characters of suffering are specially praiseworthy, as our Lord Jesus Himself had shown (Matt. v. 10, 11). It will of course be noted that the second of these varieties was necessarily unknown in Old Testament times.

Peter addresses his two Epistles to the few among the Jews who received the gospel preached unto them by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven at Pentecost. These particular persons had the "oracles of God" as a national possession before they heard the good news, and the apostle instructs them with regard to the Old Testament predictions with which they were familiar, and which had their fulfilment in the crucified

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Nazarene, and he also directs their attention to some parts of the ancient writings which apply to those who acknowledged Christ by faith in the day of His rejection and of His absence.

These godly believers were subjected to bitter persecution, but the apostle declares that the government of God, which is so prominent a theme throughout the Old Testament, is now in secret but effective exercise on behalf of His saints (1 Pet. iii. 9-13). In the Second Epistle the apostle shows that in the coming day of God that government will be exercised in unsparing judgment upon all ungodly men.

Though the two Epistles are comparatively short, there are in them several passages difficult of interpretation. Most of these, if not all, are considered by the expositor in the following pages, and his interpretations afford a help to the understanding of the passages which few can ignore without impoverishing themselves to that extent.

W. J. HOCKING.

July, 1923.

PREFACE.

Admirable as far as it goes as is Archbishop Leighton's exposition of the First Epistle of Peter, the Christian reader feels a certain lack in his treatment of Christ's revelation which we await. With this great truth of the future is associated many an application to the believer's present path, and light cast on the heavenly calling. None of the Puritan divines equals him in deference to scripture which raised him above traditional theology, or in the Spirit's unction when Christ was before his soul, as he was enabled habitually to enjoy.

It is trusted that in the little volume before the reader will be found a fuller meaning also in heeding the apostle's contrast of the grace and truth come by Christ with the position of Israel under law. To trace this continually was eminently of value to those addressed, and of lasting profit and refreshment to all saints ever since; where it is not seen or held fast, vagueness must ensue.

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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

INTRODUCTION.

Not to the apostle of the circumcision but to him whom the Lord sent to the Gentiles was it given to make known the mystery, or secret of God, as to Christ and as to the church. Nowhere is it so much as named in Peter's inspired writings, though we know that it was revealed since redemption, to the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. But Paul was the minister of the church (Col. i. 24, 25) as no one else was led to style himself. To him pre-eminently was the mystery made known by revelation, as to him was given this grace to evangelize among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the mystery, which from all ages had been hid in God Who created all things. Even the word "church," inserted in 1 Pet. v. 13 by the A.V. as by other translators, is an unfounded conjecture; and the R.V. rightly agrees with the correction, "She that is in Babylon, elect together with [you], saluteth you, and Marcus my son." It was an individual sister, with the brother named.

The subject matter is the government of God, which is richly treated in both Epistles, but on a

different side in each of the two. It is however God's government, not simply as saints of old knew it, but as it was modified by Messiah's advent and the accomplishment of redemption. Hence there is evident contrast with Israel's position under law, and the anticipation by faith of what it will be at Christ's appearing, making the necessary difference that those addressed are strangers and sojourners meanwhile, and hence holy sufferers on the earth, awaiting praise and honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But while the First Epistle is occupied with that righteous government applied to the Christian's path day by day as he hopes for the bright result at our Lord's revelation, the Second pursues it with solemn and detailed energy to the judgment of false teachers, rivalling the false prophets of Israel, and working no less corruption and destruction; and it goes on even to the day of God, by reason of which inflamed heavens shall be dissolved, and burning elements shall melt, succeeded by new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, even the eternal state. The judgment of the wicked was notably distinct in the Second, as the watchful care and eventual triumph of the saints in the First. But, so far from any antagonism or even dissonance, they are the complement of one another.

Accordingly we are told in the beginning of the First Epistle that the apostle Peter addresses "sojourners of dispersion," which can mean Jews only,

of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. But they were Christian Jews, and so described as "elect according to foreknowledge of God the Father by (or, in) sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ." The Gentiles of this large region of Asia Minor were settled at home in it; Jews there were sojourners dispersed from the land of Israel. But the description appended, like the Epistle generally, shows that they were pilgrims in a higher sense as God's children and confessors of Jesus Christ. The Second Epistle (iii. 1) declares that it was written to the same persons. There is no ground therefore to claim for it a more catholic character than for the First. But "catholic" is a word greatly abused.

That both Epistles are divinely given and intended to profit all the faithful is unquestionable. But if *for* all saints, it is of interest and not without moment that we should recognise to whom they were written. That which the inspired writer himself says ought to be conclusive. But the learned no less than the unlearned like to have their opinions; and the late Dean Alford was only one of many who cite a number of verses, even in the First Epistle, to persuade us, notwithstanding the express terms of the address, that the apostle addresses himself to Gentile Christians as well as Jewish (for instance, i. 14, 18; ii. 9, 10; iii. 6; iv. 3). Is it true then, that these passages furnish proof that his admonitions were directed to such as had

been heathen, and were now converted to the faith of Christ?

Take now the first of these (*i.e.* i. 14); and where is the trace of a Gentile? Were not Jews, when begotten again to a living hope, to be as children of obedience, not conformed to former lusts in their ignorance but according to the Holy One Who called them, to be themselves also holy in all manner of living? What indication of previous heathenism is here? Ver. 18, far from pointing necessarily to Gentiles, emphatically supposes Jews only. For they beyond all had a mode of life handed down ancestrally, and all the more vain from their boasted knowledge of the living God.

Still plainer seems the Jewish appropriation of ii. 9, 10. It is true that the Jews by their unbelief and rebellion, their idolatry first, and finally by Christ's rejection, forfeited their special privileges. "But *ye*," says the apostle, *ye* the remnant who believe, *ye* anticipate what the nation are yet to have "in that day" when they too believe. Ye who in your unbelief belonged to them as "not a people," but now do believe, ye are "God's people;" ye who were not shewn mercy, now became objects of mercy. And this is entirely confirmed by the verses which immediately follow. For they are exhorted, as strangers and sojourners in a yet higher way, to abstain from fleshly lusts, having their behaviour seemly "among the Gentiles," as an outside class of evil-speakers.

The next, chapter iii. 6, offers no difficulty for after setting forth Sarah's pattern of obedience, he tells the wives that they were become her children, not by mere flesh and blood, but by doing good and being not afraid with any terror. How does this imply previous heathenism? The last is iv. 3; but it is a forcible reminder that in the days of their unbelief they had been morally as corrupt as the heathens. Living far off among them, they were guilty even of their unhallowed idolatries—a thing of course if they were Gentiles, but shameful in Jews. Not a word of proof is there in all or any of these passages that the Epistle goes beyond its address.

It ought not to be doubted that Peter was in Babylon, the literal Babylon on the plain of Shinar, when he wrote the First Epistle, according to the arrangement made in earlier days (Gal. ii. 7, 8), that the gospel of the uncircumcision should be confided to Paul, and that of the circumcision to Peter, God working in each to their respective ends. There was no jar whatever, but happy fellowship; and it was marked by Peter's employing the same brother as his intermediary, who had been Paul's choice on a remarkable occasion and a former mission. It seems not improbable that Peter's wife (cf. 1 Cor. ix. 5) was the co-elect sister there whose salutation is given, with that of Mark his son in the faith (it appears). And we may feel assured that he would not associate with his own salutation that of one who had drawn out a memorable

censure even of Barnabas, until confidence was restored, as the great apostle expressed it in Col. iv. 10, Philemon 24, and 2 Tim. iv. 11. If the apostle Paul was debarred at this time from visiting the assemblies which he had planted in these lands, the apostle Peter writes to strengthen his brethren; but with singular delicacy he addresses those of the circumcision who were allotted to his care, yet sends the letter by Silas the well-known fellow-labourer of the apostle to the Gentiles, who had founded the assemblies throughout this extensive region. Not a word implies that Peter had served in those parts, though Origen and Eusebius state so from a mistaken inference put as a tradition.

It is scarce worth while to notice the strange error of many ancients and moderns that Rome is meant by Babylon. Even if the Revelation had been known when the Epistle was written, instead of long after, it is harsh to conceive a mystical term of prophecy introduced into a writing so simple and direct, yet more into a greeting of love. What can one think of the theologians who cling to that which in the end is fraught with unsparing judgment, in order to extract its shadowy support to the dream of Peter's episcopate in the metropolis of the Gentile world?

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.

CHAPTER I.

“PETER, apostle of Jesus Christ to elect sojourners scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet. i. 1).

When James wrote his Epistle, as bondman of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, it was to the twelve tribes that were in the “dispersion.” It is a mistake to call this a “catholic” address, but it has an expressly large character for Israel; for it appeals to their utmost extent. So on a notable occasion the apostle Paul says before the king Herod Agrippa, “Now I stand to be judged for the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers, unto which our twelve tribes earnestly serving God night and day hope to arrive” (Acts xxvi. 7). That hope hangs on resurrection, as the prophets indicated clearly, and the law too, rightly understood. Wherefore he immediately (ver. 8) speaks of God raising dead persons, as proved in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. God will thus be the doer and giver of all the blessing He promised; and Israel will have only to incline their ear and come to Him, from Whom they had so long

departed, and by Whom they were at length for their apostasy dispersed among the nations. But by-and-by they are to hear, and their soul shall live; and He will make an everlasting covenant with them, the sure (the faithful or inviolable) mercies of David, in Him Who is the true Beloved, a witness given to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples far beyond the son of Jesse.

"The dispersion" is a phrase evidently familiar to the Jews, which first occurs in John vii. 35, and clearly means the Jews dispersed among the Greeks or Gentiles. For the genitive here as often elsewhere expresses a dependence, not immediate but remote and external, as for instance *μετ. Βαβ.* removal to Babylon (Matt. i. 11).

But the apostle Peter in this scripture prefixes two words before "dispersion" which necessarily limit the scope of that term. The first, "elect," points out restriction to individuals chosen of God. They were elect from among the Jews, as believing that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God; whereas their brethren after the flesh for the most part rejected Him. Those who believed were Christians.

Israel had enjoyed the privilege of being the nation chosen by Jehovah as no other people was; and they will in sovereign mercy be reinstated at the end of the age under the Messiah and the new covenant, to be blessed with richer favours and for ever in that fast approaching day. It will be no longer a mixed condition as in the palmiest season of the past. "Thy people also (says Isa. lx. 21, 22) shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land

for ever ; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation : I Jehovah shall hasten it in its time." So Daniel was told later, "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book " (xii. 1).

But that time is not come. Out of the Jewish people, when the apostle wrote, God is choosing to a heavenly calling by the faith of Him Whom the nation rejected and God has glorified on high. They are His present election while the heavens receive the Lord Jesus. To these only does Peter here write ; he does not, like James, address a larger circle, some even unconverted, throughout the twelve tribes. He writes only to Christian confessors of the Lord Jesus who had been Jews.

This last is made plain and certain by the second term, "sojourners," when combined with the word "dispersion" which it qualifies. They were not the primitive possessors of these countries, nor simply "elect" from among its settled inhabitants. They were not only Jews scattered in those parts, but elect "pilgrims" or "sojourners." This was a title of grace, as "dispersion" was of judgment. Their election in this case was bound up with the journey to the better country, that is, a heavenly. Originally Jews, they were now Christians. This entirely accords with the writer of the Epistle. Peter was an "apostle of Jesus Christ" as he here introduces himself ; and as the gospel of the uncircumcision had been confided to Paul, so

was that of the circumcision to Peter (Gal. ii. 7). Hence it is to such that these two Epistles were addressed. Compare 2 Pet. iii. 1 with the verse before us. As this is certain, it is unbelieving to allow that any other statements can countervail. Even a man would not write so incoherently: why should men of faith think so unworthily of scripture? Can such persons hold divine inspiration?

It is the more remarkable, because, as we know, the churches throughout Asia Minor had been founded by the apostle Paul and consisted largely of those who had been Gentiles. The delicate consideration of Peter is the more striking, because he directs his appeals throughout a part of that land to those Christian Jews who fell under his administration. Needless to say, his instruction in no way clashed with that which Paul had preached, taught, and written to them, whether Jews or Gentiles. None knew better than Peter how much the Jewish confessors of the Lord Jesus needed to be established in grace; none felt more than he how disposed they were on the one hand to boast in law and ordinances, and on the other to conform to the shameful ways of the Pagans who surrounded them. In his very address or the superscription he strikes the key-note. From the start he thus reminds them, that they were "elect" after a new sort, not national now but personal, and flowing out of the grace of God as Father for known association with Christ not on earth but in heaven. They were therefore but "pilgrims" meanwhile, where He was despised and rejected as a

sufferer beyond all others in life (as He was alone and infinitely in His atoning death), that they too might by faith rejoice in sharing His sufferings as far as this could be.

For Peter was jealous over their souls with a godly jealousy, lest election might be severed from a deep sense of divine grace, and the spring be forgotten in claiming the issue. He therefore loses no time in saying plainly that not more surely are they "elect" than "sojourners." Had he heard the Son of God, in pouring out His heart to the Father, declare that His own (and were they not His own?) were not of the world, as He was not? Had he forgotten the Lord's repeating, yet more emphatically, "Of the world they are not, even as I am not" (John xvii. 15, 17)? Here it is a figurative expression, but the same truth. They were elect pilgrims. The world of man's home was not theirs, nor yet was Canaan, but heaven, yea the Father's house above. It was not Jewish feeling for the land of promise, but Christian hope in waiting for Christ and to be with Him where He is, and like Him glorified.

Therefore were they but sojourners here looking for glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and called to gird up the loins of their mind, being sober, and setting their hope perfectly upon the grace to be brought them at that revelation. Practical duties are based on the new relationships of grace; and truth is the communicated knowledge of both. For it is a characteristic of Peter's method and style to blend all together informally

and with fervour, so as to act on the renewed mind, exercising the conscience and the heart. If he has not the immense sweep of Paul in ranging through the counsels of God, if not his the penetrating into the roots of complicated questions and clearing the principles at stake, if a far-reaching and unfailing and subtle dialectic belongs to Paul beyond all others, to no one more admirably than to Peter was it given to strengthen his brethren pithily, earnestly, and affectionately, by the exhibition of Christ and His work, and by the constant application of God's righteous government, whatever be His grace too.

The names given of the lands, where were the Christian Jews addressed, call for little notice. It has been shewn by others that it well suits one writing from the eastern Babylon, but not the little place so named in Egypt any more than the symbolic metropolis of the west. The lack of persons saluted serves to prove that Peter was little if at all known personally there, whatever might be the just weight of inspired letters from him. These various provinces had been the familiar scene of Paul's labours.

They were "elect," then, "according to foreknowledge of God [the] Father, in (or, by) [the] Spirit's sanctification, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace be multiplied" (ver. 2).

Israel was the elect people beyond any nation on the earth; but they were elect after quite a different pattern. This clearly appears in Exod.

vi. 2-4. "And God spoke to Moses, and said to him, I am Jehovah; and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah I was not made known to them. And I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned." The designations as such, were familiar enough previously; but the name was not given by divine authority as a title of relationship to count on, when God first revealed Himself as El-Shaddai to the fathers, next as Jehovah to the sons, of Israel. The true pilgrim fathers were thereby assured of His unfailing protection, weak as they might be, in the midst of the corrupt heathen they were destined to supplant; and the sons were through Moses to know Him as their unchanging Governor who made them a people of possession to Himself through all ages, He that was and is and is to come.

The Christian Jews, believing in Jesus not only Lord and Christ but Son of the living God, as our apostle first confessed Him, were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. So had our Saviour unbosomed Himself in John xvii. "I manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word. . . . Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given to me, that they may be one, even as we are. . . . O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these

knew that thou didst send me. And I made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them." So on the Resurrection-day His message through Mary of Magdala was, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John xx. 17). How immense the advance in the glory and nearness of the relationship revealed!

According to this form and reality of foreknowledge, then, is the Christian chosen. It was and is Christ's in the fulness of personal divine dignity; it became ours by grace through redemption. The name of "our Father that is in heaven" shone early through the Lord's discourses on the mount, as in Matt. v.-vii., and in Luke vi. and elsewhere. But it was definitely and fully made our own by the Lord when risen; and thus the Holy Spirit leads our hearts now in joy and in sorrow. It is so that we are entitled distinctively to know Him, as Christ did perfectly. And it was in God's wisdom that the apostle of the circumcision should make it plain to the believing remnant of the Jews, as the apostle Paul did fully to Gentile believers.

Hence the "sanctification" or "holiness" here spoken of took quite another and far deeper shape. The elect people Israel had been set apart to Jehovah in an outward way. Individually and peremptorily they were circumcised in the flesh on the eighth day. Any other peculiar marks were,

as the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, "carnal ordinances imposed until a season of reformation." On the contrary the Christian, whether Jew or Greek, enjoys the Spirit's holiness; he is even born of the Spirit (John iii. 6, 8), and thus is the sanctification inward to the utmost degree. Accordingly such a one is "a saint" from God's first vital action spiritually in his soul. So Ananias instructed of the Lord goes to Saul, just converted, and at once accosts him as "Brother Saul," before he was even baptised as he was immediately after; so it is in substance for every one that is begotten by the word of truth. The Spirit's activity is immediate and abiding, the ground of the practical holiness that ensues, which is but partial and relative; whereas what the apostle here introduces is a principle absolute, unfailing, and personal. In practice alas! we must confess, with the Epistle of James, that "we all often offend." Only unspiritual men flatter themselves otherwise. We too frequently need the active care of the blessed Advocate Whom we have with the Father (1 John ii. 1).

Practical sanctification is a capital and constant duty for every Christian; and it is urged, as throughout the Bible, expressly in vers. 15, 16 of this chapter. But in ver. 2 it is solely sanctification in principle, that is, in the life given by grace rather than in the walk which is bound to manifest it, as all the godly must readily own. "As he who called you is holy, be ye also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Be ye holy,

for I am holy." But so to interpret the Spirit's holiness (or, sanctification) *here* would necessarily dislocate the sentence, and could insinuate nothing but error destructive of truth, even the fundamental truth of the gospel. For what we are taught is that those Christian Jews were chosen, in virtue of the Spirit's sanctification, for obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus : the original spring, the necessary power and process, and the distinct result as a fact. If taken to mean holiness in practice, this would be *before* coming under the virtue of Christ's blood. In other words the error must follow, that practical holiness is the way to be justified by His blood ; which might suit a besotted Romanist, but must be rejected by the least enlightened among Protestants. It denies the gospel of God's grace, and is at issue with all scripture that treats of the matter.

But if we understand the words to mean that the Spirit works in souls when born anew, to set them apart to God in this vital and indelible way, all is clear as well as consistent. For His setting apart is *unto* obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ. We are thus sanctified, not externally but in the new life imparted, to obey as Christ obeyed and to be sprinkled with His precious blood. So the same Saul of Tarsus immediately, when converted, says, "What shall I do, Lord?" His heart's primary purpose is to obey ; as our Lord Himself could say in His unique perfection, "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God." The Christian is bent on the same character of obedi-

once. It is not like a Jew, to obey and thus gain life, as under law ; it is obeying out of life already possessed, because he believes on Jesus.

Even the order, which to some is a difficulty, strictly adheres to the truth. For converted souls in general, perhaps always, have invariably as the instinct of divine life this purpose to obey as Christ obeyed, not legally, owning God's wondrous grace, before they do or can apprehend at all fully the efficacy of Christ's sacrificial work in blotting out all their sins. The interval may be ever so short where the gospel is distinctly proclaimed ; but as this is far from usual, one can see that many a soul truly converted may struggle on for weeks or months or even years, without the comforting assurance that Christ's blood has made them whiter than snow in the eye of God. Saul of Tarsus again supplies an obvious illustration. Was there ever a more notable conversion ? Yet was he three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink : the plain sign of a deep work of self-judgment, in no way of distrust or doubt, before he entered into the settled peace of deliverance by faith of the gospel, which before those days he had only regarded with stern unbelief.

Unquestionably the allusion is to Exod. xxiv. where Holocaust and Peace-offerings were presented to Jehovah ; and Moses took half the blood in basons, and sprinkled half on the altar. Then he read the book of the covenant and the people said, All that Jehovah hath said will we do and obey ; and Moses sprinkled the blood on the

people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant that Jehovah hath made with you concerning all these words. The blood here was the special sanction of death, signified by the blood-sprinkling, in case of disobedience. With this ministry of legal condemnation for the sinner the apostle contrasts the Christian, sanctified by the Spirit from his starting-point, to obey as Christ did in filial love, with the immensely blessed addition of *His* blood-sprinkling, which cleanses from every sin, instead of menacing inevitable death if we fail. If this was the law wherein Jews boasted, that is the gospel of which Peter was ashamed no more than Paul. The resulting obedience, of which our Lord is alike example and power, *is* (in other words but the truest sense) our practical holiness ; and it confirms in the strongest way the refutation, already ample, of the notion that the Spirit's holiness in this scripture imports the same thing. For it would really confuse the sentence and destroy the truth generally.

The fact is that theology in all the schools, Popish or Protestant, Calvinistic or Arminian, has somehow lost, and ignores, this most momentous truth of the Spirit's primary setting apart the renewed soul to God, even before and in order to justification and that obedience which is its inseparable effect. The only person my reading has lit on with any little inkling of its distinctness from the practical holiness which, as all the Reformed at least agree, follows justification, is the excellent and able Abp. Leighton. All others to the best

of my knowledge slur over what they did not understand ; and this is to say the least.

But I regret to add that none has more impudently tampered with this scripture, to suit his ignorance of it and his desire to uphold mere dogmatic views, than the famous translator and commentator, Beza, or Théodore de Bèze. Dean Alford was bold enough sometimes in squeezing the text and its translation through too much confidence in German critics, and his own real desire to be candid, without sufficient knowledge of the truth or subjection to the divine authority of the written word. But even his occasional temerity shines in comparison with Calvin's successor in the college of Geneva. For I ask any competent scholar whether the ill-regulated wit of man could devise a worse or more shameless perversion of our text than his rendering, "*ad* sanctificationem Spiritus, *per* obedientiam," &c. $\epsilon\nu=ad$ / $\epsilon\iota\varsigma=per$ / Were it in Homer or Herodotus, one might smile at lapses so absurd on the part of a learned, able, and zealous Christian. But such a dealing with God's word is atrocious. Yet this flagrant error stands uncorrected in all the five folio editions of his Greek and Latin N.T. from 1559 to 1598.

Had Beza and other theologians been subject to scripture, they would have learnt by grace that what the apostle of the circumcision here teaches is implied by the apostle of the uncircumcision in 1 Cor. vi. 11, "But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Do

men with the fear of God assume to correct the inspiring Spirit? Do they allow themselves the daring unbelief that they can alter the apostle's word, so as to avoid error and sustain their systems of divinity? It is clear that this greatest even of-inspired teachers lets the Corinthians and all believers know, that there is a real and most vital sanctification to God which accompanies the first quickening of the soul, when we are born of water and Spirit, and cleansed from our natural impurity by His life-giving power, before we enjoy the blessed sense of God's justifying us through faith in Jesus and His work. The order of Paul therefore is as necessary and as exact as that of Peter, both conveying the same truth, which has dropt out of all the systematic divinity of all ages, as far as I know. The reader can also compare 2 Thess. ii. 13. Holiness in practice remains intact, distinct, and imperative, to which justification gives its powerful impulse and cheer.

The apostle here adds, "Grace unto you and peace be multiplied." The nearest analogy in O.T. scripture, singular to say, is in Dan. iv. 1; though the imperial penitent only says, "Peace be multiplied." So Peter does yet more fully in the address of his Second Epistle to the same dispersed remnant of Christian Jews. It is characteristic of his fervour. James was content to write, "Greeting." Paul usually says, "Grace to you and peace" though he almost always adds "from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," with "mercy"

to an individual. Grace is the source, peace the outflow.

In grand terms from a glowing heart our apostle opens his letter after an address, as we have seen, of admirable suitability. It recalls the initiatory of a still greater apostle and the loftier theme of the Epistle to the Ephesian saints. But it is the deeply defined distinction between the two, notwithstanding this obvious resemblance, which gives the true key to both Epistles. He who fails to apprehend the different scope and the divine propriety of each betrays his own spiritual incapacity, and, if he imposes his ignorance on others, is nothing but so far a blind leader of the blind.

"Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ": so begins the letter to the saints that were in Ephesus. He is the God of the Man, Christ Jesus; He is the Father of Him, His Only-begotten, eternal, and beloved Son. He blessed us accordingly in His sovereign grace as "God," in His most intimate relationship as "Father." Every spiritual blessing is conferred; not one fails. It is not natural blessing as on earth to Israel till by transgression they forfeited it. Ours is in the heavenlies where Christ is now glorified at God's right hand; and all is secured in His redemptive power by virtue of Whom all the universe subsists together (Col. i. 17). It is in Christ so as to be unchanging blessedness, in contrast with those who stood on the conditions of the law fatal to the sinful and fruitless.

No such wealth of privilege, no such heavenly elevation, appears in our text ; yet does it announce what is equally momentous for the saint and for God's glory. Every other spiritual blessing had been in vain, if God's mercy did not beget us again, as our Epistle declares. There is no blessing more absolutely necessary for a sinner lost and ruined, with the old life depraved by inborn evil, habitual self-will, and incurable alienation from God. Hence the precious assurance of our apostle in words at first strikingly akin to those of the apostle Paul. "Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that according to his abundant mercy begot us again unto a living hope through Jesus Christ's resurrection out of [the] dead " (ver. 3) : an entirely new and divine life.

It is not as Jehovah for Israel, nor as Almighty God for the fathers. For us Christians God wrought more profoundly for His glory and for those who believe. It was in Christ's redemption in view both of the present and future on earth, and for heaven through all eternity. For He went down under God's judgment of sin, broke the power of sin and death, procured purification for sinners by His blood, and was raised again for the justification of believers. Every saint from the beginning had life in the Son of God : impossible to live to God, as all did, without life in Him. But now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ wrought in a more triumphant way in Him Who as sin-bearer entered the dark portals of the grave which closed on all others, and so glorified God

that He could not but raise Him from among the dead in the virtue of a life which death could no wise touch, so complete that henceforth we belong not to death, but rather death to us. Thus did God as here revealed beget us again through Christ's resurrection out of the dead. None could speak or know it till that mighty witness of redemption. It was not, nor could be true, till Christ was thus raised.

Truly it was "according to God's abundant mercy." If death has no more dominion over the dead and risen Saviour, the believer receives a commensurate portion even now : so much so that were He to come from heaven for us, we should be changed in a moment into the likeness of the body of His glory. Mortality would be swallowed up of life without one dying. We should not be unclothed but clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

It is therefore "unto a living hope" that God begot us again. "Lively," though due to Tyndale and followed by Cranmer, Geneva, and even the Rhemish, is inadequate and misleading. Wiclif alone was right. We are viewed as pilgrims still on earth in our mortal bodies. We have left the Egypt world, and have crossed the Red Sea, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, instead of meaning death to us, is our cleansing from our sins ; as His life is the spring of that filial obedience, which in Him is seen in absolute perfection. We are here not regarded in the height of the heavens, risen with Christ and seated in Him there. But

Christ is raised for our deliverance, and we are ushered into the world as set free from the old house of bondage, and we traverse it as the wilderness, led of God on the way to the heavenly Canaan as Israel of old to the earthly.

It is accordingly under this aspect that the Epistle contemplates the Christian. He has to do with a God of grace, not of law for a Jew, and an object of His government here below, till the living hope is realised of being with Christ and in heaven. But that divine government for every day meanwhile is not of the chosen people as of old in earthly power and with deliverances to strike the eye and awe of the nations. A government of souls comes before us while evil is still prevalent in the world ; but God makes all things, trials and sufferings of faith in particular, work together for good to those that love Him. As Christ's resurrection was manifestly the victory of the Saviour for His own over the enemy's power, behold Him on high to fill them with holy confidence that He will appear to their full deliverance and glory in due time according to promise.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we find the present association of the Christian and the church with heaven in Christ. Here it is a living hope of reaching heaven through Christ in a glorified state by-and-by. Both aspects of the truth are of the deepest interest and importance : we are on earth redeemed, as pilgrims and strangers, going across a desert and waiting for Christ ; we are also even now quickened together with Christ, raised to-

gether with Him, and seated in Him in the heavenlies. As the letter to the Ephesians treats all its topics on this footing from first to last, so does the first Epistle of Peter to the Christian Jews throughout open out to them divine life as theirs, aided by the sustaining power and gracious direction of God, to guide them through this dread and howling wilderness of the world.

Nor are there any proofs of the inspired mind of God finer or firmer than the details of divine truth thus discoverable to the soul dependent on God and honouring His word. Some of the indications, each characteristic of its own book, may appear as we dwell for a season on this or that; but what are they among the many more which remain to reward the diligent searcher into these oracles, nowhere deceiving, never dumb?

The scope of our Epistle excludes, as we have seen, the great truth unfolded in that to the Ephesian saints, that we are already blessed in the heavenlies (*ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις*) in Christ. This is connected indissolubly with the mystery of God's will, which gave Christ, set there above the highest creatures, as Head over all things to the church, the which and which alone is His body. Accordingly we await an administration of the fulness of the seasons or set times, when God will head or sum up all the universe in the Anointed Man, the things in the heavens and those on the earth, in Him in Whom also we were given heritage.*

*It is an instructive proof how little the most eminent critical ability avails for the N.T., that Lachmann edited *ἐκλήθημεν* (A D E F G) in

We have no such elevated relationship revealed here, nor is the boundless inheritance of all creation in this Epistle predicated of us or even of Christ. The inheritance here is simply "in the heavens" to contrast it the more distinctly with that which was Israel's portion [in the land of Canaan. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ begot us again unto a living hope through resurrection of Jesus Christ from out of dead persons. It was a hope therefore superior to the inroads of death. If He died, it was that our sins should not bar us from bliss with Him, inasmuch as His own self bore them in His body on the tree; and He rose that we might enjoy His victory, as well as profit now and ever by His suffering once for sins.

But the apostle pursues the inspired aim yet more definitely into the future—"unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading, reserved in [the] heavens for you*, that are being guarded by God's power through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in a (or, the) last season" (vers. 4, 5).

Thus Christ risen and gone on high (instead of taking His seat on the holy hill of Zion, and the

Eph. i. 11, where spiritual intelligence is certain that it must be *ἐκκληρώθημεν*, the added truth of our heirship. The Vulgate had similarly erred though qualifying it by "sorte," as also the Peschito and Harcl. Syrr.; Memph. &c. in the rendering of "chosen" which belongs to the calling, not to the inheritance.

* There are but few cursives which read ἡμᾶς "us," as do Steph. edd. 3 and 4, and Beza edd. 1 and 2, and Elz. It is in none else even of the earlier editions, as Erasm. Complut. Ceph. Beza. Colin. Steph. 1 and 2. Beza is right in edd. 3, 4, and 5. No uncial is known to sanction "us," which seems due to assimilating ver. 4 to 3, in disregard of what follows.

sceptre of righteousness over Israel and the nations) has changed the outlook for the believer meanwhile. He too looks by faith on Christ where He is, and awaits the part which the gospel pledges to him in heaven. It is an inheritance which no corruption can destroy, which no defilement can sully, which resists all the withering of time. In itself, in its purity, and in its freshness, it will abide unchanging. It stands in virtue of Him Who not only created all originally but Who has reconciled us, and will more widely still by His blood (Col. i. 20, Heb. ix. 23).

The inheritance in view is in no way enjoyed now, but "reserved in the heavens for you." Who can doubt these words were meant to raise the eyes of these believing Jews especially, and of the readers in general, above "glory dwelling in our land," as in Ps. lxxxv. 9? Yet the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those that turn in that day from transgression in Jacob, when (as surely as Jehovah said the word) His Spirit and His words, according to His covenant, shall not depart from them from generation to generation, from henceforth and for ever. But beyond just doubt, neither the closing promise of Isa. lix. nor the glowing vision of chap. lx. and of all that follows to the end of the book, speaks of an inheritance "reserved in the heavens" for those who now believe in the gospel. It is Israel and the glory predicted for the earth, though rising up in the last two chapters to "new heavens and a new earth." The promise is there applied to Jerusalem; but it furnished the ground for

Peter in his Second Epistle to look onward to its fulfilment in the largest sense, when the kingdom shall give place to the eternal state, and God shall be all in all. Before that, will be accomplished, inchoatively at least, Israel's full part in that which shall never know change or eclipse.

The language here recalls Col. i. 5, where the apostle Paul speaks of "the hope that is laid up for you in the heavens." The saints there, as here, are regarded as on earth, instead of being seen in their present heavenly association with Christ. It is hope anticipating the glory on high, not as already seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, as in Eph. ii. 6. Only Peter was not given like Paul to tell the saints in the Epistle to the Colossians, that as they died with Christ and were raised with Him, and thus had done with ordinances for men as alive in the world, so they were to seek and mind the things above where He sits, not those on the earth. Indeed our apostle (as we see in chap. ii. 24) rises no higher than our death to *sins* in a practical way, which is true and important, not at all to the doctrine in Rom. vi. of our death with Christ to *sin*, which is the root, and not merely the manifest effect or offshoot. Every shade of difference proves how grievously those err who think that scripture speaks loosely. For such a thought really betrays the spiritual ignorance of such as presume to judge it; when in fact they, however great their erudition outside (it may be), have need to be taught the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God,

and are become such as need milk rather than solid food.

The hope of such an inheritance reserved for them in the heavens was most cheering. But in thinking of themselves and the wilderness through which they pass, they needed and have another source of blessed comfort—you, says he, "that are being guarded by (or, in) God's power." What more suitable, what more precious and welcome, than such a divine assurance? The inheritance was kept or reserved for them in the heavens. This was just what was wanted, while they were on the earth waiting and learning self as well as God, and suffering for righteousness' sake or, still more blessed, for Christ's name. But, as proving their own weakness and men's hostility and Satan's active malice, they were constantly exposed to difficulties, trials, afflictions, and dangers. Hence their need to be meanwhile guarded all the way through. And so they are—garrisoned by God's power. And if God be for us, who against? Is He not immeasurably more than all?

Still God has His means; and this the apostle proceeds next to tell us. It is "through faith." Nor can any means for a saint on earth compare with faith. For it beyond all others honours God and the word of His grace, needing dependence on the good Shepherd by the Holy Spirit, Who is sent here and dwells in the Christian, to guide into all the truth, and thus glorify Him by receiving of His and announcing or reporting it to us. Thus is it "by God's power," but "through faith" which

gives Him His due place, and keeps us in our place of confidence in Him according to His word. For we walk through faith, not through sight (2 Cor. v. 7). It was not so that Israel marched through the wilderness, but guided visibly by the cloud or the pillar of fire. The Christian now, whether a Jew or a Gentile, has to walk through faith, of which the Lord Himself was the blessed pattern and perfection.

But the end is also added: "unto [or, for] salvation." In our Epistle, as often in the Pauline Epistles, salvation does not stop short of the final result. See Rom. v. 9, 10; viii. 24; 1 Cor. v. 5; Heb. i. 14; vii. 25; ix. 28. Hence when our apostle speaks of what is now given and enjoyed, he discriminates it as "salvation of souls" (i. 9). Otherwise he connects salvation with the full victory of Christ even for the body; which therefore must look on to the future day.

This is entirely confirmed by the context. Here for instance it is a salvation "ready to be revealed." This is quite characteristic of our apostle. For the truth which runs through the First Epistle in one form, and the Second in another, is the righteous government of God as made known in Christ to the Christian. John is occupied with eternal life in the Son of God; the issue of which will be the Father's house where He is, and we are to be, at His coming to fetch us there (John xiv. 2, 3). 1 John iii. 2, 3, adds that if it or He is manifested, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. The apostle Paul was given, more than any,

to make known how the saints are to be changed and caught up to be with the Lord; so as to be brought with Him when that day begins (1 Thess. iii. 13, iv. 13-17).

Thus Peter points to the revelation of salvation in the day of Christ's appearing; because not till then will be the establishment of the kingdom in power and glory when the earth and the earthly people shall taste its blessed effects. Grace will be shown in the richest way by the Lord's coming to receive us to Himself that we may thus be with Him in the Father's house: all are caught up alike, as the apostle Paul shows, into the same home of love. But there is no manifestation of righteous government in this; in the revelation to the world there will be in the highest degree. For in His appearing and kingdom each will be seen as having received his own reward according to his own labour. And the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render in that day the crown of righteousness, not to the faithful servant only who was already being "poured out," but also to all who love His appearing. Then too will Satan be excluded not only from the heavenlies but from the earth. Then will come the world-kingdom of the Lord and His Christ, and not only recompence to the righteous, but destructive retribution to those that destroy the earth (Rev. xi. 15-19).

Peter also lays great stress on the fact that Christ has so completely wrought redemption to God's glory that nothing calls for delay, save the long-suffering of God that is still bringing souls to

repentance. Otherwise salvation is "ready" to be revealed "in a last season," as Christ is "ready to judge living and dead" (chap. iv. 5). Both belong to that day of manifestation, when evil shall be put down, and judgment, instead of miscarrying as so often now, shall return to righteousness. Never more shall the throne of wickedness claim fellowship with Jehovah. "For He cometh; for He cometh to judge the earth." Those who mind earthly things cannot love His appearing, which will establish the new divine order of righteous government wherein Jehovah alone shall be exalted.

Thus the new life imparted, as abundant as the mercy that begot us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from out of the dead, has a result no less worthy of the God and Father of our Lord. It is for an inheritance incorruptible in itself, undefiled by evil, and unfading in its beauty. It is not on earth as Israel looks for their portion, but reserved in heaven for saints who in their weakness are being guarded in the midst of difficulties and dangers through faith unto salvation, founded on a sacrifice even now accepted, and therefore ready to be revealed, even for the body, in a last season which will manifest the grand purpose of God.

The apostle now turns to the marked and peculiar characteristic of Christianity which stands contrasted with the hopes of Israel: the co-existence of exceeding joy, whilst passing through keen sorrow of ever so varied kinds. It will not be thus, when Jehovah reigns, the world is stablished

that it cannot be moved, and He judges the peoples with equity ; when all creation is in harmony, the heavens glad, the earth rejoicing, the sea and its fulness loudly responsive, the field and all that is therein exulting, and the very trees of the wood singing for joy (Ps. xvi.). While the Lord Jesus abides hidden on high, the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, though its earnest expectation waits for the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. viii.) ; as their revealing depends on the manifestation of the Lord (Col. iii.).

Then, and not before, will come the restitution of all things (Acts iii.), when God who sent Jesus the first time for the redemption (by blood) of His heirs will send Him again for redemption (by power) of the inheritance, both heavenly and earthly (Eph. i. 10). Then Zion shall never more taste sorrow or shame ; and stiff-necked rebellious Israel shall be meek under Jehovah and David their king, their backsliding healed, themselves loved freely, when He will be as the dew to them (Hos. iii. xiv.), and they in the midst of many peoples as dew from Him, as showers upon the grass, a blessing that tarries not for man nor waits for the sons of men (Micah v.).

But though by faith we behold Jesus, Who has been made a little lower than angels on account of the suffering of death, for the same reason crowned with glory and honour, now we do not yet see all things subjected to Him, as they will be seen when His world-kingdom comes (Rev. xi. 15). Meanwhile sufferings prevail during the present time ;

and Satan, though known to faith as judged in the cross of Christ, is the ruler of this world, the god of this age blinding the thoughts of the faithless to the end that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ Who is God's image should not shine forth. Hence the Christian has the part of Christ, rejection and suffering both for righteousness and for His name. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. xv. 19). How different from the day when "great shall be the peace of thy (Zion's) children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee." "Behold, they may gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee." "And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. lx. 3). "For that nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish" (ib. 12): "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (ib. 20).

Undoubtedly these are highly figurative expressions; but they are figures expressive of Israel's blessings in the days of the future kingdom when Jehovah shall be King over all the earth. In that day shall Jehovah be one, and His name one (Zech. xiv. 9). Then idols of silver and gold shall be consigned to the moles and to the bats (Isa. ii. 20). And peoples shall flow to the mountain of Jeho-

vah's house ; and many nations shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah and to the house of the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His path ; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many peoples and reprove strong nations afar off ; and they shall forge their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-knives : nation shall not rise against nation, neither shall they learn war any more " (Mic. iv. 1-3).

In these scriptures there is a true foreshadow of the coming kingdom, but in no sense applicable to the Christian. For he now, though having peace in Christ, shall have tribulation in the world, called to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ ; he knows, that if we endure, we shall also reign with Him, while wicked men and impostors wax worse and worse deceiving and deceived. As our apostle says (ii. 20), "If when ye do well and suffer, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable (or, grace) with God." Such is practical Christianity in contrast with the coming kingdom, contradicted alike by the principle and the practice of Christendom. It is therefore the more imperative to dwell on the truth and expose the departure from it for His glory and the walk of faith.

Again we have, in a general application, what the apostle of the Gentiles says of Christian service in the still fuller and more emphatic terms of 2 Cor. vi. 4-10. If Paul knew it above measure in his

ministry, he like Peter calls on every Christian to be "as sorrowful (or, grieved), yet always rejoicing."

"Wherein ye exult, now for a little (if it is needful) put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, much more precious than gold that perisheth though proved by fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at [the] revelation of Jesus Christ" (vers. 6, 7).

To connect "wherein" with the last season seems poor in comparison with the glorious result generally. It is even misleading, if it be so taken as to deny the Christian's title to exuberant joy even now in the portion God has given us in Christ. Never will there be a work to surpass, yea or to match, what has been already wrought in the cross. Nowhere else such a concentration of what otherwise must be irreconcilable, majesty and humiliation, holiness and mercy, righteousness and sin, love and hatred, Satan apparently victorious but really and for ever vanquished, man at his utter worst, God in His fullest grace, Jesus at the lowest point of obedience, yet glorifying God absolutely even as to sin, all issuing for the believer to God's glory in a perfect acceptance and an everlasting deliverance, with the reconciliation of all creation to come. "Wherein ye exult." What else can we feel through grace? If we believe, we do not wait for the day of sight to participate in this exceeding joy, which breaks forth in thanksgiving and praise. In that day it will without doubt be unmixed with suffering and sorrow. The weakness of the mortal body will be no longer, but

incorruption, glory, and power: so thoroughly shall we all be changed at Christ's coming. There is no scripture, no sound reason, however hostile, to deny present exultation as a proper characteristic of the Christian even now; or this, as the precise meaning here intended by the apostle.

But it is accompanied by being "put to grief" as a needed passing trial in God's government, while the exceeding joy may and ought to be habitual. For this rests on accomplished redemption and life in the power of resurrection, on the grace and truth which came through the Saviour. These abide unchanging for our souls, whereas the grief is definite; as the very tenses of the verb and of the participle imply, no less than the facts warrant from which both affections cannot but flow. Hence "now for a little" qualifies of course the aorist participle, and in no way our actual exultation as unbelief in effect would make it. This is still more distinctly taught by the brief clause "if needful," or "if there is need." How considerate and good! For the Father of spirits deals thus for our profit to the partaking of His holiness. No discipline at the time seems of joy but of grief; but afterward it yields peaceable fruit of righteousness to those that have been exercised by it. So we read in Heb. xii. 10, 11.

Nor is Peter's doctrine really different: "for a little at this time,* if there is need, put to grief in

*The *ἀπρί* is in no way superfluous, if *ἀγαλλιᾶσθε* be as it is a proper present; for it goes with the participle to counteract any wrong use of the aorist. The grief comes transiently now, and only where an unerring God sees the need. This when trusted is a great cheer in the trial.

manifold trials," or temptations. So triumphantly says Rom. viii. 34, It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather raised, who is too at the right hand of God, who also intercedeth for us : who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword ? These were heavy trials, but by no means all ; for indeed they are many and manifold. But if we do *not* know what we should pray for as is fitting, the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us intercedes according to God Who hears Him ; and we *do* know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those that are called according to purpose.

Only as Heb. xii. looks for a good result now, our text points to yet more by-and-by, as it says, " that the proof of your faith, much more precious than of gold that perisheth though proved by fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory in the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Thus the apostle contemplates the wilderness and our journeying through it. In the type this began for Moses and Israel with a song of exultation ; and if Israel failed to continue thus, it is no rule for us, for (or, concerning) whom God foresaw some better thing ; and what happened to them is written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. The worshippers once purged have no longer any conscience of sins ; and no wonder. For Christ by one offering has perfected for ever—in perpetuity—those sanctified, as Christians are. The wilderness is pre-eminently

the scene of temptation. There the heart is put to the proof. All the more needful is it, that in passing through we cherish confidence in God's love to us. There we find by these trials how weak we are, and alas! it may be, careless, light, and unfaithful. We are sifted like Simon Peter, but have the Lord pleading for us as for him that our faith fail not. For this is the desire and aim, that the proof of our faith might be found to praise.

Note again that praise, honour, and glory are connected with Christ's revelation. His coming to receive and take us to the Father's house is supreme grace; in His revelation will be the appraisal of fidelity and reward accordingly. Both assuredly will be verified; but righteous government is quite distinct from sovereign grace.

The apostle explains how it is that the Christian is enabled to exult in the midst of trials ever so severe, yet never allowed but where need calls for them at the present time and for a little while. For assuredly, if God's power acts as a garrison round His saints whilst they pass through the world, it is no less energetic in controlling every hostile influence, whatever be the malicious wiles of the adversary the devil. Hence can we boldly say, we *know* that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those that are called according to purpose. Yea we glory in the tribulations also, knowing what under God is the blessed result both here and hereafter. All the blessing along the way turns upon having Christ as the object before our souls.

"Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though not now seeing but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable and glorified (or, full of glory), receiving the end of your faith, salvation of souls" (vers. 8, 9).

When the kingdom is manifested in power and glory at the revelation of Christ, when Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth, when with His sore and great and strong sword He will visit leviathan the fleeing serpent and leviathan the crooked serpent, and will slay the dragon that is in the sea, He will in Zion make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And there He will swallow up the veil that veils all the peoples and the covering that is spread over all the nations. He will swallow up death in victory. And the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of His people will He take away from off the earth; for Jehovah hath spoken.

But now there is the contrast which the N. T. everywhere proclaims, as in the opening, and, we shall see, throughout this Epistle; where it was a special aim to instruct the Christian Jews, lest their old Jewish expectation might mingle and lead to disappointment. For we who believe in the rejected but glorified Christ have to do meanwhile with "the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt. xiii. 12), as the Lord told the disciples. "To you it is given to know the mystery of the

kingdom of God " (Mark iv. 11). As a whole, and in its varied parts, it was a secret for which the chosen people was unprepared, looking mainly for the display of righteousness, when Israel shall blossom and bud, and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit, and Jerusalem shall be called Jehovah's throne, and all the nations shall be gathered there, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem ; and as they shall walk no more with stubborn heart, so shall both houses of Israel be gathered in one, and Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. And no wonder, for Satan shall be bound in the abyss, and Jehovah-Jesus shall be King over all the earth, nor this only but as the Head over all things heavenly as well as earthly.

With the glorious prospect for the universe in ages to come Christianity stands in striking contrast. For the devil, as our Epistle shows (v. 8), walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. It is a wilderness world still, instead of blossoming abundantly and rejoicing with joy and song ; and the glory of Jehovah is not yet seen, the excellency of our God, as all the earth in that day shall be filled with His glory. The saints are the very souls who are put to grief, as need arises, in manifold trials. At the same time they are entitled to deeper joys than the displayed kingdom can afford. And here, as the fact had been clearly stated according to experience in the light of the truth, the apostle explains the rich and unfailing source. It is Jesus, the crucified ; yet

He is not here but risen, yea glorified on high. He is thus the key to all.

"Whom having not seen ye love." What a difference from the ordinary occasion of human affection, nay more, from the promise to Israel in that day! "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips. Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever . . . Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. xlv. 2, 6, 7). It is not only His reign of beneficence in power and majesty; but at least Jerusalem begins with looking on Him whom they pierced, and mourning as for an only son, a firstborn. Yet appears their Deliverer when their danger is at its extremity, and their bitterest self-reproach is swallowed up in their loving gratitude for Him whose faithfulness to them no evil on their part could overcome.

Good as their portion will be, that of the Christian is far better. And here the apostle does not even notice the peculiar circumstances of such disciples as beheld the Lord in the days of His flesh. He does not say, "we who saw Him then," but "ye" as addressing those of the dispersion, just like the bulk who believe the gospel. "Whom having not seen ye love." Nevertheless it was an immense fact that He had come, the obedient and dependent Man; God's faithful Witness, manifest-

ing the Father, as we read of Him in the Gospels; accomplishing redemption, and now at the right hand of God above. Hence the Lord pronounced the least in the kingdom of the heavens greater than the greatest before it; and the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 40) says that God provided or foresaw "some better thing for us."

It must be admitted, as to the words before us, that whatever the love the elders cherished for the coming Messiah, it could not have had that impulse and strength which was given by the power of His infinite grace acting on renewed hearts, as they followed His steps, and hung on His words, and delighted in His ways here below. The Lord could say, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I say to you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things that ye behold, and did not see them, and to hear the things that ye hear, and did not hear them" (Luke x. 24). But it is plain that even that wondrous privilege was beneath the mighty accession imported by His death, and resurrection, and ascension, especially when the Holy Spirit was given to apprehend all fully and to bear witness accordingly.

Therefore those who yearn after a Messiah seen on earth know not how much it is to know Him dead, risen, and glorified, even for the deepest profit in tracing His recorded ways on earth. For it is in this light that His every word, step, and act are best understood and enjoyed. There His love shines at its fullest; and *we* love, because *He* first loved us, and assuredly love Him beyond all.

Now it is in this way that the apostle could say characteristically, "Whom having not seen ye love." It is just so the Christian loves Christ. He knows His love, as none before Incarnation could know, and beyond all during His ministry. He knows it in His humiliation, in His suffering unequalled and above all comparison in His rejection and cross. He begins, though he never saw Him here, with learning its depths, where those who followed Him on earth closed their difficulties, and passed into spiritual understanding, when He was raised from out of the dead. None has such vantage ground for loving the Lord Jesus as the Christian. Even the apostles loved Him all the more when they emerged from Jewish wraps and veils into that state of light and liberty.

The next clause only confirms the superior blessedness of Christianity: "in whom, though not now seeing but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Our Lord has conclusively ruled that believing has a value beyond sight. "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed they, that have seen not and believed" (John xx. 29). It is just the difference between the Jews when their blessing comes, and the Christian yet more blessed morally now; and what will it be then? As heaven is above earth. Hence it is evident that as Christianity deepens love, so it purifies and strengthens faith. The elders in its power obtained witness; but how immensely the scope of faith is enlarged when the secrets of God are no longer hidden but revealed

as now to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit!

Well may the Christian then "exult with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It is so characteristic that our Lord represents its very starting-point in the reception of the prodigal son. For God as such is glorified in that cross of Christ which is its foundation, and He is also as Father in the love of that relationship. "Bring out the best robe and invest him; and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and hath come to life, he was lost and is found." God Himself has His joy in the grace that to such brings salvation. What sanction for its object and all that have tasted of like mercy! And as we are called to grow by the knowledge of God and His Son, so also to rejoice in the Lord always, and in every thing give thanks. Shame on us if we do not now exult with joy unspeakable and glorified, seeing that in the glory is He on whom our blessedness depends. No doubt we boast in hope of the glory of God; but our best, our perfect, security for it is that He is there, entered as forerunner for us.

In accordance with the exultation to which we are even now entitled, while looking on for its perfection when we are glorified, it is added, "receiving the end of your faith, salvation of souls." We shall not receive salvation of the body till He comes for whom we wait; but we are not waiting for the salvation of souls. This the gospel announ-

ces with all plainness of certainty. Christ has wrought such a work for it that no addition could make it more complete in itself or more efficacious for him that believes. He is not like the earthly priest standing to renew what never could be finished. When He had offered one sacrifice for sins, He in perpetuity (or, without a break) sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. Whatever else He may do, He has nothing to do for cleansing the worshippers. For by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity those that are sanctified; His seat there proclaims it.

But we are told by one who denies this present fruit of Christ's work to be here meant, that the word *κοιμίζόμενοι* quite forbids the sense of "present realising," and in every one of the references it betokens the ultimate reception of glory or condemnation from the Lord. Is this true? The texts are 2 Cor. v. 10, Eph. vi. 8, Col. iii. 25, 1 Pet. v. 4, 2 Pet. ii. 13; which in fact disprove the strange allegation. For indisputably the first is from its nature only a future scene with which the aorist subjunctive falls in. The second and third not only presuppose that day but are expressly the future tense; like the fourth. The fifth is a future participle, whereas in the contested case of our text it is the participle of the present tense, and the context confirms that it is now. "Joy one cannot speak out and glorified" may be and is pleaded for a future sense. But will it be really so in that day, when perfection is come? When we

know as we are known, will utterance fail as it does now?

"Glorified," or full of glory, is no doubt an unusual word; yet to attribute this also to a joy too big for our present power of expression seems just to suit the fervour of the apostle. Christ on high its source might readily clothe the Christians' joy with that character of glory before they themselves are there. Soul-salvation, before our bodies are conformed to the body of His glory, is a worthy end of our faith to receive now; for beyond all controversy the outer man follows the inner, and God never disappoints the believer of his hope. Salvation "of souls" too by its restricted application fittingly lends itself to what the believer receives now; whereas for the future the apostle does not so qualify "salvation," as we have already remarked.

The concluding verses of the introduction refer to salvation as far as it was originally disclosed to prophets, and now fully presented as glad tidings by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, consequent on the sufferings which were to befall Christ and the glories that should follow, while we await that power which will even externally deliver from evil at His appearing. The brief unfolding here given was of extreme moment for the believing remnant whom the apostle then addressed and all such as might follow. They had little difficulty in apprehending that the Lord in that day will not only accomplish the blessed and joyous prospect for the earth, but for the heavens also. Salvation,

ready to be revealed in the last time, comprehends, though it be not limited to, their entering on an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved for them on high, whilst they need to be guarded in God's power through faith meanwhile. It is but soul-salvation now, the pledge of what is final, complete, and glorious in that day. The rejection of Christ and His absence on high brought in meanwhile a necessary modification which tests every soul of man, and not least those who had the early and partial revelations of God.

The unbelieving Jews sought to solve the difficulty by the fiction of two Messiahs: one the son of Joseph, of the tribe of Ephraim; the other the son of David, of the tribe of Judah; the first, to contend and suffer death; the second, to conquer and reign gloriously and for ever. The Talmud taught it; the later Targum applied it to Cant. iv. 5, vii. 3; and the Rabbins Solomon Jarohi, Aben Ezra, and D. Kimchi popularised it. Now we know that the O. Testament leaves no conceivable opening for two such personages, but lays the utmost stress on their being different states of the same Anointed of Jehovah. He was indeed the Son of David, not through Mary only as in Luke iii., but legally too through Joseph who was of Solomon's royal stem as in Matt. i. And, what was of immeasurably deeper importance, He and He only of David's sons was David's Lord, as in Ps. cx. 1 cited by Himself to confound the haughty adversaries who doubted and despised Him. The crowd then, and

probably their leader, had not yet invented the delusion of a double Messiah; but they left no room for His sufferings, and cared only for His earthly glory as their vested right. Hence when He said (John xii. 32), "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all to me" (this He said signifying by what death He was about to die), they answered, "We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is *this* Son of man?"

As we shall have more to say, when we look closely into ver. 11, we turn here to examine the details of what precedes in its due order.

"Of which salvation prophets* that prophesied of the grace that [was] toward you sought out and searched out" (ver. 10).

So we learn from Gen. xlix. 18. "Salvation" was identified with the coming and work of the Messiah. The believers little if at all understood how it was to be; but they had no doubt of the saving grace which would then be manifested. They recognised signal acts of deliverance meanwhile, as in the days of Moses the miraculous passage of the Red Sea; as in the work which Jehovah wrought by Jonathan; and as later still in Jehoshaphat's day, when the sons of Ammon and

*It is not "the" prophets as a body, but persons so characterised. Hence the article follows, "that" prophesied concerning the grace that was destined for those that now believe. Prophetic character is all the more brought into prominence by omitting the article before *προφήται*. Class is in view rather than the persons as an entire and definite object before us.

Moab and those of mount Seir destroyed each other to the relief of Judah whom they had menaced with ruin. But they looked on to the latter day as the goal of their hopes, when Messiah should establish the salvation fully and for ever. How clearly it is "grace," not of works whereof flesh might glory.

Hence in the Psalms we hear as in the last verse of xiv., "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When Jehovah bringeth back the captivity of his people, then shall Jacob rejoice, Israel shall be glad." In the second book Ps. liii. similarly concludes, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, then shall Jacob rejoice, Israel shall be glad." The times were dark, and growingly darker; but if the godly remnant fall back on what God, Elohim, is when covenant privileges were no longer enjoyed, they anticipate in faith God's scattering the ruined foe, and long for final salvation to come out of Zion as His centre, when His people as a whole should return with everlasting joy. It is certain too from Ps. lxxvii. that the Spirit of prophecy, if the written word had been but heeded, regards God's mercy to Israel as His way to extend His "saving health among all nations." Sovereign grace is not more sure and definite than rich and free. "Let the peoples praise thee, O God, let all the peoples praise thee. Oh let the nations be glad and sing for joy! for thou shalt judge the peoples with equity and govern the nations upon earth."

Nothing can be in more marked contrast with Jewish narrowness. Salvation is neither of prescriptive right, nor of personal merit, but of "grace." And so will sing in a day yet to come, both the nations, and all Israel that shall be saved.

It is of deep interest to observe that the next Psalm, lxviii., has for its central truth the Lord ascended on high, the mighty conqueror, Who, as He "received gifts in man" (*i.e.* as such), gave gifts to men. So the apostle could add, without citing the words which await divine grace in its future activity, "yea, the rebellious also, for the dwelling of Jah Elohim [there]." Alas! the Jews are still rebellious; but the day hastens, when they shall look up and say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah; and He will assuredly come with a blessing never to pass away. Their God is the God of salvation; and so they are to prove, when in answer to their cry He rends the heavens and comes down, and all their righteousnesses are as a polluted garment in their eyes, as indeed they are, and He clothes them with the raiment of salvation and praise. But we must refrain from citing more from the book of praises.

None need wonder that the prince of prophets is pre-eminently rich in speaking of salvation so divine. In chap. xii. which closes the first section of his prophecies, Isaiah predicts that Israel shall say, "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid; for Jah, Jehovah, is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. And with joy ye shall draw water out of the wells of

salvation." This follows beyond doubt the introduction of Messiah and His future reign in chap. xi. In chap. xxv. 9 he says when drawing to the end of the next section with various and prolonged thanksgiving, "Behold, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is Jehovah, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." So in xxvi. 1, "We have a strong city: salvation doth he appoint for walls and bulwarks." In his third section, where the final troubler of Israel is revealed with a "woe" to him, chap. xxxiii., we have in ver. 2, "Jehovah be gracious to us; we have waited for thee. Be their arm every morning, yea, our salvation in the time of trouble;" then in ver. 22, "Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah our lawgiver, Jehovah our king; he will save us." Again in xxxv. 4, "Be strong, fear not; behold, your God: vengeance cometh, the recompence of God! He will come himself, and save you." In the middle or fourth section of history we could not look for more than such a typical reference as chap. xxxviii. 20. But in the fifth where "My servant" appears, we have ample testimony and in forms of great variety beyond the words "save" or "salvation." He restores, redeems, forms for Himself, pours water and His Spirit upon them, as His witnesses and His servants as He is the God of Israel, the Saviour, "a just God and a Saviour; there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (xlv. 21, 22; see also 8, 17; xlv. 13). In the sixth division, where Messiah comes out fully

and His rejection, salvation is still more conspicuous, as in chaps. xlix. 6, 8, 25; li. 5, 6, 8; lii. 7. Who can be surprised that discerns the Saviour suffering, and exalted, in chap. liii. where we have the fullest and clearest witness to Him and His work, though the expression of "save" or salvation there occurs not? But many other words point to that truth and the meritorious and efficacious cause, as in vers. 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12. In the seventh or last part we have its express and abundant mention, as in lix. 1, 11, 16, 17; lx. 18; lxi. 10; lxii. 1; lxiii. 1, 5; lxiv. 5.

In Jeremiah it is enough to refer to chaps. xv. 20; xxx. 10, 11; xlv. 27; in Ezek., xxxiv. 22; xxxvi. 29; xxxvii. 23; in Hosea i. 7; in Zeph. iii. 17, 19; in Zech. viii. 7, 13; ix. 16; x. 6; xii. 7. Only it would be a mistake to imagine that other prophets did not predict the same thing in other words. See for example Daniel (ix. 24) who confesses the sins of Israel and pleads the Lord's righteousness and name. Then comes the answer of a definite time, when the transgression should be closed, and an end made of sins and expiation for iniquity, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and the vision and prophet sealed, and the holy of holies anointed. So it is with others, each in differing forms.

Nothing then can be plainer in result than that prophets predicted concerning the coming salvation, which did not fail for such as believed the gospel, like those to whom the apostle addressed this Epistle. For what if the mass of the Jews were without faith? Their unbelief did not make of

none effect the faith of God. Those who submit to His righteousness in Christ reap the blessing.

Prophets before them, we are told, diligently sought and searched diligently concerning that salvation. Their prophesying did not supersede the need or the profit of sedulous research, but rather stimulated it. No honour in prophesying saved its instruments from seeking and searching earnestly to understand what was given them to predict out of the fullness which is in God. Dependence is and has ever been called for, with confidence in His goodness and His tender consideration of our own ignorance and weakness. But the gift of His word encourages us to wait on Him for understanding it as far as pleases Him. So did inspired men, as we see notably in Daniel for a case at hand, as well as for what would only be in the time of the end. Nor can any incidental fact more distinctly prove how truly prophecy was not of man's will nor shrewd guess of wit, but of God, Who spoke or wrote by His servant in the Spirit. For he had still to sift it with all diligence to understand what he had thus divinely uttered. Salvation was a rich blessing from God, transcending all that they possessed in gracious privilege and bound up with Messiah's day, which God alone gave prophets to anticipate. But what they prophesied, they needed to weigh and examine deeply to make truly their own, in whatever measure of intelligence this might be.

Let us now consider what is revealed as the object of the research. "Searching what or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ that [was] in

them did indicate when testifying beforehand the sufferings that [were] for Christ, and the glories after them" (ver. 11).

A mind was at work far beyond that of prophets, yet at work intimately in them; "the Spirit of Christ," a phrase the more striking because not till long after did the Son become the Christ. But what He was disclosing looked on to that wondrous fact and testified of Him beforehand in that character. It is somewhat as in Heb. ii. 17 the apostle speaks of Him as High Priest, whereas He only became a priest properly when He rose from the dead and went to heaven. This some not perceiving have been led on by the enemy to cast the precious truth of propitiation into the chaos of their own error, which denies to His cross its moral glory, and gives it to a fable.

Be it observed that the language employed is unusually precise. The sufferings are said to be not merely "of" Christ, but "for" Him. They befel Him not simply as a fact, but were appointed unto Him; just as the grace was "to youward," so were the sufferings to "Christward." Christ is never by Peter used mystically as in 1 Cor. xii. 12, but exclusively and strictly in person. Compare especially chap. iv. 1, 13.

Nor are we left in doubt what the Spirit of Christ that was in prophets of old did signify, seeing that He testified beforehand, not only the glories of the anointed One Whom all saints awaited, but what at first sight seems beyond measure strong, the sufferings destined for Him

which precede. This it was that the astonished disciples were taught by the Lord Himself, both before His death and after His resurrection, and nowhere more clearly than in the Gospel of Luke. "So shall the Son of man be in his day (*i.e.* His appearing in glory). But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation" (xvii. 24, 25). Again, when risen He said (xxiv. 26), "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter his glory? And, beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Who could wonder that they should afterwards say one to another, Was not our heart burning within us as He spoke to us on the way and as He opened to us the scriptures? Now that He is gone, His Spirit, the Spirit of truth, is come to guide us into all the truth.

The saints addressed, like all other Christians, come between the sufferings that came unto Christ, and, if not the glory, certainly the greater part of the revealed "glories" that should follow. For it is plain and sure that the magnificent scenes of the last days, times of restitution of all things whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began, await His coming from the heavens to take the earth and all the universe under His direct and manifested sway.

Messiah, ascending as a conqueror on high, was clearly made known in Ps. lxxvii. 28, and His receiving gifts as Man, that Jah Elohim might dwell in Israel, still regarded as the rebellious till

He make Zion His abode for ever. Then, on the one hand, God will smite the head of His enemies; and, on the other, princes shall come out of Egypt: Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God, and the kingdoms of the earth shall sing praises to the Lord. The same great truth is reiterated in Ps. cx.—the scripture Christ Himself recited to confound those who denied His divine dignity as David's Lord. Both psalms strikingly pass from His exaltation in heaven to the day of His wrath. Then Jehovah shall send forth the rod of Messiah's strength out of Zion, and He shall rule in the midst of His enemies.

What is being done for His friends meanwhile is developed only in the New Testament generally, as here in particular. Room is left for it in the O. T. It is the grace come to the believing remnant, as to us who believe from among the Gentiles, before the generation to come is born again for the days of the displayed kingdom. Undoubtedly He is received up in glory (1 Tim. iii. 16); but this is part of the mystery of piety, there made known by the apostle of the uncircumcision, and found so largely explained and applied by him in his Epistles, as it is used briefly and powerfully in what lies before us (i. 21, iii. 22).

But there are "glories" to come, which give object and exercise for that hope which is a bright and large part of the truth, so characteristic of Christianity, and so difficult for a Jew as such to apprehend. Hence one perceives how unpalatable to a rabbi it is to read in Dan. ix. 26 that after a

definite interval Messiah the Prince was not to come merely, but "should be cut off and have nothing" i.e. of His Messianic rights, which is the true force. It was ruin to the benighted and faithless people; it brought destruction, as the context shows, on the city and the sanctuary. The facts and the prophecy which revealed this and more, they themselves cannot deny. Yet are they still impenitent, unbelieving, unblessed, and disposed to deny a great prophet, who shed light on what and what sort of time the Spirit of Christ was signifying, as was done in various ways.

But those who believe the gospel, Jews or Gentiles, come in according to the new principle of sovereign and indiscriminate grace to save souls. The Saviour, rejected by the Jews as a whole, is gone up on high, not at once to introduce the Kingdom in power and glory as even the apostles at first expected, but to inaugurate the mysteries of the Kingdom, itself a mystery, while He sits at the right hand of glory above. This it was which perplexed prophets of old, and not only the sufferings destined for Him Who might well have seemed the last One to suffer. Yet so said the prophetic word, so testified beforehand the Spirit of Christ that was in prophets: the Servant Righteous beyond all comparison was to be equally the sufferer beyond comparison. Suffering is an enigma to all who believe not what sin is before God; but even to those who did believe of yore, which of them so read the riddle that the Christ was to fathom its depths? For He was to suffer,

not only from man because He was faithful to God, but, yet more overwhelmingly as it must beyond controversy be, from God because He was faithful for man, for sinful man ! Yet Daniel is equally clear that the people are to be delivered after a time, the last time of distress without parallel, when blessed is he that comes to those days, and the prophet like all the righteous dead shall then stand in his lot. It is part of Christ's glories to follow, when He shall reign, not as Son of David only, but with the wide and everlasting dominion of Son of Man.

Long before the prophet of the captivity, the lowly seer of Moresheth-gath, testified (v. 1-3) of the Judge of Israel smitten with a rod upon the cheek. Even a rabbi cannot mistake that He was to be born in Bethlehem, though overlooking on the one side His rejection, and on the other His going forth from of old, from everlasting days. Knowing Him not, they in judging Him fulfilled also the voices of the prophets which were read every sabbath. "Therefore will he give them up until the time when she that travaileth hath brought forth." The birth of the new-born Israel is thus postponed ; while Christ sits, rejected by them but exalted by the right hand of God to the blessing of such as Peter was writing to. When that day comes (the prophetic terminus of glory for Israel and the earth), "the residue of His brethren," instead of being added together now to form the church as on and after Pentecost, "shall return unto the children of Israel." Then shall He stand and feed them in the strength of Jehovah, in

the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God. And, instead of being scattered as now, outside their land, they shall abide : for then shall He be great even to the ends of the earth. And this [Man] shall be Peace. When the last head of a great country, the leader of the outside nations, shall come into the land, it will only be to find power there, not the previous weakness. Then the enemy's land shall be wasted retributively ; and the remnant of Jacob be not only as a dew of blessing in the midst of the peoples, but also as a lion among the beasts of the forest.

Here again was no obscure intimation of the sufferings to come for Christ and of the glories that are to follow them. But seek diligently and search out as they did, no small difficulty remained, even for those who pondered the wonderful words of Isa. xlix. 3-8, l. 4-9, lii. 13-15, and liii., the most detailed and luminous of all : the sufferings which awaited Messiah, and the glory of His people Israel. But there was also a covert allusion in Isa. lxv. 1, 2, to a time, and a singular sort of time, when God would be found by the heedless Gentiles, and find in Israel a people disobeying and opposing ; just as Moses of old predicted (Deut. xxxii.) that God would provoke them to jealousy through a no-nation, and anger them through a nation void of understanding.

But we know that even those who were blessed in seeing and hearing what many prophets and kings desired to see and hear, so little realised our Lord's clear and repeated explanation of His

coming death of rejection and ignominy, that they were utterly staggered when it came to pass. "We were hoping," said two of them no more downcast than others on the resurrection day, "that He it is that was about to redeem Israel." His sufferings in redeeming by His blood, so far from entering their hearts, were the stumbling-block ; whereas, as the Lord assured their troubled souls, this was both the only way consistent with God's character and their moral necessities, and the very truth set out in the scriptures. He must be a suffering and an ascended Christ : as emphatically for the Christian now going to heaven, so for Israel and the nations to be blessed on the earth by-and-by under His reign of glory.

In fact, however, the first prediction in the first book of scripture made known to the instructed ear what prophets searched into, and what the apostle explicitly states here with all clearness of light from Christ dead, risen, exalted, and about to appear in glory. The figurative terms are intelligible and expressive. The woman's Seed (in itself a phrase as gracious as startling and unique) should have His heel bruised, but bruise the serpent's head : a victory over the power of evil complete and final, but not without keen suffering. Again, blessing even for all families of the earth, when idolatry had overspread them, was promised in Abram's seed in Gen. xii. ; but fuller light came in chap. xxii., where the father's only son is seen risen from the dead in the same parable which presented him previously as the lamb God would provide for

a burnt-offering. Thereon Jehovah's oath which distinguishes, in a way which the apostle Paul gives us to understand, the numerous seed which shall possess the gate of the enemies (as in O. T. prophecy), and the Seed without any such number attached but "one" only, in Whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This last Gal. iii. applies to the grace come now to Gentiles no less at the least than to Jews who believed. What a testimony is it not to "the sufferings Christward, and the glories after these things"?

The same principle might readily be shewn in the history of Joseph, suffering in the pit at the hand of his brethren, and then both sold to Gentiles and consigned, if not to death, to the Gentile prison; but exalted to rule the world, administering its power with the same wisdom that had been manifested in previous humiliation, to the glory of him who sat on the throne. We at least are inexcusable if we cannot clearly discern what prophets may have duly searched. Add to this, that so it was before he made himself known to his guilty brethren whose sins he forgave, preserving their life no less than the Egypt-world's that he governed. Can one fail to read here another application of our text? Nor would it be difficult to trace a fresh testimony beforehand in the blessing Jacob a-dying pronounced on his sons, yet to be fulfilled, for their good portion at the end of days, if we may not now speak of it all more particularly.

Genesis is not singular in this respect. So it might be shewn in the types of Exod. xii. and xiv.

xv. So too throughout the earlier and the later prophets. The Book of Psalms is quite as rich in the same witness borne beforehand to Christ. What can be deeper, what more undeniable, than the testimony to His sufferings and His consequent glories in Psalms xxii. and cii.? These may be the fullest ; yet are they but a part of what presents both, in that rich collection which the Lord loved and used so perfectly, and prophets searched not in vain, though at a great interval, in their day.

We have next an interesting intimation made as to enquiring prophets, full of importance to us no less than to those the apostle was addressing:—

“To whom it was revealed that not to themselves but to you* they were ministering the very things which have now been announced to you through those that brought you glad tidings by† [the] Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven ; which things angels desire to look into ” (ver. 12).

There is no distinction more characteristic than the one just brought out. The Holy Spirit wrought in those of old as “the Spirit of prophecy” ; and

*“To us” (ἡμῖν) seems so natural that one need not be surprised that this reading should appear in K, many cursives, and some ancient versions, more than even in ver. 10. But there is no sufficient ground to doubt that ὑμῖν (“to you”) is the true text, as attested by the best and oldest copies, with the bulk of juniors and with good and ancient versions. Text. Rec. presents the record rather unnaturally in giving ἡμῖν and ὑμᾶς in ver. 12.

† The preposition is not read by A B, some cursives, and Greek and Latin fathers. Ancient versions are in such a case uncertain. The great mass favour ἐν which would mean “in the power or virtue of,” or “by” as we say briefly.

so He will work in days to come, as we learn from Rev. xix. 10. Our brethren that have the witness of Jesus at the end of the age, when the final conflicts arise, will know the Spirit's action in a prophetic way, not as the one Spirit who baptised us into one body, the church, and who dwells with and in us individually (John xiv. 17).

Here we have the contrast drawn. It was revealed to the O. T. prophets that not to themselves but to us they ministered the things announced now to the faithful through the gospel. They prophesied of the privileges now enjoyed. The Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven at Pentecost is not giving a prophetic testimony to Jesus as then. He is as given to the Christian a Spirit of present communion in a way which was not and could not be, till Christ had come and accomplished redemption.

Fully is it admitted that all saints of old were born of God. If not born of water and Spirit, they could not see or enter the kingdom of God, as the Lord told Nicodemus. This was no privilege special to Christianity, as some shortsighted men conceive. It is indispensable for that kingdom of God in which shall come many from east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, as well as with the elders before them, and prophets and saints after them. Flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. But all the children of God without exception will have their part in it, as they that are Christ's are raised at His coming.

The saints of old, before He came in flesh and suffered as He did once for sins, could not have more than "the Spirit of prophecy." And it appears from the Revelation, that so it will be again during the Apocalyptic crisis, when the heavenly saints are seen on high, and Jewish and Gentile saints will be separately called to bear witness on earth in the tribulation to come. All that is revealed of them in those trying scenes points to a distinct testimony and experience, resembling substantially that of the elders who had witness borne to their faith and through it, but with the faith and witness of Jesus too, as far as it is given them. They will look for His coming in His kingdom. But nothing indicates the possession of those privileges, individual and corporate, which we now enjoy through the Holy Spirit given to us.

They will not know that their bodies are Christ's members (1 Cor. vi.), and that they are a living God's temple (2 Cor. vi.); nor will it be theirs to say that they have put on Christ in Whom they are all one, and there can be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, nor male and female, but who as being sons have the Spirit of God's Son sent into their hearts crying, Abba, Father (Gal. iii. iv.). It would be language beyond their intelligence to hear of the glory of His grace (which God freely bestowed on us in the Beloved), still more to be the fulness of Him that fills all in all (Eph. i. 23). Nor could they, as Paul exhorted the Colossian saints, give thanks to the Father who qualified them for their share in the inheritance of

the saints in light, Who rescued them from the power of darkness and translated them into the kingdom of the Son of His love. They will in faith long for the glorious future He shall establish ; but they must fast and groan for the present. The two witnesses prophesy (not, preach grace) in sackcloth, but with power to devour their enemies with fire, killing those who would hurt them—power to shut heaven, and over the waters, and to smite the earth, till their hour is come on finishing their testimony. Symbolic and figurative this is no doubt, but the symbols and figures are of a state wholly foreign to that of the Christian and the church.

Far different is your position, says the apostle, who have not only the prophetic testimony of old, but had glad tidings brought to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. Even the babes of the family have an unction from the Holy One and know all things (1 John ii. 20); they know the Father, as well as their sins forgiven for the name's sake of Christ. The Christian dwells in God and God in him: what greater blessedness can there now be? He is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance. We are children of God, kings and priests. We are Christ's body, and bride. We are heavenly in title, and about to bear the image of the Heavenly at His coming. What precious, holy, or glorious privilege is withheld from us? In short, as another apostle says, "all things are yours;" not that ye in yourselves are anything, but that Christ is the whole sum and substance of blessedness. "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." What a circle, and what a centre!

How wondrous it is that the rejection of Christ which would prove the Jews returned from Babylon worse than their fathers banished there and elsewhere for their idolatry (as Isaiah and others foretold), is made by God's grace in the cross the turning-point of all blessing! Hence is the righteousness of God. Receiving it by faith now (while the people generally are as unbelieving as the nations generally) the remnant according to the election of grace enters into better blessings than if He had been received in the display of His kingdom. For thus only in divine wisdom could these exceeding privileges be the portion of believers on earth, with the further privilege of suffering, not only for righteousness, but for His name. Truly, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says (xi. 40), God provided, or foresaw, "some better thing" concerning us.

It is the interval after propitiation was made, Christ meanwhile exalted at God's right hand, and the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, which gives occasion and ground for the special privileges of the Christian and of the church, as well as of the gospel. The Messiah had been cut off and had nothing (*i.e.* of His Messianic glory on Zion and over all the earth); but He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father for His new and higher glory; and by-and-by He will appear for

the promised glory before the world. Christianity comes in between. Cf. John xvii. 24, Rev. xi. 15.

Thus the joys of communion as well as peace in Christ are tested fully. Also love has the freest scope, in the endurance of suffering for good rather than evil, and for earnest service both in the church and in the gospel. Thus hope again acquires its highest character, no less than spiritual understanding while we wait for Christ's coming and the glory to be revealed in the last time. The new blessedness is so rich and peculiar, that the Holy Spirit, besides illuminating the ancient oracles of God, was already inditing another divine volume, and expressly in the leading tongue of the Gentiles, of which this Epistle forms a part. It is written in Greek, not in Hebrew, even though addressed to believing Jews, or to the twelve tribes of Israel. Nothing short of this would set forth the new things adequately, beginning with Christ's advent and atoning death, and closing with that great prophecy, which, while it crowns all the predictions, fitly concludes the entire revelation of God.

Who can wonder that the verse ends with "which things angels desire to look into?" Angels were upheld by the Son. They were enabled to keep their first estate. They did not need redemption like guilty man. But they were permitted, not only to shout for joy when the corner stone was laid in founding the earth, but in the multitude of the heavenly host to praise God at the birth of the Saviour, and say, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men. It was

not that they doubted ; but what wonder and awe, yet eagerness withal, must have filled them as they bent down to apprehend what His sufferings meant, and indeed His humiliation at large, and the glories after these ! Oh, what lessons to learn of God in men, and above all in that one Man Who best proved the divine complacency in mankind !

Exhortation here begins, founded on the preceding verses. Now that Christ is come, and gone to heaven, having borne our sins, the believing Jews were objects of rich and sure blessing, far beyond what their fathers enjoyed before the law or since.

The glory is not manifested on earth as the prophets predicted, but this will have actual accomplishment in a new age. There is now an intermediate state for saints on earth before that new age : faith, love, and hope have their fullest exercise, after the sufferings destined for Christ were closed, while He is received up in glory. It is therefore before the revelation of His other glories to all the earth, and indeed to the universe. Our life is hid in God ; but when He is manifested, so shall we be with Him in glory. The glories after His sufferings are not therefore complete, but in a large measure await His appearing at the end of the age.

Yet the glory in which He sits already at God's right hand has a momentous bearing on the soul individually and on the church as a body. Hence even now we exult with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; for Christ, its spring, is glorified and we expect to be, now receiving the end of faith, salvation

of souls, but not yet that of our bodies. Meanwhile we have for our profit, not only what prophets testified beforehand, but the still fuller light of truth announced in Christ and since Christ by apostles and others, who evangelised in the power of the Spirit sent forth from heaven, as Father and Son alike promised. This is Christianity, not promise but accomplishment of redemption by Christ's work, and, as shewn elsewhere, for Gentile believers as much as Jewish, though these only are addressed here by the apostle appropriately to this message.

"Wherefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope perfectly for the grace that is to be brought to you at Jesus Christ's revelation (ver. 13).

The allusion in the opening clause is evidently to their forefathers at the first passover: a memorial to them, a feast to Jehovah to be kept by an ordinance for ever. "Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand." Could words or acts more graphically give us the living picture of a people screened from divine judgment, and leaving in haste the house of bondage for a land flowing with milk and honey? The Lord in Luke xii. 35 employed the same figure, with others, to impress on His disciples their pilgrim character in waiting for His coming: in no taking of their ease, but constant readiness to do His will earnestly, as is meant by their loins girt about. On occasions of active exertion the garments, instead of being allowed to flow loosely, were tucked up, that the work might be done without

impediment. So would He now have our hearts engaged without wandering affections or distraction of mind. The blessing is assured to our faith ; we love Him Who first loved us, and He with a love above all measure ; whilst the prospect before us is glorious beyond all comparison.

The apostle's phrase " the loins of your mind " renders inexcusable the notion of such fathers as interpreted it of chastity ; for this would require another expression of quite distinct form. It seems strange that Calvin should characterise a turn so unintelligent in itself, and unsuitable to the context, as philosophising refinedly about the loins. It is a wholly baseless importation of prurient ideas, natural perhaps to those who piqued themselves on a fair show in the flesh, which soon betrays its hollowness by falling into all manner of uncleanness. He himself however had no doubt of its quite different meaning, in the disentanglement of the Christian from all hindrance to devotedness.

There is another term which immediately follows, of great practical moment, " being sober." It is expressly from its form a continuous habit ; which is the more emphatic, because the form of the phrase before, with which we have been occupied, implies no less precisely the act done and settled ; and such is the force of the hope which immediately follows. They had once for all girt up the loins of their mind ; their hope was set with equal decision upon the grace to be brought to them at Christ's appearing. The nature of the case called for and explained these being accomplished facts in their

souls. But the sobriety in question calls for unceasing diligence.

For there is much in the gospel and in the truth now fully revealed, which might naturally lead to the utmost enthusiasm. We see how it affected outside observers on the day of the church's birth. All were amazed and in perplexity when they heard Galileans speaking in the various tongues of the Gentiles the great things of God. Some mockers said, They are full of new wine. Apart from the striking phenomenon of grace which was thus ungraciously maligned, how much there is in Christianity if realised to fill the heart and lips to overflowing! Even the eminently wise Paul could say, "whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God; or we are sober, it is for you" (2 Cor. v. 13). Here no doubt it is the kindred thought of discretion that is expressed; but it is at bottom the same truth. Before God and to Him, the heart may rightly go forth in extasy; but when we think of men and even the saints, a more guarded feeling is well on our part.

Hence the same apostle exhorts the saints that were in Ephesus to guard against exciting causes. "Be not drunk with wine whereby is dissoluteness, but be filled with the Spirit." Where He becomes the source and power of all within us, acts outward should be according to God's mind. Our singing even is meant to be so characterised that it may please Him Whom we praise, in no way carried away by sweet sound, but with the spirit and with the understanding also.

Hence then "being sober" is laid on us as a continuous duty. It is a figure naturally drawn, as all admit, from keeping clear of all intoxication; which for the Christian means the avoidance of everything apt to excite the flesh or spirit. Young Thessalonian believers are thus exhorted, "So then let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us watch, and be sober [the same word as here]. For they that sleep sleep by night, and they that drink drink by night; but let us, being of the day, be sober, having put on a breastplate of faith and love, and hope of salvation as helmet." In 1 Pet. iv. 7 the word, in view of the end of all things having drawn nigh, is "Be of sound mind therefore, and be sober unto prayers." (So also in chap. v. 8). Here it is not constant habit that is involved in the form of the phrase, but the soul's attitude due to so solemn a fact. Both appeals have their importance. The call in our verse 13 is grounded on known redemption as our portion, whilst we journey through a wilderness world, with an expectation worthy of what God has already given us in Christ.

Of this he proceeds to speak in the next words, "hope perfectly for the grace that is to be brought to you at Jesus Christ's revelation." One cannot doubt that it is the glory about to be revealed unto us, as it is put in the Epistle to the Romans (viii. 18, 19), the revelation of the sons of God. Nor does our apostle treat of anything beyond that supreme bliss, which he describes as "the grace that is to be brought" in that day. For he does not open out, as Paul did in 1 Thess. iv., the preliminary stage

and the special action of the Lord, in Himself descending from heaven with that shout which shall assemble His own whether dead or alive to meet Him in the air. Our Epistle dwells on the manifestation of the saints with Christ in glory without telling us how the wondrous issue is to be effected.

It is so intrinsically blessed, and so efficacious even now for the well-being of the soul, that he bids the saints "hope perfectly" for the grace to be brought then and thus. "To the end," as in the A. V. and so understood by many, seems short of what is intended by the adverb; nor does any sufficient reason appear to make us swerve from the simple meaning. It is likely that translators shrank from connecting perfection with a hope which too often fluctuates, if it be not also rather indefinite and feeble. They preferred "to the end."

But it is the aim of the Spirit apparently to reveal it in its power, grandeur, and blessedness, so that the coming glory should be regarded as part of that grace which we have known in Christ's death and resurrection for our souls, and the rest we are awaiting for our bodies. Then indeed we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son, the First-born among many bréthren. The grace that is to be brought in that day is a meet object for our hope to have once for all and perfectly; just as in Heb. x. we are now called to approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and washed as to our body with pure water. For the veil is rent;

and we who believe have boldness to enter into the holies by the blood of Jesus. It may be that none of those addressed by Peter did "perfectly" hope for that grace to come, as sure as the grace which had already appeared ; but the aim of this scripture was to invite, yea, to urge it. Why should the saints not cherish the hope fully and without a waver? He Who has promised will assuredly perform. Let us treat all shortcoming in hope as a wrong done to His grace and truth.

It may seem strange that our apostle writes here of the grace to be brought at Christ's revelation only to those who now believe. Prophets do speak of this, as may be seen with especial plainness in Isa. viii. 13-18. To this throughout is the Epistle directed, rather than to the far more common witness which prophecy bears to the manifest and wide-spread blessing when Christ comes in His kingdom with power and glory. Then all Israel shall be saved ; and their receiving and fulness shall be "life from the dead" to the world at large. But this would not have been meat in due season to the believing remnant whom Peter here addresses. Hence he stops short of any development on that head which fills the prophets, and he dwells simply on their own Christian portion at the revelation of Christ. This is what they needed, and what the Holy Spirit gave him to minister. Compare the preceding ver. 4. What will be by-and-by for Israel and the nations on earth the prophets fully declare from Isaiah (we might add from Moses) to Malachi.

" So great salvation " calls for earnest decision and sobriety, brightened as it is by a perfect hope which puts not to shame. But next the apostle insists on a quality of the new life we have in Christ which is as indispensable for the saint, as it is due to God.

" As children of obedience, not conformed to the former lusts in your ignorance, but according to the Holy One that called you, be ye also holy in every [part of] conduct, because it is written, Holy ye shall be, because I [am] holy " (vers. 14-16).

The Christian is characterised as a child of obedience. This is far more energetic than the "obedient children" of the A.V. which rightly speaks of men in their unrenewed state as the children (or rather sons) of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2, Col. iii. 6). It is the habitual bent of fallen nature to disobey God. Now on the contrary, when sanctified by the Spirit, we are so for obedience, childlike obedience, as we see its perfection in our Lord Jesus. As He is our pattern as well as life, it is to His obedience we are livingly set apart, no less than to the sprinkling of His blood. Quickened by the faith of Christ, we are neither left to ourselves like the Gentiles, nor set under the law as the Jews ; but are subject to Christ and His word as the perfect law of liberty ; even as it was His meat to do the will of the Father that sent Him.

Here it was of the more consequence to express this, as the apostle was addressing such of the circumcision as believed. Re-action is ever a danger. They might have slipped into the delusion that all

direction was gone because the law was ; a mere negation for those delivered from the bondage of the law. But Christ freed from law only to lead into a constant obedience far deeper and more comprehensive. So in Romans viii. the apostle taught the saints in Rome, Jewish or Gentile, that if the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (which is our law) set free from the law of sin and death (against which Israel and man vainly strove), it is through redemption that the law's righteous requirement (*τὸ δικαίωμα*) might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit. And this walk is solely one of obedience. We are not our own but bought with a price, and what a price ! "Glorify God then in your body." We are the Lord's freedmen, had we been slaves ; we are Christ's bondmen, had we been freest of the free. The Christian denies his Master and his standing, if he claim independence of His authority and His word. The more he knows his privileges, the greater is his obligation to obey. He was once, Jew or Gentile, a son of disobedience ; he is now a child of obedience ; let him be consistent as such. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The apostle John only confirms and completes Paul and Peter.

Such then is the great governing principle ; and so it must be, unless God's children are to have an unnatural independence, yea mastery, of God Himself, and thus subvert the highest of all rights. But it is of moment also to beware of old habits, which may not be weighed sufficiently when the

Christian relationship is new ; for habits are apt to re-assert their evil influence when the truth has no longer the fresh power over the soul which the ungrieved Spirit maintains. Hence it is here added, "not conformed to the former lusts in your ignorance." When the True Light was unseen, the heart's ignorance of God was extreme. Here it is no comparison of Jews with heathen, but their real state pointed out as before Him, when divine love was as unknown as light. How rank was the growth of lusts in that ignorance ! They were now the more to beware of being conformed to what dishonoured Christ, being themselves begotten of His God and Father unto a living hope. If God's power alone keeps, it is through faith, which implies the heart simple and subject to His word. Those who are still passing through the wilderness need to be on their guard, vigilant, and self-judging.

Another consideration follows and lifts the eyes yet higher. "But according to the Holy One that called you, be ye too holy in every [part of] conduct." Holy is He that called them out of darkness unto His marvellous light (chap. ii. 9). Holy is He that called them by His grace unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus (chap. v. 10). He is just the same every step of the dangerous journey they were meanwhile treading. They were even now in the nearest relation to Him as objects of His love, and after a sort which was only shadowed by His people of old. Then it was national and after a fleshly and temporal sort, though individual faith pierced

through to the Coming One and to things better and enduring. Now it was distinctly personal in character and everlasting. For the people and the land and the world Jesus was the rejected Christ; higher and larger glories came into view, grace fuller and more intimate. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he shall put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice." The highest in earthly position might claim or call away; but such are strangers to those that have heard the voice of the rejected Christ. "And a stranger will they not follow; for they know not the voice of strangers." Can one wonder? He is the door that opens into every blessing. By Me (said He) if any one enter, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out, and shall find pasture. Who but He could truly say, I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly? It is now in the power of His resurrection (1 Pet. i. 3). If He that called them is holy, how essential it is that they should cherish the same character of separateness from evil to Himself, and this without stint or limit? "Be ye too holy in every part of conduct."*

Was this an unheard of requirement on God's part? Far from it. When as Jehovah He governed a people after the flesh, even so it could not be otherwise: "Because it is written, Holy ye

*"Conduct" answers to the early meaning of "conversation," which is antiquated and nearly obsolete, being now confined to free interchange of speech. It is strange that Johnson, Richardson, &c., ignore this, the uniform sense in the A.V. of O. and N.T., *i.e.* "behaviour," "conduct," "course," or "practical life." Webster edited by Goodrich and the Century Dict. give it as the first sense of the word.

shall be, because I am holy." The apostle cites Lev. xi. 44: see also chaps. xix. 2; xx. 7, 26. Without doubt, as we read in Heb. ix. 10, the Levitical system consisted only of meats and drinks and divers washings, ordinances of flesh imposed until a time of rectification. Christ brought in His person grace and truth, and redemption enables us to walk accordingly in the Spirit. It is now the children, not of the fathers, but of God the Father, whose standing is not in flesh, but in Christ. The holiness rises according to the place and relationship.

If the principle in itself be thus invariable, the character of the holiness is akin and proportionate to the blessing conferred. As there is no bound to the grace and truth received in receiving Christ, so must the holiness suit the Holy One revealed in the Son of God. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. And Christ is the light, not of Jews only but of the world. Hence he that followeth Him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The natural man, no matter how intelligent, never rises to this; if he profess Christianity, as he may and often does, it is unreal. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." The believer alone has reality in Christ, whence is the contrast: "but if we walk in the light as He is in the light [and there every true Christian does walk], we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from every sin."

We all know how often it is argued that this is a condition. Who doubts this of "If we walk" &c.? But what most who so talk overlook is that it is the condition of being a Christian, not in name only but in deed and truth. The apostle John in no way means of some real saints compared with others. It is the condition of such as are brought to God. It is the unquestionable privilege of all the faithful who follow Christ, unless it be pretended that any faithful souls do not follow Him. It is not a question of walking *according to* the light which admits of different degrees, but of walking *in* it, which belongs alike to all who were once darkness but are now light in the Lord. They are therefore exhorted to walk *as* children of light. But John expresses the necessary condition assumed: if we walk in the light as God is in the light (true of every real follower of the Lord Jesus), then have we these other privileges. For all now go together, as the gift of divine grace: we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from every sin. They are the constant enjoyment of all that walk in the light, as do all that are Christ's.

So too in this Epistle of Peter the exhortation to be holy is addressed to all. If all were alike sanctified of the Spirit in principle, as we have seen in ver. 2, all are in ver. 15 enjoined to be holy, because the God that called them is holy. Here it is holiness in practice, without which (as Heb. xii. 14 solemnly assures) no one shall see the Lord. If ye live after the flesh, ye are about to

die (Rom. viii. 13). Know ye not that unrighteous men shall not inherit God's kingdom (1 Cor. vi. 9)? He that soweth to his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (Gal. vi. 8). We need not surely quote more of these grave warnings.

It is well to guard against the misuse of this text and others, as if God's word gave apparent support to the heterodoxy of perfection in the flesh, otherwise styled sinless sanctification, whether taught by A' Kempis and other Romanists, by Jer. Taylor and W. Law, by J. Wesley and his followers, or by the American school of so-called higher holiness, with its modifications in Great Britain since it got discredited. Nothing can be plainer than that scripture urges God's people, or as we now say His children, to be holy, because He is. It is a call addressed to all. The false deduction is of a state attained by special faith in some. And this has led J. W., if my memory serves aright, to misquote, "*holy as God is holy.*" What is written is the reason God lays down: He requires practical consistency with Himself in those that are His. Nothing can be more certain, becoming, and necessary. But to be holy *as* He is holy is in any case mistaken, and liable to most presumptuous thoughts if not blasphemous error.

Possibly what was running in the good man's head was our Lord's injunction in Matt. v. 48: "Be ye therefore perfect *as* your heavenly Father is perfect." But this text has no real connexion with the aim for which it is produced. For our Lord simply insists on the grace toward evil men

which His disciples are to cultivate, *after the pattern* of their heavenly Father, Whose sun is made to rise on evil and good, and Who sends rain on just and unjust. What has this to do with the question of the old man in believers? There is power in the Spirit given to us against every ill; but this assertion is very distinct from the assumption that sin is extinct and gone from any saint on earth. It ought never to be allowed to act.

But other considerations are urged of distinctly Christian character, which add immense weight and power both to the new responsibility and to the comfort and cheer of those who are Christ's.

"And if as Father ye call on Him that impartially judgeth according to the work of each, pass the time of your sojourning in fear" (ver. 17).

As Jehovah was the divine name in relation to Israel, so is Father to the Christian, and this, not in the vulgar sense of the derivation from His breath, as fatherhood of Adam and the race (Luke iii. 38, Acts xvii. 29), but of the special and spiritual nearness into which the risen Christ brought the believer. "Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." He had prepared the disciples for this throughout His ministry. Rejected by the Jew, He turned from fleshly kin and said, "Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. xii. 49, 50). But now that redemption was accomplished and accepted as the

new standing fact, now that purification of sins is made, and life given abundantly by His resurrection, He could announce precisely that His brethren enter the same relationships that He Himself had as risen from the dead and taking His place on high. So had He anticipated while opening His heart to the Father in their hearing only a few days before: "I made known to them thy name, and will make it known, that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them." This is Christianity, not in atonement (however true and needed through our sins and ruin), but in its positive excellency and in our special and proper place according to God's counsels and love.

To the fathers dwelling in tents with nothing but His promises He revealed Himself as God Almighty, El Shaddai, their sure and sufficient Protector in the midst of the peoples they were in due time to dispossess. When the time came to bring forth Israel out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, He gave the name of Jehovah as their unchanging Governor, He their God and they His people. "And what great nation is there (Moses could ask), that hath God so nigh to them, as Jehovah our God is in everything we call on Him for?" "Hath God essayed to come and take Him a nation out of the midst of a nation by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a powerful hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Jehovah your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto you it was shewn that thou mightest know that

Jehovah He is God ; there is none else besides Him. From the heavens He made thee hear His voice, that He might instruct thee ; and on earth He showed thee His great fire ; and thou heardest His words out of the midst of the fire. And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out with His presence, with His great power, out of Egypt, to drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as at this day. Know therefore this day, and lay it to thy heart, that Jehovah He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath—none else" (Deut. iv. 7, 34–39).

It was indeed the best portion a nation could have here below till Messiah reigns over them, and the new covenant be made with the houses of Israel and of Judah. But before that day Messiah came for a deeper, holier, and more wondrous purpose—to suffer for sin, and for the sins of all who believe, to the glory of God. The cross of Christ, where He suffered from God as well as from man, presents a work divine beyond all that ever was wrought or can be again. For in this way, so strange to human eyes, not only was the Son of man glorified, but God was glorified in Him Whom man despised and the nation abhorred. Therefore God glorified Him in Himself and glorified Him straightway, instead of in His kingdom of manifested power and might, which He awaits in due time. But in and by His sufferings on the cross atonement was made ; and risen from the

dead He could and did reveal in all its fulness the name of His Father and our Father, His God and our God; that we might ourselves call upon Him as such, in a blessed nearness never till then appropriated by the faithful, never even possible before save to our Lord Himself.

Yet it is exceedingly important to recognise that divine love never weakens but really and powerfully strengthens our sense of divine light. This is the dread of fallen humanity. Conscious sinfulness, till we know that we have been once for all cleansed sacrificially, makes us shrink from God. How changed all is, when we not only repent and believe but rest on Christ's one offering, whereby He has perfected in perpetuity (*εἰς τὸ διηνεκές*) the sanctified! Then we children of light walk in the light, and prove it as wholesome as it is marvellous. We are thus thankful for the way with us of our God and Father in a world of danger and darkness and deception and selfwill and rebellion against His will and word. For He "impartially judgeth according to the work of each."

So had the Lord Himself taught in John xv., speaking of Himself as the True Vine, and of His disciples as the branches. "My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every one that beareth fruit He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit." Those that remained around Him were already clean, because of the word He had spoken to them; many went back and walked no more with Him, and stumbled at the word, being diso-

bedient. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. The Vine represented the external relation, and the branches those who bore His name truly or not. It was no question of life eternal or of union with Him as glorified. It was a blessed place on earth of cleaving unto Him and bearing fruit, and so every true saint proves; but it might be only mental or external, and so unable to bear the word or overcome the world, and thus in some way come to ruin. The believer welcomes the Father's care and bears more fruit. Even if He chastens, it is a Father's hand, and a proof of His love, the very reverse of alienation from the erring one. "He dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is there whom a father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, of which all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The Father of spirits can make no mistakes, as our honoured parents may have done; without fail He chastens for profit in order to the partaking of His holiness (Heb. xii. 7-10). Man or woman, young or old, poor or rich, He judges according to the work of each. There is no partiality with Him; there is a Father's love in the light.

But the present participle expresses here, not the abstract principle, but His actual dealing in distinct reference to the time of our sojourning. It is uncommonly bold to say otherwise in presence of John v. 22, and indeed the context; where our Lord teaches that the Son quickens in communion

with the Father, but has all judgment committed to Himself, because He is the Son of man. He only, of the Persons in the Godhead, became man, and suffered to the utmost in that humiliation; so He only has authority to execute judgment (in the final and everlasting sense) in that very nature. This is set beyond fair doubt, because the Lord declares that the believer does *not* come into judgment, by any such solemn act as He speaks of; whereas it is certain that every believer does become subject to the judgment which the Father now carries on while we are here. It is not that future act in God's judgment, no doubt through Jesus Christ the Lord (Rom. ii. 16, xiv. 10); it is not the Father's doing but the Son of man's. But it is the Father Who now judges according to the work of each saint in his sojourn here.

That this scripture goes no farther than the Father's present scrutiny is evident from the exhortation which follows: "Pass the time of your sojourning in fear." At Christ's appearing there is for those addressed or others like them no sojourning more. Any such time is ended. Pilgrimage in the wilderness is exchanged for an abiding city, the coming one. There is no longer grief which we no doubt needed, but praise and glory and honour, with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. But now it is our responsibility as Christians that our conduct be "in fear" of our Father and God, Whose word is living and operative, sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to division of soul

and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern both thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature unapparent in His sight ; but all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes with Whom we have to do.

It may be well, even if hardly needful, to say that the fear enjoined on the believer, during the time of his earthly course, is not only consistent with enjoying our Father's love but its inseparable accompaniment. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared," says Psalm cxxx. 4. Hence "blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah, that delighteth greatly in His commandments" (Ps. cxii. 1). Not only is "the fear of Jehovah the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. i. 7), but "happy is the man that feareth always" (Prov. xxviii. 14). It is in contrast with him that hardens his heart, who shall fall into mischief.

There is a natural fear of unbelief, which distrusts God and really hates Him. Of this John speaks in his First Epistle (iv. 18), as incompatible with love as with faith and hope, in short with the knowledge of God and His Son. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love [His, not ours] casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment ; and he that feareth hath not been perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us." A true and filial spirit fears the commandment ; as whoso despiseth the word shall be held accountable. In His fear is strong confidence, for He looks to the man who trembles at His word. No privileges of grace are meant to hinder or weaken

this pious fear and godly awe. We shall also give account of all done in the body before Christ's tribunal, and receive accordingly. But this to us who believe is not the judgment from which grace exempts.

So the apostle Paul speaks of being with those who received the gospel at Corinth "in fear and in much trembling," though in the full assurance of faith and in labours as abundant as his love; and in the Second Epistle he praises the saints for receiving Titus with fear and trembling (vii. 15), to his comfort and the joy of his fellow-workman. What a contrast with the wicked and slothful bondman in the parable! Him the Lord describes as being afraid of the gracious Master, counting Him "an austere man," and therefore hiding His talent in the earth, instead of using it faithfully for the good of others in His service, relying on His love!

Well did one write more than two centuries ago, "This fear is not cowardice; it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers for a good conscience and the obeying of God. 'The righteous is bold as a lion' (Prov. xxviii. 1); he dares do anything but offend God; and to dare do that is the greatest folly and baseness and weakness in the world. From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions and patient sufferings of the saints and martyrs of God, because they durst not sin against Him; therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for Him. Thus the prophet [Isaiah viii. 12, 13] sets carnal and godly fear as

opposite, and the one expelling the other. And our Saviour [Luke xii. 4], 'Fear not them that kill the body; but fear Him Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say to you, fear Him!' Fear not, but fear; and therefore fear that ye may not fear" (R. Leighton *in loco*, Jerment's ed. i. 133, 4).

The fear in which the saints were urged to pass the time of their sojourn is the farthest possible from that doubt as to their souls and distrust of God's grace, which go together if they be not the two sides of the same unbelief that leaves Christ out as revealed in the gospel. Such a dread is wholly excluded by the words which follow, as they ground the inculcated fear on the comforting and assured fact of having been redeemed, and redeemed by that which is of all things the most precious to God, and the most efficacious for sinners.

"Knowing that not by corruptibles, silver or gold, ye were redeemed, from your vain course ancestrally handed down, but by precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless" (vers. 18, 19).

Jewish believers ought to have been familiar with redemption. In its earthly and temporal shape it is the central truth of the book of Exodus; wherein their bitter bondage and oppression forms the beginning; and God dwelling in the tabernacle in their midst, founded on that redemption, is the close. But they also came under the law, which Israel then undertook to obey. They

thus let slip the promises to the fathers, and slighted the grace just shewn to themselves from the Red Sea all the way to Sinai. This was fatal ; not because the law was not good, but because they were weak and ungodly, sinners and enemies, as another apostle describes man's natural state (Rom. v.). To such, no matter what long-suffering and goodness may be shewn, the law must prove a ministration of death and condemnation. And so it was to the elect nation, which blindly and self-righteously offered to stand on legal conditions.

Now it is by grace that any have been or can be saved, and therefore through faith. This was attested to their fathers, as plainly as any shadows could convey it, in the combined type of Jehovah's Passover and Israel's passage of the Red Sea. The blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door-posts and upper lintel of each house expressed in that figure the sacrifice of Christ (1 Cor. v.). This alone could perfectly meet His moral judgment and not only screen a people justly exposed to it, but give them there and then to feast on the lamb's body. With bitter herbs they were to eat ; for repentance toward God must accompany the faith that *He* would see the blood that night and pass over all within the sprinkled doors ; also with loins girded, shoes on feet, and staff in hand, as pilgrims henceforth turning their back on Egypt for Canaan, but meanwhile crossing the desert. But there was a great supplement—the passage of the Red Sea ; which in figure joins the resurrection to the death of the Lord Jesus for us. Here it was divine

power righteously exercised on behalf of His people, impossible without the Victim's blood, but now annulling the enemy's power, and entitling them to sing as delivered, Jehovah too no longer as a judge shut out, but leading and fighting for them victoriously. Christ was not only a propitiatory through faith in His blood, but given up for our offences and raised for our justification. It is God for us (Rom. viii.) but by Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins to take us out from the present evil age. We are thereby brought to God, not yet to heaven though made meet for it as Col. i. 12 declares with all plainness and decision.

It is of this redemption Peter speaks when he tells the saints that they "were redeemed," and that they knew it consciously (*εἰδότες*). It was no longer a simply objective fact: this they had at first to apprehend by faith; it was now part of their inward realisation by the Holy Spirit. And the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 12) characterises it, in contrast with the foregoing pattern, as "everlasting redemption." An eternally divine Person was needed, as He deigned to become incarnate, in order by His atoning death to obtain it; and having obtained it, He entered once for all into the heavenly sanctuary where we know Him now on high. Redemption is therefore an accomplished standing of rich and immediate consequence to God Who is glorified by it, and to the believer; and of his acceptance, not Christ's resurrection only is the guarantee but His session at God's right hand above.

There is another and future application of divine power which is called redemption, as in Rom. viii. for "our body" when raised or changed at Christ's coming (1 Cor. xv. 23); so too of the acquired possession, "our inheritance" (Eph. i. 14: of. Rom. viii. 19-22). But this power of His glory is also founded on His work as well as His person. The same principle applies to its very frequent use in the Psalms and Prophets to the future deliverance of Israel for His kingdom on earth. See Pss. ciii. 4, cvi. 10, cvii. 2; Isa. xxxv. 9, &c., xli. 14, &c., xliii. 1, xliv. 22, 23, xlviii. 20, lii. 9, lxiii. 9. Another word also conveys it, as in Isa. i. 27, xxix. 22; xxxv. 10, li. 11; Jer. xv. 21, xxxi. 11; Hos. xiii. 14; Mic. vi. 4; Zech. x. 8. All however rests on His blood-shedding. The return from Babylon was an outward sample and pledge.

True redemption was no mere release by creature means, such as the children of Israel knew, when every man in the numbering of them had to give a ransom for himself as a living man to Jehovah, "that there might be no plague among them." Here it was no question of sins or sacrifice but of a ransom for his life against plague. Accordingly the principle established was a sacred half-shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than the half shekel when they give the heave-offering of Jehovah to make atonement for your souls" (Exod. xxx. 15).^{*} This was a beautiful

^{*} Think of Peter's unintelligent zeal in maintaining that his Master was a good Jew in paying this temple tax, and of the Lord's gracious reproof in summoning to Peter's hook the fish with the shekel in its mouth to pay "for Me and thee."

token that each of the people, all alike, belonged to Jehovah their Divine Guardian and Governor. But in presence of Christ and His redemption already possessed, even silver that shadowed grace or gold that represented divine righteousness, were but "corruptibles," fading away before the glory that both surpasses and abides (2 Cor. iii. 9-11).

It is worthy of remark, that the saints are here said to be redeemed, among its manifold and wondrous results, from their vain course, or mode of life, handed down from their fathers. Language so precise to describe, not Gentile idolaters, but the Jews since the Maccabees in their tenacity of tradition from father to son, it is hard to conceive. Of old before the Babylonish captivity, kings, priests, people, ran a race after the abominations of the heathen. But this hateful lusting after strange gods they learnt to abjure; and even Antiochus IV. (Epiphanes) could only impose his profane Hellenising on Jerusalem and the Jews for a measured space by treachery and violence, by pillage and massacre. Our Lord Himself formally charged even the more orthodox and learned among them with neutralising the most solemn duties of the law on its human side, and thus the word of God, because of the tradition of the elders. It made them "hypocrites." "*In vain* do they worship me" (citing Isa. xxix. 13); a prophecy which embraces their final trouble but deliverance when at the lowest, as well as their sinfully blind state, that brought them so low, about to pass away for ever at the end of the age.

Can there be a more authoritative comment on the apostle's description of their state before they were redeemed? Their manner of life, even in its religious aspect, had neither purpose nor result. No doubt this might well be said of Paganism, which was wholly a lie with demons behind it; but how emphatic when applied truly to men confident of being a guide of the blind, a light of those in darkness! Only among Jews had the early fathers a claim from God. But this was for His promises, not for any such tradition of theirs, as the sons imagined. For the truth, "one is your Father, who is in heaven" said the Lord to the disciples. Fore-fathers, of whom scripture gave a reliable and sad account, were their trust, not the living God. They were guilty, because only they knew those sure and unambiguous oracles; but the heathen knew them not, and filled the void with the deceptive myths of poets. Gentile religion, like their wisdom, did not come down from above, but was earthly, natural, and demoniacal. What a contrast with ours which has its centre in Christ and its basis in His redemption, its glorying in God, its charter in His word, and its power in the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven!

Accordingly the redemption is here said to be "by precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless." The order of the Greek, which some prefer in English also, is "by precious blood as of a lamb . . . , Christ," followed closely by "fore-known" &c. in ver. 22. The truth in

substance remains the same. Christ's blood is of all things precious. "Without shedding of blood is no remission"; by His blood our conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. ix. x.). Not only are believers redeemed by it, as here; but it is everlasting redemption, as we have seen. In Christ we have redemption through it, not yet of the body, but the remission of offences (Eph. i. 7). Nor was there forgiveness only but peace through the blood of His cross (Col. i. 20), and justification in virtue of it (Rom. v. 9). For indeed as He loves us, so He washed us from our sins in His blood (Rev. i. 6). As we now drink the cup of the new covenant in His blood, so in heaven the new song is of the Lamb slain Who bought to God by His blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Is it not indeed precious blood?

The allusion is plain in "as of a lamb unblemished and spotless." It may well be to the paschal lamb of which we have spoken. They had too the burnt-offering of the morning, and especially perhaps the evening lamb, offered between the evenings, day by day continually. It was at the door of the tent of meeting before Jehovah, "where I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee [the mediator]. And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and it [the tent] shall be sanctified by my glory." So it stands in Exod. xxix. 38-46, the book of redemption. Thus only could Jehovah dwell in their midst. Hence we can measure the daring that takes away from the Prince of the host the

"daily" or continual offering (Dan. viii.); for it was the exclusion of the visible link of acceptance between God and His people on earth: a more impious affront than any political oppression of His people.

For the Christian the sanctuary is on high. "For Christ is not entered into holies made by hands, figures of the true, but into heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us" (Heb. ix. 24); and there He entered once for all by His own blood (12). "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii. 26).

The apostle next treats of the comforting truth, in order to establish the saint, that however new to them the gospel might be, it was all settled in God's mind and counsel before man fell, yea before creation. Redemption was no remedial afterthought, though of course implied in the sentence of Jehovah Elohim on the serpent in paradise, and shadowed in sacrifice ever after.

Hence we here read of Christ, "foreknown" indeed before [the] world's foundation, but manifested at [the] last of the times for your sake, that through him believe on God that raised him out of [the] dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (vers. 20, 21). All the older English versions, save that of Rheims, add "who was" foreknown. But the absence of the article forbids this. It is assumed rather than asserted.

* Tyndale and others since say "foreordained," but this goes beyond the word which ought to be rendered faithfully. A commentator cites Rom. viii. 29 to justify the change; but the text is adverse, because it distinguishes the two.

Such language is never employed about the divine dealings with Israel. Rich and large as are the promises to the fathers, they never go back into eternity as here. Men may reason in an abstract manner on prescience and omniscience ; but the fact is plain, that God did not speak to the fathers nor through the prophets of blessings before the world's foundation. They were made in time, however enduring they may be.

Here we learn that which transcends the promises. Lately come in manifestation, Christ as God's Lamb was foreknown before creation. The gift of His Son to suffer and redeem was ever in the mind of God. He knew what the creature would be if put to proof, and that none could stand save those upheld by the word of His power. Meanwhile every means to instruct and to direct, to cheer and to restrain, to warn and to alarm, was tried ; and this formally and fully in Israel separated from the nations for God's grand moral and religious experiment ; vain as it must prove. God showed all along how thoroughly He knew the end from the beginning, though they believed it not, seeking to make their own righteousness out of that law which was meant to prove the impossibility. For through law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. iii. 20), as salvation is only through the faith of the Saviour.

"Foreknown" could not suffice. Christ was "manifested" in due time ; and the due time was "at close of the times." Long had been God's patience ; manifold His dealings in moral govern-

ment, if by any means there might be fruit from man for His acceptance. But the fall, though in one man, was of the race ; and the sample of the race under the special care of God proved the tree to be worthless, producing therefore bad fruit. If any one could have been conceived to change the result, it was the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God. When He was sent, as He Himself puts it, the husbandmen said among themselves, This is the Heir : come, let us kill Him, and seize on His inheritance. And they caught and cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him. But in Christ's rejection on the cross God made Him that knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. For therein only was God glorified as to sin. The Son of man bore His judgment of evil, as He had already glorified His Father in the unfaltering obedience of a life devoted to do His will. Hence as it was God's righteousness to raise Jesus from the dead and give Him glory at His right hand, so it is to justify every one who believes in Jesus.

It is accordingly written "manifested at the last (or, the end) of the times for your sake." The most ancient and best MSS. (NABC), many good cursives, and old versions give this sense ; not "at the last time" according to earlier editors. It is similar in force to Heb. i. 1. where the form is "at the last of these days." In fact the gospel was sent out to Jew first, and to Greek. Among those who believed, the dispersed Jews to whom the apostles wrote received it as God's power unto

salvation. When boasting is excluded, and ought to be silenced, God speaks, and speaks in love to all; for all are lost sinners. When we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for ungodly men. Such as owned their guilt and ruin before God cast themselves on Christ and His precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless. Nothing else could meet adequately either God or man. And as these believing Jews submitted to the righteousness of God, they became entitled to the blessing of the gospel.

But it is an error often made to confound what is here annexed with the statement in Rev. xiii. 8. For this scripture teaches no more than our text that the Lamb was slain from the founding of the world, a meaning only made possible by a mystical imagination. The comparison however of what is said in chap. xvii. 8 affords plain evidence that the name written in the book of life of the Lamb slain is the true connexion with the world's founding, not that the Lamb was then slain. For the later scripture referring to the same truth omits "of the slain Lamb," but affirms the writing in the book of life from that time.

Nor is this all. "From" the world's founding is not of the same import as "before" it. Let us respect and learn from the very words of God. Those saints who are preserved from yielding to the Beast at the close of the age had their name written from the foundation of the world in the slain Lamb's book of life. With this we may compare the King's language to the blessed from

all the nations, severed like sheep from the goats, to inherit the kingdom prepared for them "from" the world's foundation. But the phrase used in Eph. i. 4 as in 1 Pet. i. 20 is pointedly different. As Christ was foreknown and loved by the Father (John xvii. 24) "before" then, so did God choose in Christ us who now believe "before" the world's foundation, that we should be holy and unblemished before Him in love. It is easy for a Christian to understand Christ foreknown before time began; but how wondrous the grace that God chose us to such an association and for such a purpose! He was known before creation, as He had a glory in personal right above it; we by grace are objects of divine counsel which His work suits in order that we may enjoy all where He is, and with Him.

Then the apostle carefully defines who they are that are thus blessed, though in no way confined to the believing remnant of Jews, "for your sake that through Him believe on God." The testimony of the gospel is quite unlimited. "Disciple all the Gentiles (or, nations)," said the Lord (Matt. xxviii. 15); "preach the gospel to all the creation" (Mark xvi. 15); "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations" (Luke xxiv. 47). Nor is He less explicit in the gospel of John: "for God so loved the world that He gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have life eternal." Here as we have the result no less plainly unlimited as in the other Gospels, so does the Lord

restrict life and salvation to those that believe the testimony of God.

There is a difference in the reading but not in the truth. Three MSS. (A B 9), supported by the Latin Vulgate, say "that are through him 'faithful'." The great weight of copies, uncial and cursive, with the ancient versions generally, support the usual text "that through him believe." Faithful often says more than believing, in no case less. The substance remains the same. Not a doubt can there be to a renewed mind that it is through Christ that we are faithful toward God. The question is, if this be intended here, where faith appears to be set before us, rather than the fidelity which springs from it. If so, it is a truth no less certain than interesting that through Christ we believe on God.

Men talk of rising "through nature up to nature's God." But how could this, even if true of any, avail for a fallen soul whose sins morally compelled the Creator to become a Judge? And what could His providence, real and gracious and mighty as it is, do to cleanse the sinner from his guilt or to give him reconciliation with God and assurance of His love? The law again, righteous and holy and good as it is, could only aggravate his misery if his conscience rightly felt his evil state, and God's just and necessary displeasure with a creature, originally upright, but now so alienated, selfwilled, and rebellious. No, it is the Lord Jesus Who alone could and did meet the otherwise insuperable difficulty. It was His to conciliate

what without Him was irreconcilable on any ground of truth ; but He only by His sacrificial death for our sins. In His cross divine love and light, grace and righteousness, majesty and mercy, unite to bless those who repent and believe the gospel. Thus only are loving-kindness and truth met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Hence then through Him we believe on God as the Saviour God, giving His beloved Son for our offences and raising Him again for our justification. It is not said here, as once to us when mere sinners, that through the Father's drawing one comes to Christ ; but now we through Christ believe on God in the deep, intimate, and enduring way that is revealed to us as saints.

No one hath seen God at any time : the Only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father—He declared Him. It is through Christ that we believe on God, as Light and Love, Saviour and source of all grace, Who sent Christ and drew us to Him, made us His children, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. But we must not forget that by receiving God's testimony the soul believes on Christ. "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath life eternal" (John v. 24). Christ being received makes God known more fully to faith, as in resurrection He could say, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God (John xx. 17).

Here it is intimated of those "that believe on God that raised him out of [the] dead, so that

your faith and hope are (or, should be) in God." The resurrection of Christ from among the dead and the glory given to Him on high are God's mighty and distinct evidence that *He* is for the believer absolutely and for ever. If anything could have made this doubtful, it was our sins. But they were laid—yea, *He* laid on Christ (Isa. liii. 6) the iniquity of us all. Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Where are they now? When *He* made purification of the sins, *He* sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Not one sin did God leave on the believer; not one did Christ carry into heaven; for what *He* thus did was the will of God; so that our faith and hope are in God. The teaching is thus far the same as in Rom. iv. 24, 25. We can no more doubt God for the future than for the past, as the apostle so triumphantly declares in Rom. viii. If God be for us (and this *He* has proved irrefutably to the utmost), who against?

The apostle had appealed to their conscious knowledge of redemption by that which is of all things most precious to God—the blood of Christ as of a lamb unblemished and spotless. And if it was eternally before God, however late in accomplishment, God's raising Christ from the dead had through Him so acted on them, that their faith and hope were in God. From Him they looked for all good, and nothing but good, henceforth and for ever. *He* has now further considerations of the greatest weight in urging the saints to mutual love; for this is only secondary to receiving Christ and

the truth, without which is no love according to God's nature.

"Purified your souls as ye have in your obedience to the truth* unto brotherly affection unfeigned, love one another out of a pure* heart fervently" (vers. 22).

Thus the saints are authoritatively taught the true source of their purification. It is from God as certainly as it is to God. It is not ritual which could not purge the conscience, but in the fullest sense personal; it was not in their habits only, or even their thoughts and affections. They had purified "their souls," that is, their inner selves in all extent. For a man's soul is essentially the seat of his conscious individuality, of his will, of his responsibility to God. His inner capacity is in his "spirit," for or about which he is as responsible as for the things done through the body as the outer instrument; but his responsibility lies *in* the soul. Soul and spirit however are so closely joined, that but one of the two generally is named, as here. Only the one which is named in scripture, though not excluding the other, is always strictly correct and has its proper force. On the other hand men and in particular philosophers, as they shrink from facing their responsibility to God, constantly incline to count the "I" to be in the "spirit," of which they are proud, rather than in the "soul,"

*The most ancient and best MSS. do not read διὰ πνεύματος "through the Spirit," the Latins strangely giving *charitatis* "of love," instead of *veritatis* "the truth" which is certainly right. A few omit καθαρῶς "pure."

awakening thoughts which they do not relish. What depths of sin and shame has not man's will led him into?

But those to whom the Epistle is addressed had no more hesitation in owning the truth as to themselves than the apostle had in crediting them with the grace in question. It is not a wish or a prayer that they should be purified, but rather is assumed as a settled fact, as surely as they were faithful. This is said in no levity, nor does it imply the least licence; save that they were still passing through a desert world, exposed to a sleepless enemy. Hence were they dependent on their unseen God and Father, as He is unfailingly faithful to such. But the call to love one another is manifestly grounded on the assurance that they had purified their souls already; which involves the responsibility of continual consistency with this state of purity, and of self-judgment in case of failure. It is the regular Christian standing, which may be varied in the form of expression; but it meets us substantially in every apostolic Epistle.

Hence our apostle averred the like grace for the believing Gentiles, when he pleaded the cause of their liberty against Pharisaic brethren who sought to put them under law: "And the heart-knowing God bore them witness, giving the Holy Spirit just as to us also, and made no difference between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith." As in Acts xv. 8, 9 "faith" is stated to be the subjective means, our scripture says yet

more that it was by the Jews' "obeying the truth" objectively put before them. "Obedience to the truth" is but another and fuller way of expressing their faith. To have a solid and divine character there must be subjection to the truth.

Further, the purification of their souls is next shewn to be "unto brotherly affection unfeigned." Before we have purified our souls, there is every thing not only to hinder such affection but to render it impossible. Sin, darkness, self, fleshly and worldly lusts, and under Satan's power make men more and more miserable, relieved only by pleasures as vain as the religious efforts of a bad conscience in lieu of happiness. How deep the ruin of the fall! God good and holy, whom man gave up and lost, was replaced by the liar and the murderer! Cain is the firstborn of Adam and Eve: what a witness of natural religion and of brotherly affection! Abel testifies to grace by faith. By birth we are like the one, by new birth our part is with the other. "By faith Abel offered to God a mere excellent sacrifice than Cain."

God justified us by faith, giving us redemption through the blood of Jesus. Not otherwise were our souls purged, and thereby are we fitted for brotherly affection, such as God looks for in Christians. In ordinary circumstances any other feeling would dishonour and in effect deny the relationship which grace has established for our present and mutual recognition. Scripture clearly lays down the exceptional cases, and how we ought then to behave; but we need not now say more

about it. This is the Lord's new commandment. By this, said He, shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love among one another.

So the Spirit guards against mere forms or words by qualifying the brotherly affection for which their souls were purified as "unfeigned." Pretence to a good that is not genuinely felt is hateful to God, and unworthy of His child. Hence the value of cherishing the sense of His presence to be kept from hypocrisy in this way as in every other. Let us never forget His marvellous light into which He carried us out of darkness. "Know ye not," says the apostle Paul, "that ye are God's temple, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you"?

Hence the exhortation, which is not tautological as some have irreverently said, "Out of a pure heart love one another fervently," or intensely. It is a simple charge that the object in view may be earnestly heeded. God's love to us is the spring of all our blessing, and never did it flow out so freely and fully as when man's sin proved how utterly undeserving he was, and no less wretched and helpless. Then it was, and at the lowest point, when God turned his evil in rejecting and slaying Christ, His Son, to the proof of His own all-overcoming goodness in making Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. In the faith of Him and His sacrifice have we purified our souls, hitherto steeped in defilement, unto unfeigned brotherly affection. Let us love then the objects of the same divine love, who rest on the same sin-cleans-

ing sacrifice. No doubt they were called to be holy throughout their course, because He Who called them is holy ; but they were bound to love their brethren, not for any reasons of their own or for reasons in others, but "out of a pure heart" and "fervently" : had not God so felt and dealt with them ? Even to heathen, when they believed in Christ, the apostle could write (1 Thess. iv. 9), "ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

Yet the purification of the believer's soul, effected as it is already, is not all that enforces brotherly affection unfeigned and fervent. Our new birth as saints has this love essentially in its nature, as surely as it is through God's word. So the passage proceeds :—

"Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through God's living and abiding word " (ver. 23).

It is not without intention that the participle of the active perfect is employed in ver. 22, and of the passive perfect in ver. 23. Rigid Calvinism seems hardly compatible with the former, nor rigid Arminianism with either. Revealed truth, large no less than exact, insists on both as a settled standing of grace ; on which is based the call to be imitators of God as children beloved, and to walk in love, as the apostle of uncircumcision exhorts us. It is not that purification precedes the new birth as matter of fact ; for to be born anew is the first vital dealing of grace with the soul, but purification attests it.

Evangelicalism is here utterly lame and short, if we may judge by the theological text-books, and such discourses as meet the public eye. Of course, one could not expect sound doctrine from Romanist divines; but those considered orthodox Protestants are on this scarcely better. Their idea is a change on man by the Spirit's action through the word of God on his faculties, which are no longer devoted to self and Satan but directed to His service. But this is rather descriptive of the effect than a statement of the operating cause or means under His hand. Scripture is abundant and clear that a life is given to the believer (and Christ is this life, as the old one is from Adam fallen), which acts through our faculties on objects revealed by God and far beyond those of natural life. Thus, as our Lord taught, one sees and enters the kingdom, not only by-and-by but now by faith; or as the apostle puts it, translated by the Father into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

In vain do unbelieving professors, or saints misled by tradition, decry this new order of being as mystic. For the life of which the saint partakes was comparatively hidden from O.T. believers; yet they had it in Him Who had not yet appeared, but was truly hoped for. Now since Christ came, this and much more is cleared up; and the believer is assured that he has it as a present thing, whatever be the added blessedness at His coming again when the body is swallowed up by the life which the soul has already in Christ.

For indeed it is life eternal, and so declared even now ; and woe to him who is emboldened by the enemy to deny it ! For this is the soil out of which grow the fruits of the Spirit working on the inner man to the glory of Christ its source, a life even now quite as real and incomparably more blessed and momentous than the old Adamic life. Calvin is almost as vague as the rest ; only Leighton here speaks as one taught of God as far as he goes.

We have then been begotten again, as not even the Jews were, whatever their boast of being Abraham's seed and of never being in bondage to any, at the very time when they were undeniably slaves to the Romans for their apostasy, and of their father the devil, in believing his lie against Him Who is the true God and the life eternal. But the believer has been begotten, "not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible," not of man or through man, but through God's living and abiding word. So the Lord declared to Nicodemus, Except one be born anew (*i.e.* of water and of Spirit), he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God (John iii. 37). That which is born of flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of Spirit is spirit. The flesh does not become spirit, any more than the spirit becomes flesh. The life given is of God, in Christ, and by the Spirit who employs the word here figured as often by "water." To bring in baptism here is not only foreign to the context, but opposed to all the scriptures which treat of the subject. James i. 18 is as adverse as Paul (1 Cor. iv. 15), and John (xv. 3) no less than the text of

Peter before us. Very likely all the fathers who discuss it join in gross and superstitious error ; and Calvin may have been the first of the theologians, as Hooker says, who rejected the error ; but so much the greater is their shame. This truth is as sure as it is transparent.

What can be more apt for the apostle's purpose than the passage he cites from the prophet ? In setting forth the blessedness of being born again, he makes it more felt by contrasting with it universal nature, and nature at its best.

"Because all flesh [is] as grass, and all its glory as a flower of grass. The grass withered and the flower fell away ; but the word of [the] Lord (Jehovah) abideth for ever. And this is the word that as glad tidings was preached unto you (vers. 24, 25).

It is the twofold lesson of repentance and faith, which is thus appropriately attached to being born again. Hence, in comforting His people, it is not only the coming of a Deliverer that is in question, even if this Deliverer be Jehovah, but the necessity that the people should judge themselves in His sight. The voice of one crying in the wilderness needs the supplement of a second that cries so solemnly of fallen man, "all flesh is grass, and all its comeliness as the flower of the field." Israel had flattered itself that they were wholly different from other men. But a voice which flatters not must cry that it is not merely the Gentiles that perish, but "surely the people is grass." Where were the ten tribes ? and why chased out of Immanuel's

land? And where had Isaiah just announced to the king of David's house, that their treasures and their sons were to be carried away? Was it not to Babylon, the centre of graven images and enchantments and sorceries, because of Judah's persistent love of idols? Which of human kind so guilty as the favoured people, and its most favoured tribe?

Nor was this all. For the scattered remnant to whom the apostle wrote knew of another sin still more heinous, into which they had lately fallen though long predicted by the same prophet (Isa. xlix-lvii.) with its terrible issue in receiving "the king," the Anti-christ of the last days, as must surely be accomplished in its time. Yes, "*all* flesh is as grass, and all its glory as a flower of grass." Difference there is. Some are much fairer than others, refined, tender, generous, brave, affectionate, and religious after the flesh. There is not only the grass in general, but its flower. And men are apt to admire and even adore what is so pleasant to their eyes, their fancy, and their feelings. But nothing is right truly, where God has not His rights: and He as plainly judged man's sin, as He clearly presented the only hope for the sinner in the woman's Seed, the virgin's Son, Immanuel.

Hence to believe in Him, now come and dead and risen and ascended, is the only salvation; and nothing more truly causes the penitent soul unsparingly to own its natural ruin and its sins. For it is no light thing for man to sit in moral judgment on himself; and it is just what the Spirit of God works in him (not at first peace or liberty, far from

either indeed, but) the deep sense, not only of what he has done but what he is before God as a sinful man. That the Son of God is come from God, and by Him sent, not to condemn but as a Saviour, encourages him to integrity in self-judgment. Without doubt it is deeply painful under the word and Spirit of God to be brought down in conscience of one's own evil in His sight into the dust of death; and the sight of Christ by faith by His very perfectness increases the self-loathing. How sweet then to have the testimony that the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from every sin! that He made peace by the blood of His cross! that He is not only the Living Bread, as come down out of heaven, but by His death gives us to eat His flesh and drink His blood, so that I dwell in Him, and He in me!

The Pauline teaching, of not only His death for us but of our death with Him, carries out the truth still more thoroughly; but even in its simpler form by our Epistle we are enabled to write death on all humanity, and forbear to boast of what seems fairest outwardly. Nor is it an idea or sentiment, but a reality personal and experimental for our everlasting profit henceforth, not only in distrusting ourselves, but in tenderness toward others, and in boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through Whom now we received the reconciliation.

The reason too is certain and extreme. All flesh is as grass, and all its glory as a flower of grass. In human nature, fallen as it surely is, there is no

stability ; its flower only and altogether evanescent. Withered the grass, fell away the flower. There can be no trust, no dependence on the creature. Are we then left to ourselves, our sins and our follies, just when we most evidently need the only true God, as good as He is great? Not so. We had no just claim ; we shamelessly deserted Him when He showed us nothing but tender mercy ; like Adam, we forgot His word and disobeyed Him, we believed the liar and the murderer, and hoped we might sin and not surely die. This was ruin now ; and if this were all, it led to ruin everlasting. For sin breeds more sin ; and such was and is the history of the race. But He spoke, even when judging the sin and sentencing the enemy, of One Who should vanquish him who wrought the mischief ; and of the One to vanquish Satan, keenly suffering as the woman's Seed, in the infinite compassion of God for the ensnared. If human nature at its best is feeble and failing, man needs what abides ; and so in contrast with that which fades away, "the word of the Lord (Jehovah) abideth for ever."

Here, in ver. 25, it is not *λόγος* as in ver. 23 ; for the latter is used to convey the meaning or mind of God, whereas *ῥήμα* is the expression, what was actually said or written. Compare the distinction which our Lord Himself draws between His "speech" (*λαλιὰ*) and His "word" in John viii. 43: they did not know His speech, because they were unable to hear His word. When the divine truth is received, the words that express it become

understood, not before. Here *ῥῆμα*, "word" goes beyond "speech" and is applied to Jehovah's message; which not only withered up self-dependence, but gave them His word immutable and abiding for ever. "And this is the word that as glad-tidings was preached unto you." What a spring of confidence to those that preach and to those that hear the gospel!

It is not only His abstract mind, but His meaning expressed fully and communicated indelibly in the scriptures. He would give His people solid assurance of the comfort He held out so emphatically to them, even before He set out by His prophet the twofold and tremendous indictment of their guilt. For, as in Isa. xl.-xlviii. He arraigns their idolatries which sent them captives to Babylon, so in chaps. xlix.-lvii. He predicts after the return the deeper guilt of rejecting the Righteous Servant, His Anointed, and receiving, as they surely will, the Antichrist, the wilful king of the latter day. But where sin abounded, grace shall surpass it all, as the rest of Isaiah triumphantly proves, and the elect remnant at the end of the age shall be His possession for ever; no longer bondmen but above bondage, yet all the more truly His servants, His Onesimi, once severed but now indissolubly joined, once unserviceable but now serviceable to Himself and a blessing to all the families of the earth according to unfailing promise.

But the apostle also shows that the remnant of Jews who now receive Christ anticipate, as do the faithful from among the nations, the blessing in the

gospel already preached. They have before hoped in Christ, as the apostle Paul expresses it in Eph. i. 12. If the mass are now blinded, if mercy shall prevail over every obstacle in the darkest days of the consummation of the age, neither these reasons nor any others hinder sovereign grace while Christ sits at the right hand of God. Those of the Jews who now receive the glad-tidings have their hope in Christ realised to the full, before the remnant becomes the strong nation of the new age. Such is the force of their pre-trusting in Him, while their brethren in the flesh refuse Him, and before the latter day bow to Him in faith. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. We are also those who from among the Gentiles have heard and believed the word of truth, the glad tidings of our salvation. For as there is no difference in the ruin, so there is none in the salvation according to the riches of God's grace.

Here too is implied the immense superiority of Christian blessedness over that of which the Jews so loudly boasted. They undoubtedly had privileges from Jehovah as the seed of Abraham: and they were born to them, if at least duly circumcised as they were, in witness of the uncleanness of the flesh. But their privileges were earthly, external, and temporal; and so it had been openly proved in O. T. times by the Babylonish captivity, as it was soon to be more overwhelmingly by the Roman scattering of much longer duration. Far different is the Christian's portion even now, and far brighter his hope. Hence in the Epistle to the Hebrews

the emphasis on "eternal" or "everlasting." Such is the salvation (chap. v. 9) as is the judgment (chap. vi. 2); such the redemption (chap. ix. 12), the Spirit (ver. 14), and the inheritance (ver. 15), as the blood is of an "everlasting" covenant (chap. xiii. 20). To this, without referring to other proofs, may be added the "better" blessings, as in vii. 19, 22, viii. 6 (twice), ix. 23, x. 34, xi. 16, 40.

Our apostle of the circumcision does not write so elaborately, but was led to base the greatness of God's gift to the believer on the being born again, of seed not corruptible but incorruptible through God's living and abiding word; a character and source of being quite above nature, in contrast with transitory flesh, even in Israel, and founded on His word spoken and written which expressly abides for ever. This is the very word that was preached unto them with all its glad news, that they might know that they had through it received a new nature as incorruptible and everlasting as His word Who communicated both. The fervour of his heart breaks out in the simple earnestness with which he speaks of a boon so needful and so blessed for man as he is. He would have his brethren know it theirs now without a shade of uncertainty.

We can readily understand that there was at least as great danger for the Jewish Christian, as for the Gentile to allow questions to arise in his heart in presence of snares and the world's unbelief. We find the apostle Paul recalling in 1 Cor. xv. the gospel which he preached to them, which they also received, wherein also they were standing,

through also they were saved if they held fast the word which he preached the gospel to them, unless indeed they believed in vain. For they were doubting of the resurrection which is an essential truth of the gospel, Christ not only having died but being risen. So here the apostle Peter reminds his brethren of the ever abiding word in the gospel announced to them, the source of their new and imperishable life as believers.

CHAPTER II.

IF the plague of leprosy were healed in the leper, however this might be (for it was beyond man), it was required that he should be pronounced clean by the blood of a bird slain over running water sprinkled on him, and a living bird dip in it let go into the open field. Thereon he that was to be cleansed had to wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water. Only so should he be clean. So it is here. The believer knows, feels, and owns his own nature corrupt, withered, and fallen, as grass under the blast of Jehovah, but has a new nature given which is as incorruptible as its divine seed by His word living and abiding for ever. On this he is called to act.

“Putting away therefore all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes long for the guileless intelligent milk that by it ye may grow unto salvation, if indeed ye tasted that the Lord is good” (vers. 1-3).

It is well that the English reader or any other unacquainted with the original should bear in mind the force of the opening word; which means an act done once for all, as the aorist implies, the tense of what may be called factness, not of gradual process. Again, it is not in the active but the middle voice,

which in transitive verbs refers back the action to the agent, giving the emphasis variously according to each word. We may compare James i. 21: "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, accept with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls." They are indeed exhortations of marked agreement, in substance of united practical aim, yet characteristic of each writer, and both of them distinct from the apostle Paul's way of dealing with the great principle of the case in Christ's death and our death with Him. They are equally given of God and equally needed by His children.

First, our apostle calls on the saints to have put away (if one may so phrase it) "all malice." That the word, though sometimes meaning "wickedness" in general, here refers to that special root of evil is evident from the other forms of iniquity with which it is joined. It appropriately begins the list as the opposite of love, the fervent love, which he had been enjoining on them as became brethren. Every kind of malice is unworthy of those, born again, born of God Who is love; for it may hide its spirit of hatred, and assume many a disguise to accomplish its nefarious ends. What a complete contrast with Christ, and how close the resemblance to his enemy the devil, whose occupation is to tempt, and to persecute, as well as to accuse!

Next, "guile" follows with no less moral truth, and "all guile" because of its manifold aim, and the desire with which men shun its discovery. For however much addicted to deceive others, they

are inwardly ashamed of a habit so base. "Guile" naturally succeeds "malice" in order to do the man deadly mischief, and withal escape detection. It is the reverse of that transparent truthfulness to which we are called as representing Him Who is the truth, just as Satan is a liar and its father.

This opens the way for "hypocrisies," the pretences to be what we are not, and not to be what we are. Hypocrisy is opposed to sincerity, and is simply playing a part in that which is mere fable if it be not the most solemn of realities as well as the most precious. How awful to make the truth of God a game of man for a little while!

"Envyings" are the other side and in the next place. For as hypocrisy has its spring in claiming to have the good we lack, envy seeks to deny and defame the real good of others. God be praised that He fails not to work here and there in ways of love, devotedness, patient grace, zeal for the truth, delight in His glory, compassion for the wretched and the unworthy. There is ample scope for detraction among such as manifest no such qualities, and are vexed to find others credited with what is so excellent. Here the believer must beware lest he yield an ear to this evil spirit and get defiled by it.

Lastly, and fittingly therefore, comes the warning against "all evil speakings," for what a variety of shapes this wears! And how readily it cheats many a one under the plea of care for the Lord's honour and just censure of what is wrong? As "envyings" utterly misbecome those who are blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, so "all slanders" are a deep offence in His eyes and can but please the great adversary of souls. Let us set our face against both and avoid the very suspicion of either, but in fidelity to God.

Then we hear the positive exhortation: "as new-born babes long for the guileless (or, pure) intelligent milk, that by it ye may grow unto salvation." No one can doubt that it is the milk of the word that nourishes the believer. It was the word of God whereby he was born again; it is the same word whereby he is fed. There is no contrast here as in 1 Cor. iii. and in Heb. v. between milk for the immature and solid food for the adult, blame being put on those who did not profit by the word, rising from elements to higher truths. Here the Spirit of God dwells on the suitability of the food provided for the babe when born; and all are encouraged to desire earnestly the pure nourishment which God supplies so liberally. It is milk for the saint's intelligence; as a mother's breast yields nourishment to her babe physically, so God's word is food to our spiritual understanding.

The general sense is quite plain. The only question is how to represent best the language of the apostle. That which in the A. V. is translated "of the word" occurs only in one other passage of the N.T., Rom. xii. 1; and there it is rendered "reasonable," as it is frequently employed by ordinary writers of the Greek tongue. "Intelligent" seems well to express its force in both texts, a better word than "rational." Why Beza who held this as to the text in the Epistle to the Romans

changed it to "sermonis" (of the word) here does not appear, as he regarded them both as alike in sense. The Peschito Syriac has here "of the word"; the Harclean Syr. "rational," as both give "rational" in Rom. xii. 1. But it is hard to understand on what principle it can bear both meanings together.*

This we may leave, as it is merely the delicate point of a rendering, where the substantial truth remains untouched. The call is of all moment. God puts the highest honour on His word, not only for its quickening power in the hand of His Spirit, but for the constant refreshment and strengthening of the new nature that He imparts.

To put baptism in place of the one, or the Lord's Supper in place of the other, is a daring departure from what is here clearly revealed. The aim of those precious institutions is, one for initiatory confession, the other for the constant communion of the saints. But to turn baptism into the means of being born of God is to falsify the truth, to contradict scripture, and to efface the nature of Christianity. "Ye are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you," says the Lord in John xv. 3. "In Christ Jesus I begot you through the gospel," says the apostle in 1 Cor. iv. 15—the same Epistle in which he thanks God that he baptised none of them save a few individuals! So James tells us (i. 12) that the Father "of his own will begot us by the word of

* It is very conceivable that the Spirit of God may have warranted the sense "of the word" among the Christians; for in the nature of things this meaning could not have existed among heathen Greeks; yet if required, it is formed quite legitimately. In this way it would well apply to both passages; and I am disposed to believe it.

truth, that we should be a certain first-fruits of his creatures." We have no earthly mother, more than the Lord had an earthly father save legally.

The sacramental system sins against the Trinity in usurping the divine prerogative. Nor does our apostle differ from the rest (1 Pet. iii. 20). Baptism signifies not life-giving but Christ's death unto which we were baptised; and His death as not only salvation to those that believe, but the privilege of being identified with His death. Thus died we to sin and no longer live in it. Nor is it by the Eucharist, blessed as it is, that the new life is sustained but in Him Who died for us to Whom the Eucharist points. It is of Him coming down from heaven, the Incarnate Word, of Him dying and giving life to the world, and ascending where He was before, that John vi. speaks, in no way of His Supper. Peter does not go beyond salvation's sign in baptism.

The teaching here is that as through the word of God, not baptism, we have been born again, so by it, not the Lord's Supper, we "grow unto salvation." To be born again on the one hand is as strictly individual as growth is. Each has to do with God directly in believing and profiting by His word, whoever or whatever may be the channel. Without faith neither can be; and the essence is that one receives the testimony immediately on God's own word for one's own soul. Hence "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"; whereas "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the witness which God hath witnessed concerning His Son" (1 John

v. 10). On the other hand in the Lord's Supper it is a question of communion when individual want has been settled between the soul and God; and we are there together to enjoy His grace and presence. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not communion of the body of Christ? Because we, the many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. x. 16, 17).

But a strange omission has prevailed since the Complutensian Edition and that of Erasmus, followed by Beza, Stephens, the Elzevirs, and Mill, to say nothing of others. Colinaeus (1534) is the only one of the early editors who adheres to the great body of the oldest and best MSS., versions, and Patristic quotations, and reads (*εις σωτηριαν*). It may have been dropt either as a supposed scholastic addition or by those jealous of trenching on sovereign grace toward sinners. But here it is a question of saints growing in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the terms of the Second Epistle (iii. 18). Certain it is that any difficulty, in receiving the words so fully attested, is solely due to ignorance of our apostle's doctrine. For though he does speak of "salvation of souls" (i. 9) as a present privilege, and symbolised in baptism (iii. 21), he still more frequently regards salvation as a complete whole for body as well as soul, and therefore to be revealed in the last time, even in the revelation of our Lord for whom we wait. Compare i. 5, 7, 13, iv. 13.

Verse 3 furnishes a weighty proviso : " if indeed ye tasted that the Lord is good." It is a reference evidently to Psa. xxxiv. (xxxiii.) 8 where there is a most touching call from the inspired writer that others might share his joy in Jehovah. " O taste and see that Jehovah is good ; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Here it is to the Christian so much the sweeter, in that the apostle identifies the Lord Jesus with Jehovah, as it is the truth. To have proved it for and in our inmost soul is the condition of growth in the word ; but it is a condition that is assuredly verified in all who believe on Him. Yes, they can and do say in their hearts, that the Lord is good. They have tasted it in the word all through.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ begot us again unto a living hope according to His abundant mercy, through (not the incarnation, but) resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It was not, as the Jews expected, unto an inheritance of earthly glory, ease, and power superior to all disasters and adversaries, the kingdom as it is to be, but unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in the heavens for those who are guarded by God's power for salvation ready to be revealed. All intrinsically has been accomplished, at a last fit time, wherein they exult, for a little at present (if there is need) put to grief by varied trials to the proving of their faith. After mention of redemption by the Lamb's blood and its practical end, the apostle refers to our being born again of incorruptible seed through

God's living and abiding word, and that new nature nourished on the guileless or pure milk of the word unto salvation. All is in contrast with the law at Sinai lightening against disobedience and transgression, but powerless to give either life or righteousness, the indispensable wants of sinful man. But grace has already supplied both abundantly in Christ, and hence, to the faith that receives Him for whom we wait, for salvation to the full, having tasted already how good He is, and so anticipated Psalms and Prophets that proclaim it for a future day.

Now we enter on privileges already conferred, represented by figures singularly interesting to the Jewish mind and its associations of honour and reverence. For, speaking of the Lord, the apostle says "Unto whom approaching, a living stone, by men indeed rejected but with God chosen, precious,* yourselves also as living stones are being builded up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (vers. 4, 5).

However sure and enduring may be the counsels of grace, God allows no reasoning to weaken the need and the value and the duty of constant dependence on the Lord. So He Himself said, "Verily, verily, I say to you, Unless ye ate the flesh and drank the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in yourselves." It is truly an act by faith once

*One might have rendered *ἐντιμον* prized, or held in honour, to distinguish it from *τίμιον*, but for *τιμή* in ver. 7 which inclines me to "precious."

for all; but where real, a continual participation follows. Hence He adds, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath 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." It is not life eternal only, but communion as a constant thing: so the Christian abides in Christ and Christ abides in him. To pretend that once to have eaten and drank supersedes always eating and drinking proves its unreality, its selfishness also, and its contrariety to God.

So here it is said, "Unto whom approaching": from the time of approach it is real and full of blessing. Assuredly a soul is not left free and assured, if one go back and walk no more with Him, as some of His disciples did, of whom John vi. tells us. Christ is the centre and touchstone and foundation of Christianity. Those who left Him were fruitless branches of the Vine. The apostle hoped better things and akin to salvation of those who abode (Heb. vi. 9). The converse is written later that "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have abode with us, but that they might be made manifest that none are of us" (1 John ii. 19).

Christ is then called "a living stone, rejected indeed by men but with God chosen, precious." "Living" is a word near to Peter's heart, since so he was enabled to confess Christ, "the Son of the living God," and heard himself for it pronounced "blessed" by his Master. "The

Christ" or Messiah was indeed truly given of God ; but this truth does not raise above the earth over which He will reign from Zion His centre in Israel. When the Jews were denying Jesus, as they still do, to confess Him as the Messiah was to be born of God. But the Son of God, as revealed in the Gospel of John, is often far more ; and "the Son of the living God" gives strong emphasis to our Lord as the conqueror of him that has the power of death. Hence the person of the Lord thus revealed is the rock on which He would build His church, now that the Jews, not the fickle crowd only but the chief priests and elders and scribes, were rejecting Him, and would consign Him even to the death of the cross.

The new building of God was to rise when the chosen nation publicly and finally, as far as their responsibility went, forfeited all for the time ; a heavenly work and witness displaced the former earthly one. And the new one, here peculiarly called "My church," He declares superior to "the gates of Hades," which is more than death. As resurrection was to mark Him out Son of God in power, to begin the new as First-born, not of all creation only but from out of the dead, so was that which Christ builds beyond Satan's power to destroy. Thus is its distinctness made plain and certain from that which man builds, which was to be corrupted and the object of divine judgment more irreparably than Israel, as shown through the N. T. from Matt. xiii., 2 Thess. ii., 2 Peter and Jude to Rev. xvii. For it is revealed that the

apostasy shall come before the day of the Lord ; and there is no restoration for Christendom, as there will be for Israel thenceforth and for ever.

Meanwhile if Israel do not yet own Him as their Shepherd and their Stone, this He is, and a Living Stone as the apostle of the circumcision here designates Him to those who come unto Him. Shall the unbelief of the mass of Jews make of none effect the faith of God? Far be it: the remnant who believe are all the more blessed. He, a living Stone, imparts His own virtue to those who come. Did men, did the builders in Jerusalem, vent their contemptuous rejection of Him Who came into the world, not to reign, but to bear witness to the truth, to bring God into it and to put sin out of it, and thus met hatred as none ever had, and on the cross wrought atonement? What was He ever, and then especially, with God? Was He not His choice One? His servant, whom He upholds, though forsaken even by God as none ever was, yet so He must be if made sin for us. Yes, He is Jehovah's chosen, in whom His soul delights ; and as He put His Spirit upon Him, so Jesus shall bring forth judgment to the nations ; He shall not cry, nor lift up His voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench ; He shall bring forth judgment in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth ; and the isles shall wait for His law (Isaiah xlii.). Here however it is by the way ; for the Spirit of God is occupied with a very different servant, deaf and

blind, ensnared by the idols of the heathen with all the ruinous consequences, instead of being true witnesses, like Him of His choice, Who becomes from chap. xlix. the great topic for His rejection with its blessed results ; that in the end Israel may really become His servants to the joy and blessing of all the earth.

But the apostle writes in the gap of Christ's rejection, before the day of blessing and glory dawns on Israel, the land, and all the nations ; and he shows us Christ, dead, risen, and ascended, the object of God's delight, and the hinge of all that is good for the believer now. He is a living Stone, rejected indeed by men, but with God chosen, prized. So he preached at Pentecost : Him given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye through hand of lawless men did crucify and slay, Whom God raised up. . . Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God made Him, this Jesus Whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ. And as Peter received a new name from the Rock which Christ alone was, so the saints who believe acquire a new nature from what He is, as he here tells us ; " yourselves also as living stones are being builded up a spiritual house."

In nature-no object lies more obviously void of life than a stone. But this only makes the power of grace the more impressive. Even John the Baptist could tell the haughty Pharisees and Sadducees, who pleaded their descent from Abraham, that God was able of the stones to raise up children to Abraham. Here the apostle predicates

of the believing remnant that they themselves as living stones were being builded up for God's use and to His praise. But it was all through the One, even our Lord Jesus. He does not develope the unity of the Spirit like the apostle of the uncircumcision; but he not obscurely hints at the association of the saints. They are being formed into a spiritual house.

It was no longer a question of the mountain consecrated by Samaritan pride, nor yet of Jerusalem and the house where the Jews said one must worship if one worshipped at all. That hour in principle passed away with the cross of Christ, as the Epistle to the Hebrews demonstrated at a later day. The only temple God owns is the church as a whole, unless it be individually the temple of a Christian's body; for the Holy Ghost by His indwelling so constitutes both (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19). Here the language is less full and precise. The general import sufficed for the purpose in hand. They composed, as being living stones, a spiritual house. Assuredly such and so near a relationship to God was a high honour put upon them even now when passing through the world; and we shall find that it entails corresponding duties on all so invested.

This he follows up by another title of honour and living nearness to God, "a holy priesthood." Nor does the Holy Spirit now recognise any other priesthood as accredited by God. The entire Jewish religious system came to its end with Christ's death: temple, sacrifice, rite, and priest-

hood. Heathenism was an imposture, Satan's evil imitation or delusive substitute. Christ is not entered into holy places made with hand, answering to the true, but into heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us. As He according to scripture is the sole and great High Priest, become higher than the heavens and seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, the sole priestly house (the same scripture acknowledges) consists of all the saints of God. They are alike washed, sanctified, justified. They had and have also access by faith into the favour of God "in which we stand." In Christ Jesus they were become nigh by the blood of Christ. Whatever the distance between Jew and Gentile, and between God and both, we out of them both who believe have through Christ the access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Though nearness to God is the most precious and essential mark of a priest, the proof is not merely the principle furnished in the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians just referred to. In our text the apostle Peter explicitly characterises the Christians only as the "holy priesthood" which the N.T. owns. The apostle John speaks to the same effect in Rev. i. 6; and the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the fullest treatment of the necessity arising out of the priesthood changed in Christ, from first to last treats Christian brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, as the true and present analogue to the family of Aaron. Early in it we read that Christ is Son over God's house; Whose house are we (Heb. iii. 6). Later

(x. 19) we read again, "Having therefore, brethren boldness to enter into the holy [places] by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which he dedicated for us through the veil, that is his flesh, and [having] a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from a wicked conscience and having our body washed with pure water."

Here the privilege attributed to all saints is greater than any son of Aaron ever enjoyed, or even Aaron himself; for it applies to all times, and with a boldness he never knew. Faith is entitled thus to approach where Christ is now through the rent veil in virtue of His blood and the Spirit who makes its efficacy good to our conscience and heart, as our settled status. Hence as we read in our text "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ," the functions are open to us and binding on us, far beyond using oxen, sheep, goats, cakes, or incense. And this we find confirmed in Heb. xiii. 15: Through Him therefore let us offer up sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, fruit of lips confessing to His name. The proof of our priestly place is remarkably complete. Hence it follows that the caste of a priesthood now on earth on behalf of the Christian saints, and separate from them, is an imposture not only unsupported by scripture, but wholly opposed to its plain and ample testimony. Nay more, it is subversive of the being and nature of the church, and incompatible even with the fundamental character of the gospel, and of christian standing.

The holy building, of which the apostle had just spoken, consists of living stones which derived so striking a peculiarity from the Living Stone. This, familiar in general to those who knew the Bible, he proceeds to base on a prophecy repeatedly cited in the N. T.

"Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him (or, it) shall in no way be shamed. To you therefore that believe [is] the preciousness; but to disobedient[ones] a stone which the builders rejected, this became head of corner, and stone of stumbling, and rock of offence; stumbling as they do at the word, being disobedient, unto which also they were appointed" (vers. 6-8).

Isaiah xxyiii. turns from "the drunkards of Ephraim" and their judgment to the still more terrible stroke which must fall on the guilty "scornful" rulers in Jerusalem. For these, to escape the overflowing scourge of the king of the north, or the Assyrian, will have made a covenant with Death and with Sheol are at agreement. But lies shall prove no refuge, nor falsehood hide them. For Jehovah who is to rise up, after the fashion of the overwhelming victories He gave David of old, will do His strange work, only on an unexampled scale—a consummation and that determined upon the whole earth. Thus the wilful king within and his covenant shall come to nought with the apostates of the people; and no less the king of the north without and the multitude of the besieging foes, as chap. xix. adds. But in the

face of this unparalleled tribulation, of which all that has befallen the people is but an earnest, the prophet declares from the Lord Jehovah, that He lays in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation : he that believeth shall not make haste. For that day will prove the downfall, final and irretrievable, of all the powers of the world, west or east, as well as of the unbelieving mass of the Jews, when the godly remnant that trust in Immanuel are for ever vindicated. Then shall He Whose name is Branch grow up from His own place, and He shall build the temple of Jehovah ; even He shall build the temple of Jehovah ; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne ; and He shall be a priest upon His throne, which no Son of David ever was save in a small typical degree, but He who is also the Root of David.

Here it is not the temple of glory as by-and-by, but a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices during the day of Christ's rejection by Israel. But do the believing Jews forfeit all because the mass reject Him ? Far from it. They enter into the enjoyment of the promises, as far as these were compatible with the present ways of God ; and if there be not the reception of all, God has provided some "better thing" for or respecting us, as another points out (Heb. xi. 39-40). They have in measure the blessedness of believing without having seen, when the prophecy is, not merely applied, but fulfilled to the letter. The trust in Christ which refused idolatry, antiochrist, and

the seemingly overwhelming power of the world, will surely be blessed, though objects of mere mercy at the end, if they have not the power of faith breaking through every obstacle in peace as ought to be now through the word.

It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul, in Rom. ix. 30-33, seizes this portion with the aim of explaining how Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, failed; while Gentiles, that did not pursue it, yet attained it. The latter believed, and thus gave glory to God; the former clung to works, though far from what the law demanded, and thus betrayed their own vain self-righteousness, as they also stumbled at the stumbling-stone, despising their own Messiah. For the law is not of faith, whereas the blessing is, and thus open to the Gentile that believes, not to the Jew that disbelieves.

Moreover the introduction of Zion is seen to have a notable meaning. For, as thus figuratively used, it expresses the mountain of God's grace in contrast with Sinai, the mountain of the people's responsibility under law, where all was failure, not because the law was not good, but because man is bad and so ruined that he cannot do without a Saviour. Zion appears after the utter breakdown of the kingdom under Saul, man's choice; for it was only wrested from the Jebusites to be the city of David, God's choice. But a greater than David is here, the Christ, Whom Jehovah lays as a cornerstone, elect, precious, beyond all comparison. He that believes on Him shall in no wise be put

to shame; as all must be who trust in an arm of flesh, most of all those of Israel who despised Him to whom law and prophets ever pointed. For the world-kingdom Jehovah has anointed His King upon Zion, the hill of His holiness; and Christ, not now but in that day, will ask and have the nations for His inheritance, and the ends of the earth for His possession, breaking all that oppose with iron sceptre, as the vessels of a potter are dashed in pieces. "For Jehovah hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His dwelling: this is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." The key to all this, is that Zion will be the earthly seat of His anointed, His beloved Son.

But Zion and the earth vanish for the present as the centre and the sphere of the divine dealings. For the rejected Christ is in heaven at God's right hand, angels and authorities and powers being subjected to him; and as He suffered for us in flesh, the Jews that believe are called to arm themselves with the same mind, no less than the Gentile saints and not to count as strange the fire-kindling among them that comes to them for trial, but, as we share in Christ's sufferings, to rejoice that at the revelation of His glory also we may rejoice exultingly. Such is the genuine Christian lot for the present, put to grief by varied trials that the proof of our faith, more precious than gold that perishes though proved by fire, be found unto praise and glory and honour in that day.

Assuredly the precious value of Christ will be manifest then. Kings shall shut their mouths at

Him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they understand. And nations shall come to Zion's light and King, to the brightness of its rising. Yet how infinite the mercy now, that the chosen people's ruin (not only under law but worse still in rejecting the Messiah and the gospel too) did not hinder the believing remnant from anticipating the blessing in its Christian form and fulness! All turns on Christ dead and risen and on high. "To you therefore that believe is the preciousness." His rejection was the occasion of making good to God's glory all that was promised, and a vast deal more which it was given to the apostle Paul to communicate. But even here how rich is the grace that is unfolded! If they could not but sorrow over their unbelieving brethren after the flesh, in what had grace come short to him that believed?

Now they understood the import of many a scripture hitherto obscure through unreadiness to think that the rulers and the people of the Jews could be so hard and dark and rebellious against Jehovah. Not only did they overlook the solemn warnings of His word in their hands or hearing, but they fulfilled the voices of the prophets by condemning His righteous servant, marked out by those divine oracles, and by wonders of divine power and goodness, only surpassed by His personal glory and by moral excellence on every side without a parallel.

Take a sample. Isa. liii. was no enigma to them any longer; on the contrary it afforded the

most luminous explanation of what had come before them in facts as certain as important. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor lordliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their face; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows: yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

Now the Jews are profoundly unbelieving, not only as all natural men but judicially blinded, because it was in the face of the fullest evidence and of long-suffering withal to the uttermost. But their self-judgment will come at length in the day of Messiah's power and their national deliverance. Then shall they see and confess it all, as other scriptures attest; and they will understand that Jehovah wrought atonement for all their sins by what was their destructive and inexcusable sin. Into this work, already in itself accomplished, the believing remnant enters now in all its value, like

ourselves from among the Gentiles. But as yet the mass are insensible. "To you therefore that believe is the preciousness, but to disobedient a stone which the builders rejected, this became head of corner, and stone of stumbling, and rock of offence." How evident the solution of the riddle! and how could it be otherwise if Jesus be the Christ and Son of God? Ps. cxviii. 22 and Isa. viii. 14 are as clearly fulfilled as the fuller prediction. While we have to wait for the earthly triumph when Israel shall own it all, Jesus is made head of the corner in heaven, and those who now believe, Jews or Gentiles, enjoy the blessing by faith. This too has even now more excellence for the heart than the visible glory when it appears as it surely will, to say nothing of the heavenly glory which will also be displayed above the world in that day.

The present state of the Jews exactly answers to the dark back-ground of the picture. And the words which follow are as solemn morally as they are sure in fact: "stumbling as they do at the word, being disobedient, unto which also they were appointed." There is neither here nor anywhere else the dogmatic reprobation of the Calvinistic school; which has no more to justify it from scripture than the opposite error of the power for good of the Pelagians. All the evil is man's; as the good is exclusively of God's grace. He never made man to be a sinner, nor does He take pleasure in a sinner's death, still less in his everlasting destruction. But He is supreme; and, bold as

man may be in wilful disobedience, God's will stands. He presents His grace and truth in Christ; and men stumble at the word which reveals Him. To this they were appointed, not to be disobedient, but, being so, to stumble in this way, which God had in His wisdom appointed as their trial. They refuse and condemn the word; which others, by grace self-judging and believing Him, receive to their salvation, peace, and joy. Compare Jude 4.

Nor is it only that Christians now are a spiritual house, a holy priesthood; and this not as a mere title, but they offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. They stand in the fullest contrast with such as stumble at the word, the disobedient. The roll of blessed privilege is unfolded here thus far.

"But *ye* [emphatically, are] a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set out the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness unto his marvellous light; who once [were] no people but now God's people, the unpitied, but now pitied" (vers. 9, 10).

It is true that as "a holy priesthood," the exercise of the heart by faith is toward the God who brought us to Himself by His grace in Christ, and could righteously bring us thus near by His blood. We hence approach within, and offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What the sons of Aaron did in the sanctuary after a material sort, which derived all its value from

being a shadow of Christ and His acceptance to God as a perfect and constant odour of rest, the saints are now exhorted to do. As the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, "By Him therefore let us offer sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, fruit of lips confessing to His name." Can any privilege be higher or more intimate than to be in His presence, walking in the light as He is, delivered from the egotism which breaks out into the variance of separate will, and cleansed by the blood which effaces every sin? to adore the Father, the only true God? to pour forth our thanksgivings for all the grace that has reached even to us? to praise Him, in spirit with all saints, for all that He is and has done, and given us to receive and know?

Christ is the ground and substance of it all, and hence without cloud or change, and the Holy Spirit given, that a divine power and character might be in vessels though still earthly. This is a wondrous assimilation to the everlasting worship which shall be in heaven and throughout eternity; but we own it now and are invited to it now, not as a title merely but as a joyful occupation, especially as gathered to His name. It will be perfectly without alloy in the day of glory to which we look on; but it does become us to abound in it here, seeing that the light and the love and the known accomplishment of that work which secures the blessedness of all to God's glory are already ours, and Christ is revealed to us in that glory as the fullest witness and pledge that it is ours.

Never should we confound worship with the

ministry of the word. Precious as this is, it is but the means of conveying to us the truth, which received by the Spirit fits us for the praise and adoration of our God. It is rather the service of the Levite than the approach and the offering of the priest. But no communication of blessing from God to our faith, however essential as the basis, has the same nature, character, and effect as worship; for this is the return of the heart, when made free of His presence and strengthened by His Spirit, to present our thanksgivings and praises in the communion of all saints, acceptable to God through the Saviour.

Yet it is not all. The believers are also viewed on another side. They, and they only, are "a chosen race," at the very time when the elect nation had proved itself more than ever guilty to its own ruin. Now to a remnant of the Jews is this word primarily addressed; not as if it were not true of all who believe, but that those might be comforted who were saved from that perverse generation, over which a fresh judgment was suspended, about to scatter them once more, and more than ever. If Israel's place was for the time forfeited, the believing remnant get the blessing and are pronounced "a chosen race." The distinction in Christianity acquired a higher character and more personal.

Next, they were "a royal priesthood" (which the Aaronic was not), but rather after the pattern of Melchizedek in its display of the blessing. In the day that is coming He will exercise that priest-

hood, sitting as Priest upon His throne, instead of bearing us up as He now does within the veil. Meanwhile those who are His are even now said to be a royal priesthood to manifest His praises before the day of His power. It is not of course preaching the gospel to the lost that they might be saved, but telling out His virtues or excellencies, as our testimony to Him who alone is worthy and exalted of God in the highest.

Then again they are "a holy nation," when the nation, who ought to have been so, stood with the stamp on it of evil to the uttermost, not of idolatry alone but of disdaining the Holy One of God, the Messiah. Had they not cried in their blind and mad hatred, His blood be on us and on our children? The remnant, on the contrary, who owned Him and were washed from their sins in His blood, were now "a holy nation" accepted in His name.

Finally they were "a people for a possession." If God was morally bound to discard at length the people who were always resisting the Holy Spirit, as their fathers had done, those of them who believed on Christ became "a people for a possession." They were the more dear, because their faith broke through the manifold hindrances by which unbelief, pride, and judicial darkness encompassed the Jewish nation. Few as they were, compared with the mass hurrying on to destruction, they were "a people for a possession" to God, that they "might tell out the excellencies of him that called them out of darkness unto his marvellous light."

Such is the Christian position here below. By-and-by Israel shall have the place in power and glory before all the nations, where the blind people see and the deaf people hear in the rejected Messiah the Lord Jehovah, the only Saviour. Then will it be plain that "this people have I found for myself; they shall show forth my praise." And men shall know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Him, who is Jehovah, and none else; and the heavens from above and the skies shall pour down righteousness, and the earth shall open and bring forth salvation, and righteousness shall spring up together. But even now, while the rejected Christ sits on the Father's throne, and the Spirit is sent forth to glorify Him after a spiritual sort in a world of darkness and rebellion against God, those who confess Christ are to tell out His excellencies. And well they may: seeing that He called them out of darkness unto His marvellous light. If these should hold their peace, as He said, the stones would immediately cry out. They were once as dark as any. So were all who now believe, darkness itself as the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, but now light in the Lord. And truly the light is wonderful unto which He called us, Himself the genuine light which never deceives nor grows dim. Though it has not yet arisen to shine on Zion, as it will surely come, it has shone in our hearts who believe, the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now it is only from heaven and for heaven, as we wait for

Him. But He will return and appear in manifest and indisputable light for Zion and repentant Israel; and the earth, which darkness still covers, shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah and of His glory as the waters cover the sea.

Meanwhile those He called out of the Jews are consoled by the assurance that in Christ all that can be theirs, consistently with walking now by faith and not by sight, is their assured portion. The failure of the ground (their own obedience), taken in Exod. xix. 5, 6, xxiv. 3-7, does not compromise those who believe. Christ suffering for their disobedience established what could not fall. Their faith rests on Him, not on themselves; whosoever believeth on Him shall not be confounded; and they did believe on Him who secures all for the weakest that is His. Hence *they* anticipate Hosea ii. 23 before it can be verified to Israel, as ver. 10 clearly proves. They are warranted to appropriate now the prophet's words. It is due to Christ whom God delights to honour. But it is full of interest and instruction to apprehend that Paul, writing to both Jews and Gentiles that believed, quotes Hosea i. 10 no less than ii. 23; whereas Peter, writing to the believing Jews of the dispersion, does not go beyond the latter. Each inspired writer was perfectly guided of God for the divine aim in view. This Wiesinger totally failed to discern, and Alford, who endorses his error, confuses the two truths, and thus destroys a distinction of all moment for spiritual intelligence. The once "no people" were now God's people; the unpitied

as to their settled state, which the perfect implies, were now pitied. How truly great His mercy now ! And it is good and wholesome for the soul to feel habitually that it needs nothing less in the day of temptation in the wilderness. So the apostle Paul reminds the believing Hebrews in the close of chap. iv. Indeed it is what the priesthood of Jesus constantly implies. All saints should cherish His sympathy and God's mercy throughout our earthly path.

The exhortation at the beginning of the chapter is founded on being born again of incorruptible seed through God's living and abiding word. Therefore were they, and all other Christians of course, to lay aside all malice and all guile and their accompaniments or effects, and to desire earnestly the pure milk of the word, that thereby they might grow to the salvation of glory ready to be revealed. Here it is another exhortation no less general and necessary, based on those high privileges of priesthood, holy and kingly, which distinguish the Christian already, though to be displayed in glory by-and-by, as declared in Rev. i. iv. v. xx. What Israel lost in rejecting the Christ was theirs, only in a more eminent degree and with even a far higher sphere in God's sovereign grace. This leads the apostle to press corresponding probity.

"Beloved, I exhort [you]* as strangers and sojourners to abstain* from the fleshly lusts such

*It is not that "you" ($\psi\mu\alpha\varsigma$) is expressed, as Lachmann ventured to do on the erroneous impression that the Rescript of Paris so reads. It is implied at most. But that MS. and many more, uncial and cursive, do read the verb in the imperative.

as* war against the soul, having your behaviour comely among the Gentiles; that in what they speak against you as evil-doers, they, as observing,† may from your comely works glorify God in [the] day of visitation" (vers. 11, 12).

For the first time the apostle addresses these saints as "beloved," for there is no ground for adding "dearly" though it be common enough with the A.V. It should be here, as the word is rendered in chap. iv. 12; and in the Second Epistle, i. 17, iii. 1, 8, 14, 15, 17. The endearing term is as appropriate to this entreaty against carnal desires, as farther on against quailing under fiery trial. On either side danger lay; and the respective exhortations came from his heart to theirs.

But he appeals to them also as "strangers (or, pilgrims) and sojourners," not in the more literal sense of chap. i. 1, but in the deeper and more spiritual view of i. 17. If grace called them to heaven, what had they to do with the objects and pursuits and interests of the earth? They were waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus in glory, called to be holy in all manner of behaviour, as is He who called them, and while free to invoke Him as Father who judges impartially according to the work of each, bound to pass their time of pilgrimage in fear, yet in a fear not of distrust but of confidence; for it is based on the conscious knowledge of divine grace in their redemption at

* Here it is not *αἰ* but *αἰτίνας* as I attempt to express.

† Not the aor. part. as in many good MSS., but the present.

infinite cost and worth. Here he had been telling them of their invaluable nearness and dignity before God when Israel for the present had manifestly lost all. It was their blessing as Christians, not their calamity as Jews, which called them to walk through the wilderness world as pilgrims and sojourners. These too give the greater force to their present estate of strangers, that they abstain from fleshly desires such as war against the soul. Even what is lawful must be used with measure in God's sight.

How striking is the different way in which grace uses spiritual privilege as here, and the sanctioned principle, as well as ambition, of the world-church! Babylon is now clothed in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold and precious stones and pearls, with a gold cup in her hand full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication, mystery written on her forehead, and withal drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. Present exaltation on earth, universal power and visible glory, the grossest idolatry, the most wanton and corrupt betrayal of holy separateness to Christ, and the murderous hatred of God's saints and of the witnesses of Jesus: such are her horrible, indelible, and unmistakable features to all taught of God.

What a contrast was even the first hankering after outward honour and authority with our Lord's warning to the twelve! "Ye know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not thus shall it be

among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever would become first among you shall be your bondman; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 25-28). From the beginning of His ministry our Lord had laid down for such as heard Him that they are to love their enemies, to do good to those that hate them, to bless those that curse them, to pray for those that despitefully use them. So teaches Peter in this very Epistle, and so he lived: blessed, if we suffer for righteousness' sake, and if we share in Christ's suffering, we rejoice now, that in the revelation of His glory also we may rejoice with exultation. The Catholic system, long before the world-dominion of Popery prevailed, was but the mystery of lawlessness developed; flesh rampant in and after the world to Satan's delight, as far from Christ known by the Holy Spirit as a theatre or circus is from heaven. But greater abominations than these were to come, till the signal and final judgment which slumbers not, when strong is the Lord God who will then surely judge Babylon for ever.

According to the mind of Christ the high privileges of faith were but to strengthen the believer's delight in God and vigilance as "strangers and sojourners" in holding aloof from the fleshly lusts such as war against the soul. It is not now the unamiable and bitter feelings of fallen man, as in ver. 1, but the self-indulgent and licentious. How often through lack of prayer and watchfulness

fleshly lusts spring from sincere esteem and pure affection unawares gliding into carnality; as the Galatians' fall from grace was from going on to perfect in flesh what they had begun in Spirit! How readily little fond familiarities follow by degrees, in the intimacy of Christian love ripening into unhallowed freedom, if not the worst evil. So might lust take other direction and form, as covetousness or any other indulgence alien from Christ. These fleshly desires, many of which men praise as doing well to self, war against the soul and are an abomination in God's sight. How contrary to the new and eternal life we have in Christ, and inconsistent with God's wonderful light in which we walk! How mischievous and debasing to the Christian! They grieve the Holy Spirit, dishonour Christ, and fight against the soul.

Hence the call is to have their behaviour comely (καλῶς) among the Gentiles. For there were these Christian Jews interspersed. Though the spring of conduct is the faith that looks to and calls on the Father, it is also an obligation to win the unbelieving and unfriendly by practical consistency with Christ, without affording occasion to those that seek it. For men of the world suspect the motives and the ways of the faithful, yet have a strong if not intelligent sense of their responsibilities, and are ever on the watch for their halting and failure. Therefore is the apostle earnest in urging "that in what they speak against you as evil-doers, they, as observing, may from your comely works glorify God in the day of visitation."

It was an early and common reproach among the Gentiles that Christians must be athoists, because they turned from idols; and no image of gold, silver, stone, or wood, nor picture of man's device, met the eye of man in their assemblies. The Jews well knew that this was just because a living and true God had won them from such vanities to serve Him. But bitterly jealous were they themselves that Christians did not become proselytes of the law, instead of believing in His risen Son, Jesus the Deliverer, and waiting for His coming again from the heavens; and still more furious were they, that any of the stock of Abraham should have the same faith and hope as the uncircumcised.

Among Greeks and Romans again the service of the state was a cherished object: and he who did not take his share of its burdens or value its ambitions had no end of contempt. To have here no abiding city but to seek the coming one, to declare that the Christian commonwealth is in the heavens from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, seemed to both Jew and Greek rank folly and odious in itself.

Love too, as the bond of perfectness, laid them open to the shameless suspicion of ill-wishers, who put an evil construction on the new brotherhood which astonished the world, embracing women emancipated by the faith of Christ from being the mere drudges and playthings of the other sex, and now in a near and common relationship where Jew or Greek cannot be, bond or free, male and female; "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." It is easy to

understand what men think and say of what is only known to and by faith, opening the door, as they in their ignorance of grace and truth judge it must, to indiscriminate licence and uncleanness. But the apostle exhorts that, from observing the comely works of those addressed, even such as spoke against them as evil-doers might rise above their prejudices and glorify God in the day of visitation.

The apostle put no commendation of themselves before them. Christ bade them beware of such praises as dangerous. But He did more to the like effect as here in Matt. v. 16: Let your light (*i.e.* in confessing Christ) thus shine before men, so that they may see your comely works and glorify your Father that is in the heavens. Our apostle adds "in the day of visitation;" but hardly in the sense of being visited with the same light and grace which Christians knew, still less of a day when the Gentiles should have a clearer preaching of the gospel than then. It appears rather to look on to a day when God shall judge the secrets of men, when the Lord shall come who will also both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of hearts; and then shall each have the praise from God.

Having begun with self-judgment as to the inner springs in order to a comely behaviour before others, ready as they are to think and speak ill of Christian men, he now turns to various external relations and exhorts us to the conduct that becomes us in them.

"Be subject* to every human institution for the Lord's sake; whether to a king as supreme, or to rulers as being sent through him, for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to those that do well. Because so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye put to silence the ignorance of senseless men; as free, and not having liberty as a cloak of malice, but as God's bondmen. Honour all, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king" (vers. 13-17).

The Jews found it a hard task morally, and in particular when entrusted with the then only revelation from God, to live in submission to the powers that be; idolatrous as these were and given up to a reprobate mind. The mass never accepted the Gentile yoke as the divine chastening of their own wickedness and departure from the God Who deigned to make them His people. And as their pride was irritated by the gospel which, on their rejection of the Messiah, God was now sending out to the nations no less than to themselves in His free and indiscriminate grace, their rebellious spirit also was growing till it drew down on them the days of vengeance in war, and desolation, as Dan. ix. 26 predicted, as well as the Lord Himself (Matt. xxi. 38-41, xxii. 7, and Luke xxi. 20-24), in the last clearly distinguishing the Roman siege under Titus from the far more solemn events about to be in the consummation of the age (Luke xxi.

* The great uncials, with some cursives and ancient versions, do not read *οὕτως*, "therefore." The connection with the foregoing is quite indirect. The verb is not only reflexive, but aorist; and so the meaning is, Be ye those who once for all submitted yourselves.

25-27, as still more fully given in Matt. xxiv. 15-31, and Mark xiii. 14-27).

It was therefore of moment to exhort the Christian confessors from among the dispersed Jews to whom the apostle writes, that they should in their humble loyalty please God and be gracious, instead of contrary, to all men. Notwithstanding that Israel was a wreck, and Judah so more than ever in God's sight because of adding the Lord's ignominious rejection to their old iniquity, the remnant that believed in Him not only received spiritually what the nation sought after the flesh, but enjoyed new blessings in Christ beyond all that saints possessed of old. Prophets had it even revealed to them, that not to themselves, but to the remnant that believed after Christ's sufferings and glorification, they were ministering those things which were announced to them through those that evangelised them in virtue of the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven.

In such a case therefore consciousness of such rich and unmerited blessing softens the heart before God, and opens and swells its new affections toward man. For as another apostle wrote, "the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God to overthrow of strongholds, overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifteth up itself against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5). Thus, on the one side as God's children, and knowing their redemption by Christ's precious blood, while on the other

strangers and sojourners instead of being at home on the earth, it was all the more beseeching, simple, and easy that they should be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake.

The church is a divine institution, not a human one, and every Christian is a living part or member, whatever his place. And God set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers. After that we are told of another and inferior class, powers, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, kinds of tongues. Sign-gifts passed away, and such of the great gifts for edification as laid the foundation. But God is faithful, whatever the changes through man's unfaithfulness; nor can Christ's love to His body cease in active and effectual care, till we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at a full grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

But here the call is external even to submit to every human institution; for they might assume different shapes, all involving trial to the Christian. But as the apostle Paul wrote to the saints in Rome (xiii. 1), where these were chiefly Gentiles, and a cruel and unscrupulous and depraved emperor reigned, "Let every soul be subject to the authorities that are above [him]. For there is no authority except from God, and those that be are set up by God." Here it is not the secret providence that comes before us, but the manifest fact. In both the duty is to subject oneself; and here "for the Lord's sake" as there for conscience.

A republic had its claim no less than royalty. The only relation revealed as to the believer is subjection without one word here or anywhere else in the N. T. for exercising authority in the present evil age. The grace of Christ is the pattern for every Christian; and "for the Lord's sake" does not import His relation to the human creation, though He is indeed Lord of all, but His appeal to the saints themselves, that they obey Him in submission to the powers of the world.

But the Spirit distinguishes, while He enjoins subjection to all: "whether to king as supreme, or to rulers as being sent through him, for vengeance on evil-doers and praise to those that do well." "Sent through him" refers to royal authority as superior. Had the reference intended been to God, the phrase (I believe) would have been *ὑπὸ*, "by," and not the intermediate word *διὰ*, "through." All may see the incongruity which the mistake would involve of predicating divine mission, not of the king but only of delegated governors.

The aim of government expressed in the latter part of ver. 14 is quite clear. It is to punish evil-doers, and to encourage those that do well. The broad obligation was enjoined on Noah after the deluge. We hear of neither king nor magistrate in the ante-diluvian world. People imagine and reason in an abstract way about Adam's day; but the case of Cain left unpunished in Jehovah's hands indicates how matters then lay. "At the hand of man, at the hand of each one's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's

blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God he hath made man " (Gen. ix. 5, 6) first laid the primary basis of human government as it is. Life belonged to God, who thus communicated the principle to Noah. Henceforward man was responsible as God's servant to execute wrath, and even to blood if blood were shed ; for he must not bear the sword in vain. It was the beginning of dispensations, neither the Adamic state being one, nor the new heavens and earth in the absolute sense during the ever-running ages. Nor was it long before Nimrod, the rebel of the Cushite line, availed himself of the dispersion to usurp despotic power of his own will ; and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

With the government of the world those who are Christ's have nothing directly to do. They are expressly not of the world as He was not (John xvii. 14, 16), who refused even to arbitrate when one sought His informal intervention ; He would be no judge or divider of inheritance (Luke xii. 13, 14). " My kingdom is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my officials fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now is my kingdom not from hence." He was come into the world to bear witness to the truth ; and such is the mission of the Christian. The age to come will behold Him and them reigning over the earth when evil shall be infallibly judged and iniquity hide its head. It is now the time to suffer with Him, looking then to be glorified. Therefore should we meanwhile be

the more zealous to submit ourselves to every human creation (as it is literally), and not only to a king as supereminent but to governors as sent from time to time through him for righteous dealing with evil-doers and for praise of such as do well. Our proper interests are on high ; but that is our duty for the Lord's sake.

A weighty reason follows. "Because so is the will of God (and are we not sanctified unto obedience—obedience of Jesus?), that by well-doing ye put to silence (lit. muzzle) the ignorance of senseless men ; as free and not having liberty as a cloak of malice, but as God's bondmen." How sound, wholesome, unselfish, and godly ! The true and comely answer to the spiteful hatred of the world is a godly course of living. For men as such, not some only but all, are senseless if they know not God, and therefore find their malignant pleasure in imputing their own evils to His children. This habitual well-doing is not to give up the liberty wherewith Christ set us free, but as we live by the Spirit, also to walk by it, instead of wearing the liberty as a cloak of malice, which enemies pretended. It is our happiness and cherished duty to carry ourselves as God's bondmen : such we really are ; and we find it the perfect law of liberty, as it flows from our new nature.

The paragraph ends with a pointed and pregnant conclusion :—"Honour all, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king." The form of the first honouring is not the same as the last expression of the act : done when called for, not the habitual

doing it. The Christian should not fail to remember that man was made as none other in the image of God. He alas! when fallen is prone to forget what rebukes his manifold inconsistencies.

Loving the brotherhood is a constant duty; but the love takes a shape according to their state. No Christian is called to love carnality or worldliness; nor yet a schismatic way, nor the heretical or sectarian, but to turn away from the one, and to have no more to do with the other after a first and second admonition, however once perhaps honoured in God's service. Love would take pains with those guilty of lesser faults, admonishing the unruly, comforting the faint-hearted, sustaining the weak, and patient toward all. It is the very reverse of either self-seeking or indifference, of independency in any shape.

Then how necessary to cultivate habitually the fear of God! There is nothing right where this fails. The holy fear of God shuts out every dishonouring fear of man, and all tormenting fear of God. We know His majesty, His holiness, and His righteous character; and we know also that He loves us beyond a father's love, with the perfection of the Son's Father. May we all deepen in our fear of Him!

There remain the words, "honour the king." This too is continuous. Whatever may be his personal character, he represents God in the things of earth. The Christian, if true to his calling on high, has nothing to blind his eyes; for he seeks no personal interests, favour, or honour, nor conse-

quently has he to feel the disappointments of such as live for present things. He can therefore in simplicity and godly sincerity honour the king for his office as of God in His providence (for it is ignorance to speak here of His grace), and this as his habit with supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, not only for all, but in particular for kings and all that are in high place, that we may live a tranquil and quiet life. Our sufferings, sorrows, and conflicts come because we have Christ our life in the world which led of Satan crucified Him; and because we have to do with men bearing the Lord's name who seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. The world's false glory, the flesh's selfishness and selfwill, and Satan's antagonism to Christ and the truth must make it a question habitually of overcoming by faith in subjection of heart to God.

The exhortation is next addressed to domestics (*οικέται*), instead of continuing the unrestricted appeal of verses 11-17. The apostle begins with those, and does not follow up to their masters as in the Pauline Epistles; and then he writes to the wives and the husbands, without specifying either the children or the fathers. But it may also be noticed that the "domestics" here exhorted are a milder name if not a wider class, not necessarily "bondmen" as in the letters to Ephesus and Colosse. At least they were in contrast with the *οικότροψ* or born slave. One can understand hired servants of Jewish origin among Jews.

"Household servants, be in subjection with all

fear to your masters (δεσπόταις), not only to the good and gentle, but also to the crooked. For this [is] grace if for conscience toward God one endureth griefs, suffering unjustly. For what glory [is it] if when ye sin and are buffeted ye shall endure? but if when ye do well (ἀγαθοποι.) and suffer ye shall endure, this [is] grace with God" (vers. 18-20).

One of the hateful and fatal, plague-spots of Romanism is the so called church's interdiction of God's word, save according to its own will. None but Satan gave such an authority. But Protestantism never rose in this to the truth; for, in opposing Popish arrogance, it fell into the snare of claiming man's right to the Bible; which easily led on to the wicked principles of the French revolution, socialism, and other like iniquities. The Christian knows it as his real privilege and solemn obligation to assert God's right to address His word to His children now, as of old to Israel, not forgetting man universally in the Old T. as well as in the New. And this it is which constitutes the apostate guilt of the miscalled Higher Criticism, which is but a euphemism for base infidelity, however many amiable and would-be reverent persons are thereby ensnared in both Nationalism and Dissent as well as Popery. What a contrast with the world is God's communication first to the domestics whose lot among Greeks and Romans was hard indeed! The slaves at any rate were no more than living tools or possessions; and their numbers were immense, public as well as private.

With these home-menials as a class the apostle begins. As he had exhorted all in view of public authority, here he presses like subjection in the house. The domestics are enjoined to be subject with fear on every side to their lords; they were Christians, and bound to serve many a master where the danger of provocation was extreme. They needed therefore to walk in all awe. For according to Christ their godly subjection was due not only to the good and gentle, but to the crooked or perverse which last naturally abounded.

Where was any so noble a principle, morally speaking, found among men? We see in the O.T. how selfish were the ways of the Jewish chief men toward their own brethren after the flesh. What a conflict, and what humiliation to such as Ezra the priest and Nehemiah the governor! Of heathen heartlessness and cruelty we need not speak, even among the civilised Greeks and especially the Romans who had to face reprisals and rebellions and serious wars through their barbarity. It is Christ seen by faith as we perceive in the context that follows, which explains the elevation of heart which is here counted on by the apostle. They were to serve the Lord Christ in the spirit not of mere self-abnegation but of grace. No matter how worthless their masters might be, grace raises the soul above the most morose, and enables it to obey and suffer even in face of shameless wrong.

For as the apostle explains, this is "grace," in contrast with the natural bias toward the legal claim, if for conscience toward God one endure griefs,

suffering unjustly. The A. V. renders it "acceptable," and this is a fair sense in this place, and capable of defence. But it appears to me simpler and more forcible to adhere to the ordinary meaning, bearing in mind of course that it is not *grace* as in God which is in question, but the answer to it in those who believe. They were in this and in their measure imitators of God as beloved children, and walking in love as Christ loved them.

An effort has been made to translate the word "thankworthy" here as in Luke vi. 32-34. But this seems short-sighted, because there is no *ὑμῖν* (to you) here as there, which makes a sensible difference. We can readily perceive the propriety of "thanks to you," where "grace to you" could not stand. Here in the first case it is used absolutely; and in the second it has the very different adjunct *παρὰ τῷ θεῷ* (with God), who delights to find in His child what reflects Himself.

The apostle carries his argument yet more deeply in ver. 20. "For what glory is it, if when ye sin and are buffeted ye shall endure (or, bear it)?" This no person can fairly affirm. One bears the burden of admitted fault. It is only natural in such circumstances. "But if, when ye do good and suffer, ye shall endure (or, bear it), this is grace with God." Is it not supernatural? Yet it is what the Lord looks for, not only in the mature and better instructed of His saints, but in the most down-trodden menials who call upon His name. For God despises none, and has called by His grace the foolish things of the world that He may put to

shame the wise ; and chosen the weak things of the world that He may put to shame the strong things ; and the base things of the world, and the despised did God choose, that He might bring to nought the things that are : that no flesh should boast before God. A house-servant if a Christian was exhorted, instead of resenting injustice to follow Christ in His path of suffering love. Impossible so to do unless abiding in Him ; but he that says he abides in Him ought, just as He walked, so to walk himself.

The place of suffering is enforced for the Christian, to the special comfort of Christian servants, by that of Christ Himself, as we next hear.

“ For to this were ye called ; because Christ also suffered for you,* leaving you* a model that ye should follow up his steps ; who did no sin,

* There is the too usual discrepancy of copies and critics. Carelessness may have misled some of the scribes, or perhaps the assumption of mistakes which they claim to correct. Erasmus erred in giving “us” twice in ver. 21, the Complutensian ed. also in “us” and “you,” Colinaeus following the former, Stephens the latter. Beza and Elzevirs were right and chose the text as translated above ; so did Bengel, Griesbach, Lachmann, Alford, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, but not Matthaei or Scholz nor even Tischendorf till his eighth or last edition. Indeed the great MSS. (N A B C), not a few cursives, the ancient versions though not the Peschito, the Memph., or the edited Vulg. against the best copies, give here the true text. Even the unlearned Christian may be assured that this best agrees with the clauses succeeding, and that “us” would clash. Yet scholars who trust overmuch the more ancient copies or the more modern should have their zeal tempered by the fact that the false reading ἀπέθανεν, “died,” is read instead of ἔπαθεν, “suffered,” by the Sinaitic (N), as well as by many cursives in the same verse ; and the same false reading recurs in iii. 18 supported by N A C., at least a dozen cursives, and almost all the old versions, though the context requires the ordinary reading supported by BKLP, and the mass of cursives. Here Tischendorf right at first, got wrong at last.

neither was guile found in his mouth ; who when reviled did not again revile, when suffering did not threaten, but gave over to him that judgeth righteously " (vers. 21-23).

The world's relations to the saints, whether servants or not, is made unequivocally plain. So it was even for the apostles. "I have given them thy word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 14.) "If the world hateth you, ye know it hath hated me before [it hated] you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but I chose you out of the world : therefore the world hateth you. No bondman is above his Lord : if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you ; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also (xv. 18-20)." If it be trying as it surely is, how great is the moral honour of such association with Christ ! "For to this were ye called." God allowed, overruled, and used it for the good of His children here below.

Earlier still, and more widely, had the Lord made known His will, God's will. "But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, help those that curse you, pray for those that use you despitefully. To him that smiteth you on the cheek offer also the other ; and from him that taketh thy cloak forbid not thy coat also. To every one that asketh of thee give ; and from him that taketh away thy things ask them not back ; and as ye wish that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love

them that love you, what thank (grace) have ye? or even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do you good, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend [to them] from whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners that they may receive back as much. But love your enemies and do good, hoping for nothing back; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of [the] Highest; for he is kind to the thankless and wicked. Be ye therefore merciful even as your Father is merciful" (Luke vi. 27-36).

It is Christ practically, and the manifestation of the Father's character reproduced in His children. Nothing less palpable or more absurd than to expect such a character in fallen man as such, that is, in the world; nothing less is what the Lord looks for from those that are His. Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is from God. Do not doubt Him, nor allow to unbelief that these are bygone things. They become and bind the Christian at all times. And so we read here, "because Christ also suffered for you." Was this to dispense with our suffering? On the contrary He suffered for you, "leaving you a model, (or, copy) that ye should follow up his steps."

The saint needs an object from God to form our souls and fashion our ways. And He sets before us Christ. What or who can compare with Him? Flaws were in the best of saints at their best, think of Peter, Paul, John. Christ "did no sin,

neither was guile found in his mouth." Christ "when reviled did not revile again; when suffering, did not threaten, but gave over to him that judgeth righteously." Who among his most bitter foes that sought every occasion ever convicted Him of sin? He always did the things that pleased His Father, and never once did any will but His, the lowliest of men, yet above the highest. For there is nothing so lowly as obedience; nor is there any thing so pure and morally elevating as ever obeying God. He and He only was "His righteous servant," He absolutely and perfectly.

It has not been shown as far as I am aware that the word *παρεδ.* admits of the reflexive sense, good as it would seem in itself, that is, of meaning "gave *himself* over." Hence various modes of supplying the ellipse have been proposed. But why should it not be rendered, though a little rugged, as it seems used, absolutely? So we find in Mark iv. 29, where there seems no need of rendering, "is brought forth" or "provided." Why not "should permit"? See Pind. P. v. 4; and Demosth. 1394. 23 even for the aorist; which A. Buttmann oddly denies. The present, &c. are common as in Herod. vii. 15; Xen. Anab. vi. 4, 34; Isocr. 106 C.; Polyb. xxii. 24, 9, as given by Liddell and Scott.

At this point the apostle turns from the more general reference to the Lord's sufferings for us, the peerless example of unrepining love and unswerving yet patient righteousness in a world of evil, to that which stands alone from all before and

after in the expiation of our sins, here expressed in terms of extreme simplicity. In atonement Christ had no companions and no followers.

"Who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed (ver. 24).

Both our text and the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 28) make certain the strict sacrificial sense of ἀνήνεγκεν ("bore") when connected with the object, "our sins."* So joined, this is the simple and sole sense of the word. Such too is the regular, if not invariable, employment by the LXX, as any scholar may satisfy himself. The notion of a pregnant sense "bringing up to," and "bearing on" the tree, equivalent to the altar, is as certainly a mistake as any thing can be. For to express the former, the usage is προσφέρειν or προσάγειν, as opposed to ἀναφέρειν. Thus we read in Lev. i. 2, 3, 5 (as in the corresponding cases), with the distinct term ἐπιτιθέναι which answers to the latter in 9. The same fact occurs in Lev. ii. 1 compared with 2, as in 16 ἀνολσει is given the exact term instead of its substitute. Compare also Lev. iii. 1 with 5; 6, 7, 9 with 11, and 12 with 16. The Hebrew is always exact, and does not warrant the weak confusion of the LXX. in 14. The due distinction reappears in Lev. iv. 1 contrasted with

*Thus with "spiritual sacrifices" "offer" is right, as in ver. 5 of this chapter and in Heb. xiii. 15. So it is with "Himself" in Heb. vii. as well as with "sacrifices" in the same vers. 27. With other objects, it is rendered "carry, bring, or lead up;" and it may elsewhere mean to bear or undergo.

10, though the high priest himself was in question; and so for the whole congregation, 14 with 19; again the ruler, 23 with 26; and one of the people, the simple *οἷσει* being used in this case, and the proper *ἀνολσει* in the other. In the intermediate mixture of sin and guilt, as well as the full guilt-offering, there is at least no violation of the usage, though other terms displace the latter; and so it might be shown from Genesis to Ezekiel that *ἀνήνεγκεν* ("bore") expresses the final sacrificial act, and not the preparatory "bringing up" which also some have sought to attach to it. This, as we have seen, has its own distinct and appropriate expression.

Our apostle and the still greater one to the Gentiles cite Isa. liii. 12; which stamps these words of the Septuagint with divine authority. Heb. ix. 28 has the deeper use of exhibiting in the same verse the exact distinctiveness of the two words (*προσφέρειν* and *ἀναφέρειν*), which many scholars have confounded, and incomparably more who were far from being scholars. In the Epistle to the Hebrews is no wavering, as in the Septuagint though generally correct. Both terms are used with strict accuracy, as for instance Heb. vii. 27 for the closing act, and ix. 14 for what preceded it. Heb. xi. 17 beautifully shows the proper word* in the

* It may interest the Hebraist to note that it is not the technical term referred to which God used in addressing Abraham in Gen. xxi. 2. The LXX. therefore may have gone here beyond the word. Yet James (ii. 21) when he uses the figure "on the altar" says *ἀνενέγκας*. But fine as much is in their rendering of Isa. liii. (especially so long before the Advent, and revealing a portion so foreign to Jewish expectation), there are evident flaws. For who can defend *μεμαλάκισται* in ver. 5? Even if it could express adequately the Hebrew for "bruised," the perf. is quite

great trial of Abraham's faith, and with the added exactitude of the perfect and imperfect tenses, of which none perhaps but the inspiring Spirit would have thought, but which when revealed is appreciated by every Christian who understands it.

Does it surprise any reader that so plain a point should be proved so elaborately? Look at the margin of the A.V. and especially of the Revisers. And who does not know the bitter zeal of too many in our own day to found, on the gross ignorance of that mistranslation, the dangerous misconception of Christ's work involved in Christ's bearing "our sins in His body to the tree?" To translate competently one must know a great deal more than a grammar and a dictionary; one needs to consider the varied usages of the language as modified by its

out of place. It ordinarily would mean "is" or "has been reduced to effeminacy." Even "the chastisement of our peace was upon him" is not cited here, but the last clause only. But the 9th verse is not well rendered, still less the 10th and 11th save the last clause. It is the 12th however which the N. T. cites for the atonement; and there the Hebrew verb is *nasa*, not *yisbol*. These verbs for "bore" occur in reverse order in ver. 4, where we have the invaluable light of the Spirit through Matthew (viii. 17), who applies the quotation, not to His expiatory sufferings as in vers. 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 12, but to the depth of the sympathy which characterised His spirit whilst acting in divine power toward the sick and suffering in Israel. With this does not agree the rendering of the Septuagint. Hence the Evangelist was led to a more correct rendering; for it is about griefs or sicknesses, not "sins" directly nor "selves" vaguely as the object. And this is the more important, because of the tendency to distract the attention of the faithful from apprehending the immense theme of Christ's moral glory, through fixing it only on what immediately ministers to peace for souls not well grounded in it. Another evil consequence is that making all the entrance of Christ's spirit to be only into what atones for the sinner not only detracts from Him much else to His praise, but it causes the testimony to the work of redemption virtually to lose its distinctiveness, and the word of God its definiteness. Thus the unwise effort to concentrate all on atonement cannot but enfeeble its own proper character and defeat itself.

application, and especially the scope and requirement of the context. Who but a tyro could write, "It is the same word that in the verse before us is rendered *on*, that in the following verse is rendered *to*, 'Ye are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls?' This, then, we apprehend, is the apostle's statement, 'He himself bare our sins in his own body *to* the tree.'"^{*} The blunder led him and many another to the utterly false doctrine, that Christ "as really, though not so obviously, bare our sins when he lay a helpless infant, in the manger in Bethlehem, as when he hung, an agonised man, on the accursed tree."

O foolish theologians, who bewitched you? One may not expect all to read the Greek Testament with intelligent and reverent care, especially if persons doubt that "every scripture is inspired of God." A single word of the text before us upsets bushels of essays, sermons, and expositions. The dark and perilous hypothesis would require the imperfect tense to give continuity of bearing our sins, which men have imagined and reasoned on. It is the aorist, on the contrary, which above all shuts out relative duration, continuity, repetition, or action commenced and not accomplished. Here it is a simple fact of the deepest moment for God and man, for time and eternity.

The hypothesis is incompatible, not merely with the word used by the Holy Spirit here and everywhere else, but with the broadest and most solemn facts which the most unlettered of believers, taught

^{*} John Brown, D.D., on 1 Peter (i. 453, Sec. Ed. 1849).

of God, receive with awe and adoring gratitude. What meant that supernatural darkness which in the hours of broad daylight wrapt up the cross from a certain point? What the cry of Him who had ever, in the fullest enjoyment of love, said "Father," but now "My God, my God, why didst thou forsake me?" Had He not, when His baptism might have raised a question, received the testimony of the Father's absolute complacency in Christ as His beloved Son? How strange bearing up our sins in His body to the tree! Undoubtedly Christ did never so profoundly glorify God; but His bruising, His stripes, His being made sin and curse, were they all while He was enjoying His Father's love? His suffering for our guilt, and God's face shining at the same time! If He had been all His life bearing our sins, He must all His life have been abandoned by God who cannot look on sin with the least allowance. But no: Isa liii. 6 attests that Jehovah laid our iniquity on His Anointed when He hung on the tree: nothing more characteristic of the atonement, or more opposed to the perfectly enjoyed communion of His life.

Christ's work on the cross, then, is here before us, the answer of divine grace to man's need and danger, and the base of divine righteousness; but this last was left for another, Paul, to treat formally and fully. The practical aim was that which fell to the fervour of Peter, "that, being dead to sins, we should live to righteousness." Both apostles delighted in these wondrous antitheses which gave glory to God and to the Lord Jesus, His Son.

The word ἀπογερόμενοι, "being dead," is so uncommon in the N. T. that this is its only occurrence. It occurs in the best classic authors, and answers to our "deceased," rather than the ordinary word for "dead." This the apostle Paul used for the privilege into which the Christian is let in order to know his deliverance from sin, as distinguished from the remission of his sins. The further privilege he treats from chap. v. 12 of his Epistle to the Romans to the end of chap. viii. It is too often confounded with what goes before, though it is clearly a grave question of the Christian's state which arises generally for the soul when he knows his sins forgiven. But our apostle speaks of "having died to sins," which is quite another thing from Paul's doctrine. It is simple and practical (having done with sins), as was his province generally. It is true that the word sometimes means "having taken no part in," and "being absent or aloof from"; but the context even of a correct writer always suffices to fix what is intended. Here it proves that death spiritually is meant, because it is that we may live to righteousness. No other sense would apply here. It never implies "being freed from," as some have said.

The apostle adds a gracious encouragement as the result already achieved by Christ and given to the believer, for which he borrows the language of Isaiah, in the same chapter but a different verse, yet as exclusively descriptive of Christ's expiatory sufferings: "by whose stripes ye were healed." Strange paradox, but no less blessedly true! It is literally

the weal or rising left by the lash which many a slave knew well. How comforting to the Christian, slave or not, who rests with assurance, not on the puerile use made of Pilate's unprincipled indignity (whatever general custom might be pleaded in excuse) to the Lord of glory, but to that which God wrought for the ungodly through the ignominious but glorious death of His Son !

The need for the healing given to believers here recurs:—"For ye were* going astray as sheep, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (ver. 25).

The description admirably suits those who from among the Jews repented and believed the gospel. It is substantially true of sinners like ourselves from among the nations. For as the Good Shepherd said, Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall be one flock, one Shepherd. Such were the means which sovereign grace employed and made effectual for gathering to Christ.

Few indeed are the Epistles which do not present our previously lost condition. Rom. i. in its latter half is an awful but exact picture of the Gentile world under Greek letters and Roman polity. The heathen remains, in poets, in dramatic and other classic writings, demonstrate it in its actual and

* The famous Vatican MS. (1209) omits strangely the opening words, but is joined by \aleph A, 5, 40, and some good Latin copies in reading *πλανώμενοι*, as represented here; not "as sheep going astray" as in most, and the Text. Rec. In the LXX. of Ps. cxix. 176, and of Isa. liii. 6, it is the aorist expressive of the fact. Here the present participle looks at the habit rather than the fact.

unconscious vileness, which the apostle but touches with a holy hand. Rom. iii. brings the moral ruin home to the Jews from their own law, psalms, and prophets: that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become, as it was, under judgment to God. And hence, as man universally had no righteousness for God, the absolute need of God's righteousness for man if any were to be saved. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus by grace laid the ground for this justifying righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, as it is written, toward all, and upon all those that believe. For there is no difference: all sinned; and God is showing His righteousness at the present time of the gospel, that He should be just Himself and justify him that has faith in Jesus.

In 1 Cor. i. Jewish pretension to signs of power and Greek to wisdom are alike crushed by Christ crucified; who is to those called, both Jews and Greeks, God's power and God's wisdom. Man as he is cannot inherit God's kingdom. The Corinthians ought to have been the last to forget their shameless depravity. And these things, sad to name, were some of the saints, as the apostle reminded them; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in (or, by) the Spirit of our God. 2 Cor. v. might furnish a bright testimony of the same grace to the morally dead and the unreconciled; and other apostolical writings are full of like mercy to sinners. But those records suffice to prove the activity of divine love in Christ toward a guilty

world. The sad fact is as true of Gentiles as the Lord told the Jews, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life" (John v. 40). All the evil is on man's side; the goodness is wholly with God, as the Lord Jesus fully shows. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37).

The straying sheep returned unto the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls. They were His, the Father's gift to Him. The Son loved them and proved His love to them at all cost to Himself; and the Father loved them as He loved the Son: a love beyond the creature's conception, yet assured by Him who is the Truth.

They did well to return to Him whose love is beyond all other love. Glory will prove and display it before the wondering world, as the Lord told them (John xvii, 22, 23); and the apostle attests it also for that day as a matter of retributive righteousness (2 Thes. i. 10). But His love is as fully set on them and made known to them now for the joy of faith and the strengthening of their souls; only unbelief can doubt it, a great dishonour to Him and loss to us. O what a Shepherd and Overseer is Jesus!

Who can measure the descent, if the sheep are content to return, not to the divine Shepherd Whose the sheep are, but to the church even were it ever so true according to God's word, to articles or symbols however sound, or to pious devices to fan the embers of faith and love in their souls? No, we have *Him* given us of our God and Father, Who once died for our sins, and is now alive again to tend and watch over our souls in His undying love, with all

authority given to Him in heaven and upon earth ; that we may please Him in a world of darkness, as He always did the things that were pleasing to the Father. Nor does He for a moment fail if the sheep should fail, as they will surely do if they be not dependent and obedient. Yet all are sanctified by the Spirit unto His obedience, not to a Jew's obedience under law, but to that of Jesus, conscious of the Father's love. For this is our portion. Yet if negligent or worse, let us not doubt His grace, but humble our hearts and sit in self-judgment on ourselves. "He restoreth my soul ; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

The Jews were taught of old to regard their kings as "shepherds"; but for the most part these were ungodly and selfish, as the prophet Ezekiel describes their sordid ways. "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed ; ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up the broken, nor have ye brought again that which was driven away, nor have ye sought that which was lost ; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered without a shepherd ; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill ; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek."

Therefore were the shepherds to hear the word of Jehovah, Who is against the shepherds and will require His flock at their hands. He Himself will both search and seek out His sheep, deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day, gather them from the countries, bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, where they shall lie in a good fold and feed in a good pasture. More than all, He will set up over them one shepherd who shall feed them, His servant David, Who is not less Jehovah than Himself.

But the believing remnant to whom the apostle had not to wait for that day ; they were, as is said in Ephes. i. 12, pre-hopers in Christ ; they not only anticipate the repentance of the latter of the latter day, but enter into better blessings during the day of Israel's eclipse, when God has raised the rejected Christ out of the dead and given Him glory above, that their faith and hope might be in God. And if there be not yet visible power and glory, they find all the more touchingly their blessing in Him by whose stripes they were healed, whose grace in receiving them without one word of reproach made them judge their blind folly in going astray, and cleave with purpose of heart to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls.

CHAPTER III.

THE apostle does not exhort the masters, as we find in the Epistles to the Ephesian and the Colossian saints; but he addresses wives and husbands in the next place, without speaking in particular to children and parents. The relation of wives, as of domestics, was one of subjection.

“Likewise, ye wives, [be] subject to your own husbands, that even if any are disobedient to the word, they may be gained without word through the behaviour of the wives, having beheld your chaste behaviour in fear; whose adornment let it not be the outward one of plaiting the hair, and of wearing gold, or of putting on apparel, but the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible of the meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God very precious. For thus also heretofore the holy women that hoped in God adorned themselves, being subject to their own husbands; as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children ye became, doing good and not being afraid of any dismay ” (vers. 1-6).

It is easy to understand, that, as with servants, so with wives, Christians who stand in the subject place might and must find frequent difficulty with heathen or Jewish superiors to whom they were so near. For the mind of the flesh is enmity

against God; and it is provoked by what is of the Spirit in those whom they command. A Christian wife cannot give up a conscience toward God in matters of right and wrong; again she has objects of faith dearer to her soul than life which claim her allegiance and observance, in public as well as private ways utterly repugnant to unbelievers of every sort.

All the more is it incumbent on such believing wives as are bound to unbelieving husbands, that they should be truly and sedulously subject to their own husbands, wherever it is compatible with doing the will of God. Even in the O. T., where such unions existed, the wife was under obligation before God to be subject; whatever the rigour that the law required, whatever the horror inspired by idolatry. The eyes of Jehovah, they knew, were toward the righteous and His ears open to their cry. The face of Jehovah was against those that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

But the N. T. greatly strengthens the believer's heart by the then revelation of the grace of Christ far beyond what could act of old. Not only does it fortify to suffer both for righteousness and His Name; it encourages faith by the sovereign grace which saved ourselves to look to our God and Father on behalf of others who need it no less than we once did. And if He sought and saved me, a lost sinner, may I not the more (from standing in so close a relationship) pray for my husband dark and dead as he is?

Here too the apostle gives a wise caution. The less spiritual Christian is too apt to forget the ways of divine grace in bringing ourselves to God, and to regard conversion as the simple effect of the truth, overlooking the various workings of the Spirit to give the word a root in the heart. The unbeliever as such slights the word and has no conception of its power when by the Spirit Christ is thereby revealed to the soul. The practical bearing has immense weight with one ignorant of God and of himself. But his conscience can value greatly, gentleness, lowliness, patience, obedience in another and especially that other his wife. He is well aware how unreasonable and unkind he has often been to her ; yet she has borne it, and never complained, never reproached, but been as loving and dutiful as ever. He is forced to feel that there must be something that makes the difference in her faith which he often mocked. Hence is pressed "that even if any are disobedient to the word, they may be gained without word through the behaviour of the wives, having beheld their chaste [or, pure] behaviour in fear."

It is not meant that one can be begotten of God without the word : 1 Pet. i. 23 forbids such a thought as decidedly as James i. 18 and many other scriptures. But the moral weight and the gracious way of the wife tell on the hard husband ; and he is won to hear, so much the more because she does not preach at him, as he calls it. How many have been thus gained to hear the gospel the day will declare. The modest purity he knows and

values much, and this in fear, not boldness or self-confidence, but tempered by the dread of offending God or her husband. For here it seems put with all generality.

Next he turns to the external habits of a Christian wife, and urges the avoidance of frivolous and sumptuous ornaments. Some may deride this: but it is their carnality or worldliness which governs. Has not the Christian to please Christ and do all things in His name? Our bodies are to be presented a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; and we are not to be conformed to this age with its changing fashions of luxury and splendour, whatever station may be ours naturally. Christ is dearer, nearer, and more than all. And the Christian wives are not exempt. Their adornment is not the outward one of dressing hair, or wearing gold things, or putting on dress, which are alien from Christ and a shame to saints. The real ornament is the hidden man of the heart which He sees, in the incorruption (for outside all is corruptible) of a meek and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is of much price. None of these showy objects is so, nor could all Ophir buy it.

Therefore Peter was led to speak of ancients witnessing for God in this respect. "For thus also heretofore the holy women that were hoping in God adorned themselves accordingly, being subject to their own husbands; as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children ye became, doing good and not being afraid with any dismay." On God their hope rested, not on themselves. Sarah

stood at the head of these pious matrons of Israel ; but though not alone (for there were not a few saints of like spirit), she was far from forgetting the true ornaments that became saints.

Favoured as Christians were by Christ and redemption come, the wives now ought not to fall short either in moral adorning or in subjection. Sarah obeyed her husband and reverently addressed him (Gen. xviii. 12) ; she was not carried away by the common ground for vanity, though she had beauty more than most. Her children such wives now became as were doers of good and not frightened by any scare from propriety. Why should they be who know that Christ's Father is their Father, and Christ's God is theirs ? Why be perturbed since He sent His servants to comfort them with the same peace He gave them ? The enemy works by fear ; God by His love in Christ against every source of alarm.

Hence as another wrote, even before love was fully manifested, when it was simply hoped for with confidence, souls "from weakness were strengthened, became mighty in war, made armies of aliens give way. Women received their dead by a resurrection ; and others were tortured, not having accepted deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection " (Heb. xi. 34, 35).

Thus the apostle cites examples ; and this from the earliest days of dealing with the called out pilgrims, which would have great weight with the Christian remnant of Jews.

Exhortation had been already given against all

vanity and worldly show, but with due care that the outward apparel should express "the hidden man of the heart." No doubt the open man of his house, the predominant partner, might enjoin and be entitled to her wearing jewels or other costly array in his sphere. But here women do not usually need a husband's command. Here the word is for their own conscience. For it is not only that God, in contrast with man, looks on the heart: His wondrous light into which He called us gives the Christian woman the highest standard, and thereby enables her by grace to judge all inconsistencies in the incorruptibility of a meek and quiet spirit. This, however foreign to human nature, would not be lost even on a hard and exacting husband, Jew or Greek; for such might be the lot of those addressed, and of course the former most frequently, either of them on the watch too often to spy the faults of a Christian. But under any circumstances such a lowly spirit, seen in all its perfection in Christ, is of much price in the sight of God; and this is of all things most consolatory to the tried if faithful.

Changes many and great have passed over the world. But this fidelity led in olden days when Israel's great progenitors dwelt in tents. Yet Sarah knew to her husband's shame that her beauty commended her to a court and a King's palace for a while, and royal gifts were lavished on him whose selfish fear exposed her to dishonour but for their Almighty protector. But thus aforetime also the holy women adorned themselves as became those whose hope was in God, instead of following the

fashion of the world that fleets away. Sarah is singled out as obedient to Abraham, and paying him marked honour, notwithstanding the familiarity of wedded life, which too often has a contrary effect. This example is here set impressively before Christian wives.

But the terms employed are notable: "Whose children ye became, doing good and not being afraid of any dismay." They were far from this in their unrenewed state. The Lord Jesus does not find, but makes, us what pleases God. Selfwill reigns in those afar from Him, with ready resentment of all wrongs that may be inflicted, and submission induced through fear, self-interest, or amiability at best. What a change is wrought by the faith of God's grace in Christ! Sanctification of the Spirit, setting apart to God in a new life now given, effects obedience, not legal but after the pattern of Jesus, and faith in the sprinkling of His blood. Thus did those Jewish matrons become Sarah's children in obeying and honouring, each her own husband. It was a divine duty imprinted on the heart by their Saviour. Becoming Christians, they became Sarah's children in deed and in truth. They were not merely lineal descendants, like the unbelieving Jews whom the Lord in John viii. reproached as being Abraham's seed, not his children; else they would do the works of Abraham. They became Sarah's children, "doing good and not afraid of any dismay." On this side is woman apt to be weak.

Is there a gentle hint here of the occasion when

Sarah laughed incredulously, as she covertly heard Jehovah promise she should have a son (Gen. xviii. 10-15)? How graciously the Spirit speaks openly of her comely bearing at that same time toward her husband! Yet did He not spare her then, when she even denied her derision. Here He only records her good conduct, and calls her children to remember it: "doing good and being not afraid of any dismay," as frequent a cause as any other of untruth. For sudden perturbation of any kind is unfaithfulness in women professing godliness. Failing in dependence on God and communion, they fear to own the truth under such pressure. Is not the caution here given therefore seasonable and salutary?

The address to husbands is much shorter, as we can readily see and understand. Yet is there not a little for our instruction.

"Ye husbands, likewise, dwelling with [them] according to knowledge, awarding honour as to a weaker vessel—the female, as also fellow-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered" (ver. 7).

As the wife is called to subjection to her own husband, so is the husband to dwell with her "according to knowledge." Thus the apostle reminds the Corinthian saints "we all have knowledge" (1 Cor. viii. 1). It is characteristic of Christ to give spiritual intelligence which is far more. We do not await the day of the Lord to have divine light. We walk in the light as following Him who is the Light of life; we are already, all Christians,

sons of light and sons of day ; we are not, as we were, of night and of darkness. The Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. Loved of Him we are to walk in the same love ; light in the Lord, to walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. On the one hand we are to prove what is well-pleasing to the Lord ; on the other, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather also reprove them, exposed as they all are by the light, for that which makes every thing manifest is light.

Favoured as the Jew of old was, compared with the heathen (no matter how civilized or refined as in Greece and Rome), Christianity gave an immense advance. But as one apostle, who had inwardly all knowledge beyond such as boasted, insisted that if he had not love, he was nothing, so here our apostle implies its necessity for the husband's "dwelling together" with his wife. Hence to love their wives has the first and great place in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. To fail in such love is a breach of the relationship, and unworthy of a Christian. Alienation is a practical denial of the husband's place. Faults there may be, haste, forgetfulness, shortcomings ; but love as elsewhere, so here in a position so near and tender and peculiar, should have long patience and be kind ; be not emulous any more than insolent and rash, nor be puffed up, nor behave in an unseemly way, neither quickly provoked nor imputing evil, and rejoice not at iniquity but rather with the truth. Love

does not change nor weary; but we need not here say more. Only we must bear in mind, in thus "dwelling together," the need that it be "according to knowledge." The vanity of our knowing, which puffs up, is contrasted with love which builds up. And what a source of instruction is scripture for the difficulties of the home as well as of the way! Christ Himself, as the other apostle pointed out, is the standard.

But a few words follow which deserve every attention. The husband, as having the place of authority, is exposed to the danger of presumption and lack of consideration. Hence the force here of "awarding honour as to a weaker vessel—the female." The very fact that such is her nature as compared with his own is the ground of the Spirit's appeal to him who is given to be her protector. Has he never learnt his own weakness before God, and proved that in the sense of it by faith is his power through the grace of Christ? His therefore it is, never to despise, but to guide and cherish her and this in no suspicious spirit but the watchfulness of love, and the grace that pays her honour. But to apply this definitely to "allotting an honourable subsistence" to the wife, as Dr. Doddridge contended, has no more claim to be God's mind than his similar use of 1 Tim. v. 17 for the elders.

Another consideration consists of a still higher plea:—"as also fellow-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Though the married estate is essentially of the earth, yet those here in view were the redeemed of God, His child-

ren. "And if children, heirs also; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Husband and wife, being Christians, are appealed to as in a relationship by grace which shall never pass away. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall they exchange the present exposure to sorrow and suffering, in which we give God thanks, for that exceeding weight of glory, into which Christ has entered as our fore-runner, whilst we are waiting for Him. O dear brethren, recognise your blessedness, and count the heaviest trial but light affliction and momentary. Look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal.

More general exhortation succeeds.

"Finally [be] all likeminded, sympathetic, brother-loving, tender-hearted, humble-minded; not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, because hereunto ye were called, that ye should inherit blessing. For he that will love life and see good days, let him stop his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile; and let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it; because [the] Lord's eyes [are] on the righteous and his ears unto their supplication; but [the] Lord's face is against evil-doers" (vers. 8-12).

It is Christ alone who makes these desires possible in those who are His. But less than this could not satisfy the apostle even in the presence of weakness and contrariety. They were called out

of sin and ruin and misery to blessing, and were therefore to be the witnesses and channels of grace in a world and a race which had fallen under curse. They were already begotten again according to the much mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ through His resurrection from the dead unto a living hope, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for them ; and they were blessed with other privileges of love, and holiness, and dignity in the highest degree, as we have seen, according to the fulness of Christ. For He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely grant us all things ?

Thus it is plain that our duties flow from our relationships conferred by sovereign grace in Christ according to the glory of His person and the efficacy of His redeeming work. They are therefore not only beyond all price but unchanging ; and they are the ground of our new responsibilities. Christ by His death met and closed our old responsibilities, in which we were lost ; and by His resurrection He has ushered us who believe into an entirely new standing of soul-salvation and blessing, whilst here below, and waiting for the completion of His grace as to our bodies also and in heavenly glory. We can therefore without affectation and in the Spirit bless God, and are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For He ever liveth to make intercession for His own. Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ? He that bore our sins in His body on the tree, lost and dead as we were in evil, lives also to make the fruit of our lives, our praises, acceptable to God. What that issues by the Spirit from our hearts and lips can have a place so high and momentous as our worship of God and the Lamb? No doubt love works here and downwards by the same Spirit; but we, if rightly feeling cannot but own that God has the first and nearest claim.

And if this be so, will not His working be all the mightier and purer when we consider our relations to one another, to say nothing of the claim of compassionate love toward a perishing world? The apostle calls all who believe to be "likeminded." Rivalry, self-seeking, liking to differ or even thwart, is not Christ, but of the first and fallen Adam. When the eye of faith rests on all, Himself and those He loves, there is no difficulty. Naturally we see others' faults and overlook our own; but this is the old man; it is the reverse of Christ, Who is our new life and Whom we are called to live. Members one of another, members of Christ, how unworthy not to be "like-minded?" If nature is opinionative, what does the one indwelling Spirit aim at and effect? If we live in Spirit, in Spirit also let us walk, not vain-glorious, provocative, or envious.

Being in such a scene of wretchedness as the world and with bodies not yet redeemed in which we groan, we are exhorted to be also "sympathetic." Surely we may and ought to rejoice with those that

rejoice; but far more frequent is the demand on our sharing the grief that abounds, and especially for righteousness or Christ's sake. It is our common portion as Christians to suffer with Him, even if we may not have the experience of suffering for Him. In any case sympathy in these holy sorrows is sweet and strengthening.

"Brother-loving" is a plain call, as belonging to the same family of God. Are we not to love them personally beyond our affection to our natural kin, as the bond is deeper and of divine nature and everlasting? Assuredly the enemy strives continually to bring in contention and misunderstanding, and every other means of hindrance; but the duty is as incontestable as the relation. How it is to be exercised depends on each case, for which we need the word and Spirit of God. For as John clearly shows, it is no mere human impulse and must not clash with the truth of God or with obedience.

"Tender-hearted" suitably follows. There is no worth in God's eyes if we love but in word or tongue, and not in deed and truth. We are to learn of Him who never relieved by power only, but His spirit entered into and bore up before God the infirmities and the diseases which He removed.

Nor is "humble-minded" the least though last in these qualities which the apostle sought to be in exercise. And where can we find its perfection but in the same Lord and Saviour? Nor could the days of His flesh be recalled without the vivid and humiliating remembrance of the sad contrast even

in the honoured Twelve, so often and to the last disputing which of them should be accounted greatest. "I am meek and lowly in heart," said He, and it was ever true. Man's ambition was wholly alien. "Ye shall not be so; but let the greater among you be as the younger, and the chief as he that serveth."

Again the apostle charges the saints not to return evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary to bless, "because for this thing were ye called that ye might inherit blessing." So marked is the contrast of the Christian with Israel when they undertook to earn blessing by keeping the law; as the apostle Paul set before the saints in Galatia, who had made the same sad mistake. "For as many as are of works of law are under curse" (Gal. iii. 10): not as many as broke law, but as many as are pledged to that principle.

It is by grace alone, that we, Christians, are saved, or any can be; and it is through faith, not of works. Called also to an inheritance of glory, are we not witnesses of blessing? We know that one of our own poets expresses what nearly all felt as unbelievably as himself: "Man never is, but always, to be blest." Christianity is the standing proof that they knew not the truth. It was the less wonderful in A. Pope, as he never rose out of superstition and dead form even to apprehend the gospel of God's grace.

But grace gives the Christian to understand and make good the moral government God carries on with His children. The apostle in vers. 10-12

cites Ps. xxxiv. for this even now ; though Israel must await another day when their heart turns to Him whom they rejected in their unbelief. Evil and guile wholly misbecome the life of believers. If any dishonour their Lord like the Corinthians, they fall under His chastening ; and this may take the shape of sickness and death. Nor is it only words that are warned against. He urges from that scripture that they should turn away from evil and do good, seek peace in practice, and this earnestly, because Jehovah's eyes are on the righteous, and His ears to their supplication, whereas His face is against evil-doers. Now the mind of the saint is as truly to please God, as the carnal mind is not nor can be. The believer is in living relationship with Christ, the duty follows, and the Holy Spirit works in power to His glory.

Zeal for what is good is apt to disarm the honestly hostile ; but in case it should not be so, how blessed to suffer for righteousness ! Christ was perfect thus ; in what was He not ?

“ And who shall injure you if ye become zealous of the good ? But if even ye should suffer for righteousness, blessed [are ye] ; and be not afraid of their fear, nor be troubled, but sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts, ready always for answer (or, defence) to every one that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, but with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that in what they speak against you as evil-doers, they may be ashamed that revile your good behaviour in Christ ” (vers. 13-16).

Man that is born of woman is of few days, as Job says, and full of trouble ; he is fallen and sinful with death before him soon, and, after this, judgment for ever. Impossible to face his real state conscientiously without continual unhappiness and awful forebodings for all eternity. Nothing within or around one can afford him solid satisfaction, still less be acceptable to God who is good and does good. His goodness therefore leads to repentance, and effectually in Christ only ; for herein was the love of God manifested in our case, that God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. It is clear that, if we are spiritually dead as being all of us lost sinners, this is our first great want, to receive a new life that we might live to God ; and this life, as it is seen in its perfection and fulness in Christ, so it is given by Him to every one that hears His word and believes Him that sent Him. The Son quickeneth whom He will ; and thus the believer has life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.

But God's love as known in the gospel goes very much farther even now ; for the believer might have life, life eternal, and be burdened by the sense of his past sins and of his present weakness and unworthiness. In the gospel God removes this distress by purging his conscience, and fills with peace through faith in Christ's sacrifice. Therefore is it added in 1 John iv. 10, Herein is love, not that we loved God (which we surely do as now living in Christ), but that He loved us, and sent His Son as

propitiation for our sins. This alone is perfectly efficacious, and the Spirit seals us in virtue of it, so that we are brought into liberty and spiritual power by grace.

Henceforward, therefore, delivered from evil we become zealous of the good ; and who shall injure us if it be so ? The worst of mankind are struck when they see the proud rendered lowly, the violent meek, the quarrelsome peacemakers, the frivolous and pleasure-hunting grave, the corrupt pure, the covetous liberal, the careless or even blasphemous godly. But no doubt an evil eye under Satan's power may refuse all moral evidence and impute ever so real change for good to hypocrisy, and only hate the more those who leave their own wretched and wicked ranks to follow Christ. They do therefore seek to draw His confessors into evil ways old or new ; and if they fail in ensnaring, they will not fail to detract and persecute ; for all that desire to live piously in Christ Jesus are surely persecuted, or (as our text says) "suffer for righteousness' sake." But "blessed are ye" says the word. It is God's mercy and their honour, as delivered by Christ out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

Accordingly the saints are exhorted not to "fear their fear, nor to be troubled." Why should they, who now are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and called out of darkness into God's wonderful light ? Calling Him Father (for such He truly is) Who without respect of persons judges according to each one's work, they would

pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, because they are so favoured and blessed, yet in a wilderness of trials and pitfalls and dangers. From "their fear" who hate and malign, once their own fear, they are set free by the Saviour; and they owe it to His honour not to be troubled, seeing that at His cost they are blessed supremely by His God and Father who is ours also. Instead of such unbelieving fear and trouble naturally, they can and do exult though now for a little while, if needed, put to grief by various trials, all of which His grace turns to account (Rom. viii. 28) to those that love Him, to those that are called according to purpose.

What then is the resource and remedy? "But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." Sanctimoniousness in manner or outward acts, far from availing, is a snare and a shame unworthy of a Christian, as far as possible from pleasing God, though it may deceive himself if unwary and others too. But to give Christ the holy place due to Him, and supremely as Lord, in our hearts, truly pleases Him Who would have us honour the Son even as we honour the Father. Without Him thus constantly set up and apart in our hearts, we are exposed to any and every idol whereby the enemy deceives the world; but with Christ thus the object of our inmost affections, how kept and blessed! So we see the fruit and accompaniment in the words that follow, "ready always for an answer to every one that asketh you a reason (or, account) for the hope that is in you with meekness

and fear." What account can creature give so satisfying, even to God, as the Lord Jesus and His redemption? In Him we have the righteousness found nowhere else, yea, we are become God's righteousness in Him ; so that, as the same apostle says (Gal. v. 5), "we through the Spirit by faith await," not righteousness as if we were not justified, but "the hope of righteousness," that is, heavenly glory with Christ. But this very blessedness, so undeserved by any, calls us to meekness and fear in confessing it, lest a rough or presumptuous spirit might dishonour the God of all grace or ourselves the recipients of His rich mercy.

In a fallen world and a sinful nature, with God on one side and Satan on the other, there must needs be suffering, and especially for the saint till Christ take His great power and reign. Satan is still the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. So far is the enemy from having lost his bad eminence, though defeated by our Lord perfectly dependent and obedient, it was by the world's rejection of Him that he became the ruler of the world, yea, the god of this age, as we read in 2 Cor. iv. 4. No doubt exceeding his commission by inciting the world to crucify the Lord of glory, he has, as it were, sealed his own everlasting ruin in that precious blood. For to this end, as to others of greater moment still, Christ died, that through death He might annul him that has the might of death. But the full execution of the sentence awaits (not the coming age merely, when the Lord will reign and he is shut

up in the abyss, but) the end, when he is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the Beast and the False Prophet had been consigned a thousand years before; and they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of the ages.

Here in the present evil age (Gal. i. 4) the Christian pre-eminently is called to suffer, not merely under divine discipline when he fails, but because he has a new nature as possessing life in Christ, and is faithful to God. Why should the fact seem hard? This the apostle here meets and explains.

“For [it is] better, if the will of God should will [it], to suffer [for] well-doing than [for] evil-doing. Because even Christ once suffered for sins, just for unjust, that He might bring us to God, put to death indeed in flesh, but made alive in [the] Spirit ” (vers. 17, 18).

How simple yet weighty and conclusive is scripture! Who that considers it, when declared, can doubt that it is better to suffer when we are doing well than when we deserve chastening for ill-doing? Yet it is not at first obvious to him who, feeling the iniquity done him, is apt to complain of the hardship. Christ suffered throughout for righteousness, for truth, for love; and we have it as our privilege to share these sufferings of His, as the apostle Paul pressed on his beloved Philippians: “To you was granted in behalf of Christ not only the believing on him but the suffering for him also, having the same conflict as ye saw in me and now hear of in me ” (i. 29, 30). Peter too had already

in chap. ii. 21 presented Christ as a model in this, but there as here, distinguished from that following in His steps, the foundation of all which He only could lay, in that He bore our sins in His body on the tree, that dead to sins, we might live to righteousness (ver. 24). So here the apostle turns to what is and must be solely His: "because even (or, also) Christ once suffered for sins, Just for unjust."

For sins it was His alone to suffer. He suffered but once in this atoning way where none could follow; for it was not from man because He was faithful to God, but from God because of His grace to man, whatever it might cost in bearing God's righteous judgment of man's sins. For on His holy head Jehovah made to light, as Isaiah says, the iniquity of us all. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him," not only to put Him to grief, but "to make his soul an offering for sin." Thus only could we be pardoned righteously and saved. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes are we healed. What pathos as well as force in the apostle's cheer for suffering as doers of good and not evil, that He suffered for our sins once and once only! Let this suffice: so perfectly was it done, as He alone could bear that burden, intolerable to Him above all, yet borne by Him that they might be, as they are, borne away for all that are His. Let us therefore now suffer only for what is good on our part.

But there is more. Christ also suffered once for sins, Just for unjust. He was alone in that one act of suffering supremely at God's hand. It was

for unjust or unrighteous men. Alas! here all were unrighteous, all sinned; and those who by grace benefited through faith would be the first to own it of themselves. Henceforward they are righteous, and so live by faith, as through it they became so; nor do they forget that they believed on Him that justifies the ungodly, and thus their faith is reckoned for righteousness. Such was His grace.

Think too of the efficacy of His suffering thus, "that he might bring us to God," not yet actually to heaven but meet for it, and therefore "to God" Who is far more than heaven. Christ on the cross cleared us from both our evil works and the evil root and sap, sin in the flesh that produces them. We are therefore no longer far from God but brought nigh, as he had said in chap. ii., a holy and a royal priesthood with a better reality of nearness to God by the blood of Christ than the Aaronic priest had typically. To assert a sacerdotal class on earth now between the Christian and Christ is to deny the gospel. None can wonder who believe in the glory of His person who was put to death in flesh, and made alive, or quickened, in the Spirit. His death rolled away the evil before God, and His resurrection proclaimed the victory to faith.

If any one desire a fuller discussion of these remarkable expressions and of what follows, he may find help in a small treatise entitled, "The Preaching to the Spirits in Prison" (Weston, 53, Paternoster Row).

Here we have need of vigilance that we yield not to fancy, but be subject to the words of the Holy
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Spirit in their exact bearing and in accordance with the context. For they are often taken up loosely and with bias in favour of a preconceived idea or with a view to a desired end. To ensure light we need the single eye; and this can only be where Christ is the governing object. The relative refers to the Spirit in virtue of "which" Christ was made alive after His death. Now of course a very different fact is added, but equally dependent on the Spirit.

"In [virtue of] which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, disobedient aforetime when the long-suffering of God was waiting in Noah's days, while an ark was being prepared, in which few, that is eight souls, were brought safe through water" (vers. 19, 20).

We are here given to understand that Christ in the Spirit preached to those whose spirits are imprisoned because when they heard His warning they were disobedient; which time is fixed as before the flood which punished them here, as they are now kept like others for judgment hereafter.

The Greek preposition *ἐν* is here required in order to accurately express "in" or "by" what power Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison. It was not in person but by virtue of the Spirit. This is remarkably confirmed by the language of Gen. vi. 3: "And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not always strive (or, plead) with man, for he indeed is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Here we learn to what the apostle alluded, not only Christ in Spirit (and we know He

was Jehovah beyond doubt), but the term of the long-suffering of God in Noah's days. For to this the divine statement refers, not to man's life, which even after the deluge was far longer as yet, but to His patient pleading while the ark was in preparation. 2 Pet. ii. 5, with 1 Pet. i. 11, lends much help to the clearness of the sense intended; for as Noah is beyond any man of old designated "preacher of righteousness," so we might expect for the power at work in him the same Spirit of Christ which in the prophets testified beforehand the sufferings Christward and the glories after these.

The truth meant in the passage is thus made quite plain and consistent, not only with the exact demands of the context but with the rest of scripture. There is if possible less difficulty here than with Eph. ii. 17, where it is said of Christ, that "He came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to those that were nigh." No sensible person sees more in this than Christ, not personally but in Spirit, preaching to Gentiles as well as Jews, after His ascension. This was plain enough; but in our text, lest it might be misunderstood by the imaginative or the superstitious, grace furnished the qualification "in which" [Spirit] He proceeded, not into the prison, as some have conceived, but preached to the spirits that are in prison. They were living men on earth when the Spirit pleaded with them in Noah's days while preparing the ark.

With this precisely agrees "disobedient as they once, or aforetime, were," during that long space of forbearing, compassion, and testimony. Again

the structure of the phrase is the one proper to express the moral cause or reason why they are now in prison. Instead of penitence and faith, when Jehovah's Spirit strove, they were disobedient: a fact which our Lord (Matt. xxiv. 38, 39) turned to a warning like His servant here. A similar fate will befall the heedless at the coming of the Son of man in the consummation of the age. There is no room in doctrine any more than in fact or in the phraseology of Peter, for the strange notion of ancients or moderns that Christ in person went to Hades after His death for the purpose of preaching to the spirits there. The strangeness is heightened by the fact that the only ones said to be the objects of His preaching were that generation of mankind which had been favoured with the pleading of His Spirit in Noah. Such a favour when they were alive would much more naturally have weighed against the alleged visitation after death, even if other scriptures did not prove its needlessness for saints and its unavailingness for sinners.

The truth is that the fabulous notion of such a preaching by Christ after death in Hades contravenes all scriptural truth elsewhere, and is only extracted from the passage before us by violence done to its separate clauses and its scope as a whole, in no way carrying on the divine argument but interpolating a wholly incongruous interruption. For the only character given to those who heard the preaching is that they were then disobedient, as the ground of their imprisonment: a strange

reason for singling these out for the favour of the Lord's going to the prison on their account.

If it be an outrage on orthodox doctrine to suppose such a preaching to such an audience in such a place, condition and time, it is even more plainly opposed to the terms of the apostle, if one foist in the idea that the Lord preached to the O.T. departed saints. Not a word implies a believer among the spirits in prison. All attempts in this direction from Augustine down to Calvin, and near our day to Horsley, as to others since, are utterly vain. The clear bearing of the teaching is to contrast the disobedient mass of spirits (in the prison of the separate state for such) with the few who in the ark were brought safe through water.

The unbelieving Jews who objected to the fewness of the Christians were thus powerfully met, as well as their contempt for preaching as having no serious effect, whether believed or rejected. Was Christ acting now by the Spirit, instead of that manifestation of power and glory which they longed for in unbelief of what God is doing by the gospel? Let them remember how He wrought before the deluge, and how it fared with those who disobeyed His warning. There is thus no real difficulty in the passage when the general analogy of Noah's days is apprehended; any more than in the details of the most correct text, with the strictest attention both to grammatical rendering and sound doctrine. No event in the O.T. could be found more apposite to warn scoffing Jews in the apostle's day than that which befell the disobedient in Noah's time of

preparing the ark. How different the effect of Jonah's preaching to the men of Nineveh! Yet their repentance was but transient, and the end of the great city followed. But the deluge was not all for those who rejected the Spirit of Jehovah that warned by Noah. Their spirits are in prison waiting for the judgment, wherein no one is just before God. They are lost for ever. It is only by faith that a sinner is justified. The disobedience of unbelief is final; it braves God's mercy as well as His wrath; it is worst in such as have the scriptures.

The assumption of Christ's preaching to the departed in Hades is a dream, which clashes not only with the truth in general but with this context in particular, rendering it in all the minute points of the words both halting and irreconcilable, when adequately looked into. The result too is an allegation extraordinary, suggesting a doctrinal inference at issue with God's word everywhere else. For it attributes a work to Christ which is superfluous for saints no less than sinners; and for these last is apt to become the basis of a spurious hope, as inconsistent with all that our Lord when here declared for those that die in unbelief, as with that which the Holy Spirit has taught since redemption. Another evil effect of this misinterpretation is, that it sets ingenious minds to essay a shadowy confirmation from such texts in the O.T. as Psalm lxviii. 18, Isaiah xlv. 2, xlix. 9, and to deny that Paradise is heavenly in the N.T. One error leads to another and perhaps many. It is well to maintain the hope of the blessed and holy

"first resurrection" at Christ's coming; but there is very great harm in denying the intermediate bliss of the saints departed to be with Christ. Scripture is perfectly plain and sure as to both.

The water of the deluge leads to the spiritual meaning of baptism in ver. 21: the figure of death judicially, whether for the world that perished thus; or for the believer's salvation by grace through Him Who went down for our sins and rose that He might be the true ark for us. The water was the instrument of God's judgment in destruction. Those in the ark were saved through it, but this only because they submitted to God's word and were secured by the ark. But the ark prefigured Christ, not the church as some vainly imagine; for no such thing existed then, nor, if it had, could it have saved, but rather consists of those that needed the salvation which is in virtue of Christ's death and resurrection.

"Which *figure (or, antitype) also now saveth you, baptism, not a putting away of filth of flesh, but a request of a good conscience toward God

* The Elzevir Edd., like Beza's, and before all, the Complut., followed indifferent MSS. in giving ϕ , which the Auth. V. adopted; but Erasmus, Colinaeus, Stephens, with whom agreed Wells, Lachmann, Griesbach, Scholz, and all modern critics, give θ on fuller and better authority. The Revisers of course correct accordingly; but they are not very consistent in their rendering of $\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\tau\upsilon\pi\omicron\nu$. For the only other N.T. use of the word is in Heb. ix. 24, there "like in pattern," here "after a true likeness." There seems no sufficient ground to translate differently in the two cases. "Figure" is the sense in both, as the A.V. conveys. Also \aleph A B P, many cursives, and the ancient versions have $\upsilon\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, "you," instead of $\eta\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, "us." There are curious omissions in the witnesses; as the Sinaitic, the cursive 78, and Aeth. omit θ . Again $\nu\tilde{\upsilon}\nu$, "now," is dropt by several cursives, the Pesh.-Syr. and Arm., as well as Cyprian. Of lesser aberrations we need not speak. The true text emerges with certainty.

through Jesus Christ's resurrection; who is at God's right hand, having proceeded into heaven, angels, and authorities, and powers being subjected to him" (vers. 21, 22).

It is of all moment to understand the mind of the Spirit; for superstition has caught at words here also to support its delusion. But we must read scripture in the light of other scriptures, as well as of the context, if we are to walk in the truth. All scripture, we may say, points to the Saviour and faith in Him for salvation of the soul. Nor is any part of it plainer as to this than the foregoing doctrine of the Epistle before us. Christ is pointed to as the quickener of men dead in trespasses and sins, Christ the Son in communion with the Father, made known in the Holy Spirit's power through the word (John iii. 5, v. 21-25). So in the first chapter of our Epistle the apostle says, "Having purified your souls in obedience to the truth unto unfeigned brotherly affection, love one another out of a pure heart fervently." How could this be, considering what man is naturally? "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through God's living and abiding word. Because all flesh [is] as grass, and all its glory as flower of grass; the grass withered, and its flower quite fell; but the Lord's word remaineth for ever. And this is the word preached unto you." Hence in James i. 12 it is written, "Of His own will He (the Father) begot us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

These are but a few of many scriptures which one might cite from the Gospels and the Epistles ; but they amply show that, as life is in the Son, so He is the giver of life to the believer, and this now not only for fellowship with the Father and with the Son, but for walking in the light, cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Baptism has its place of deep interest and importance ; but scripture never attributes quickening to it. This is a very old and inveterate error of Christendom. All the so-called Fathers who speak of life-giving assign it to baptism. It was the error of darkened times long before the Popish day ; and its necessity was founded on the wholly misunderstood words of our Lord in John iii. 3, 5. This was so universal after the apostles that Hooker lays down, in opposition to Cartwright (*Eccles. Pol.* v. § 59), " that of all the Ancient, there is not one to be named that ever did otherwise either expound or allege the place than as implying external Baptism."

Now it is a striking fact that, beyond the allusion to the disciples baptising as John did long before our Lord's death and resurrection, and His subsequent commission to baptise all the nations, the Gospel of John avoids even the mention of Christian baptism and the Lord's supper. Its design was to bring out, not the hallowed institutions of Christianity, but the life eternal and the gift of the Holy Spirit with their precious issues. No institution is ever said to give life, nor can any restore the communion which indulgence in sin may have interrupted. In John iii. the Lord

urges the absolute necessity of being born anew, that is, of water and Spirit, in order to see or enter the kingdom of God. Being by nature a child of wrath, a new nature is requisite. Water, as in John xv. 3, Eph. v. 26, refers to the word of God brought home by the Spirit in faith and repentance. This Nicodemus as a Jewish teacher should have known, especially from Ezek. xxxvi. 25, &c.; whereas neither he nor any one else could have known of Christian baptism, instituted years after.

It is similar with John vi. 53, &c., which means communion by faith with Christ dead for redemption, as verses 32, &c., speak of Him incarnate. The language in chap. iii. goes far beyond baptism, as that of chap. vi. far exceeds the Lord's supper. This last ought to be evident to any one who bows to scripture. He who so applies this passage ought to affirm, that none can have life eternal without the Supper, and that none who partakes of it can fail to have life eternal: both statements as dangerous as they are false.

Still baptism is the expression and confession of part in Christ's death; or as the apostle Paul puts it, "Know ye not that we as many as were baptised unto Christ Jesus were baptised unto His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism unto death." This is its meaning: Christ's death, not life, both which are by faith in Him. So too in the Lord's supper we announce His death till He come; for this is as it ought to be a constantly recurring feast, as Christian baptism is expressly once only. Christ must come, not by

birth alone, but by water and blood with the Spirit given as witness. Till then Christianity could not be, because God had not been glorified nor sin judged in His death. He was straitened, however great His grace, glory, and moral perfections, till *that* baptism was accomplished. The Christian institution followed.

Baptism was as Peter taught "for remission of sins," as we read in Act ii. 38. Hence Ananias was sent to "brother Saul," already having life in Christ risen, and bade him arise and get baptised, and have his sins washed away, calling on the Lord's name. So here "Which figure," for this it is, "also now saveth you, baptism." But the apostle carefully adds, "not a putting away of flesh's filth, but a request (or, demand) of a good conscience." For the life of Christ given to the soul seeks and can be satisfied with nothing less. And as He Who is and gives us life eternal suffered for sins, we also receive the rich blessing of His death in all its value. It figures therefore not life, as says tradition ever dark and misleading, but salvation, the present salvation of our souls, and pledge of the glorious change for our bodies at Christ's coming. Baptism sets forth our passing out of the fallen estate into the new standing of salvation "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." All was holy and acceptable in Him incarnate; but such was our guilt, such our ruin, that nothing short of His resurrection could bring us into salvation. "Verily, verily, I say to you, Except the grain of wheat fall into the ground and

die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Remission of sins and salvation are thus part of our blessing. Baptism as the initiatory institution proclaims it ; and so does the Lord's supper throughout, as we wait for Christ ; but it all depends on the efficacy of His death and resurrection to our faith.

We can thus see the consistency of the truth in Christ. For in Him God came down to poor lost sinners, that believing in Him they might live who were dead. But in Him dead and risen we come to God, cleared by His atoning blood and in the power and acceptance of His resurrection. And here it is that Christianity finds its basis and character. We are thus not merely safe, as all were who had life ; but now we "are saved," and become God's righteousness in Him. Hence Christian baptism follows Christ's death and resurrection. A good conscience toward God is the thing demanded, when we are alive in Him to God : our clearance by His work of redemption. "Request" or "demand" (not "answer") is the true force of *ἐπερώτημα*. And what a grand demonstration of it is in Christ on God's right hand, the same Christ Who suffered once (it was enough) for our sins and bore them away, and proceeded in due time into heaven and its highest seat of honour, angels and authorities and powers subjected to Him, instead of disputing His righteous title. That they indeed pay Him divine homage, Heb. i. declares according to O.T. prophecy ; and the Revelation discloses in its visions of heavenly glory, seen by John

and made known to us, to act now on our souls. For all things are ours, things present and things to come. May we profit by a privilege so wondrous!

We may remark too, that (though God was pleased to give an advance of privilege and truth by Paul in Rom. vi. and Col. ii., as compared with Peter's testimony in this text), the words in Heb. xi. 7 coincide with "now saveth you." "By faith Noah, warned oracularly concerning things to come, prepared an ark for the *saving* of his house." This was the figure. But the true salvation to which baptism points figuratively is of a divine and everlasting character on the foundation of Christ's death and resurrection.

But it is needful to say that whatever be the place and value of baptism, the same Paul thanks God in 1 Cor. i. that he baptised only a few at Corinth, lest any should say that they were baptised to his own name. How could he possibly say this, if thereby any get life eternal? And further, that Christ sent him not to baptise but to preach the gospel, by which, in chap. iv. 16, he says that in Christ Jesus he begot them. Whereas in chap. x. 1-12 he warns them by the examples of Israel's history, that neither baptism nor the Lord's supper avails to hinder falling in the wilderness through unbelief and the sins to which it exposes. See also Heb. iii. iv.

The truly astonishing thing is, how any saint can have become so bewitched by human pretensions, and so dull to the infinite work of grace (engaging as it does all the Trinity to save a guilty sinful

man), as to receive so evident a delusion of the enemy. As God in Christ alone could save, so nothing short of His power can keep souls through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. For salvation here (i. 5), as often elsewhere, means the salvation of the body, and not only of the soul as in 1 Pet. i. 9.

For those unbelievers who slighted the gospel through their zeal for Messiah's glory to be manifested on earth, it was not without importance to point out how much more is the glory on high in which the Christian delights to regard Christ now. He "is at God's right hand, having proceeded into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being subjected to him." He will surely and in due time sit as David's Son on David's throne in Zion; and all Israel will repent, believe and be saved in that day. But the Jews, and the Gentiles too, who now see Him by faith have a better portion, as He has gone up into a higher glory. Nor can the unbelieving Jew gainsay the fact that David in Spirit attests it, saying, Jehovah said to my Lord, Sit on my right until I set thine enemies as footstool of thy feet. If He sits, as Psalm cx. assures, angels and authorities and powers are not disobedient like the Jews on earth to the heavenly vision, but, subjected to Him, break forth in glad and loud acclaim. And Christians even here and now worship in the Spirit Him who is thus exalted above. *They* believe and know Him there.

CHAPTER IV.

HERE, as in chap. ii. 24, our apostle urges death to sins in its practical reality. It is not (as the apostle Paul, in Rom. vi. and elsewhere, teaches) the Christian privilege of having died with Christ to sin, but the duty which flows from His death as a fact in the spiritual realm, that we should no longer serve sin but walk as righteous men after Christ's example. Both speak to the same end.

"Since Christ then suffered [for us*] in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind; because he that suffered in flesh hath ceased from sin, no longer to live the rest of time in flesh to men's lusts but to God's will. For the past time [is] sufficient to have wrought out [or, purposed] the will† of the Gentiles, walking as ye had done in lasciviousness, lusts, wine-bibbings, revels, carousings, and unhallowed idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with [them] into the same excess of profligacy, speaking injuriously, who shall render account to him that is ready to judge living and dead. For to this end

* \aleph 81 and a few other cursives with Syr. Pesch., read $\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\ \upsilon\mu\omega\nu$, "for you;" as \aleph A K L P and many more, Memph. and other ancients give $\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\ \eta\mu\omega\nu$, "for us." B C &c. omit either, and this most critics prefer.

† The more ancient MSS. omit $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \beta\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$, "of life," and have $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$, not $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$ as in ver. 2.

was the gospel preached to dead men also, that they might be judged according to men in flesh, and live according to God in spirit " (iv. 1-6).

To Messiah, the greatest of all sufferers, the apostle turns the hearts of his brethren. It was all the more impressive that of Him it had been verified to perfection, and in the cross above all. For till the veil was taken from the heart of the righteous remnant, the Jew saw nothing but triumph and glory for Him, as well as for His people. And what a large part of Holy Writ bore witness to it ! Yet His death was the simplest, plainest, and the most irrefragable proof, that unbelief had hidden from their eyes the divine testimony to His suffering throughout the O.T., Law, Psalms, and Prophets. Risen from the dead He opened the understanding of His disciples to understand the scriptures and thus to judge their own dark onesidedness. As He said to two of them on the resurrection day, " O senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets spoke ! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory ? " Long before His crucifixion He had told His disciples of the Son of man being in His day as the lightning shines from under heaven to under heaven to the surprise of a guilty world ; " but first he must suffer many things and be rejected of this generation " (Luke xvii. 24, 25).

There was revealed an unequalled Sufferer, not Job, not Joseph, not Moses, nor David, nor Jeremiah, nor any other of the prophets ; but all these perhaps in some stage foreshadowing the suffering One to

come. But all this is infinitely short of the wondrous truth of the cross. For He, the Holy One of God who knew no sin, was made sin for us, and suffered, not for righteousness as saints might and did, but from God for our sins, as He alone could. And hence, when rejected of the people, betrayed by one apostle, denied by another, forsaken by all (we may say), God forsook Him, as His own lips declared. So it must be if sin was to be adequately judged, and a perfect ground laid in His death to reconcile the foulest sinner to God, cleansing him from every sin by His blood. As the apostle testified to His blood in i. 18-21, so does he now to the practical power of His suffering to give power against sin: "Arm yourselves with the same mind." Never had He pleased Himself, though in Him was no sin. Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. Such was His life in every detail; it was a pure meal-offering, a holy oblation, to God His Father, whose glory He sought in the least thing as in the greatest, and in the humblest, truest, and deepest of all ways—in obedience. And so it was in that with which nothing can compare, in His atoning death, where God had all His nature glorified even as to sin, and made Him sin for us that we might become His righteousness in Christ.

Great, and varied, and infinite are the results of His suffering; yet here the apostle speaks, not of its being the efficacious means of bringing us to God as blameless and spotless as Himself, but of its practical power against sin day by day. "Since Christ then suffered in flesh, arm yourselves with

the same mind." Christ never yielded, but suffered being tempted; holy Himself, He kept sin outside. He had no sin in the human nature which He took. But how were we to be met who had it within and were guilty without? He died for us, yea for our sins; He was forsaken of God that this judgment might be complete; and in this judgment the apostle Paul adds that God condemned the root of all, sin in the flesh, in Him a sacrifice for sin, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit.

Peter here draws from Christ for the Christian the great abstract principle, "because he that suffered in flesh hath ceased from sin, no longer to live the rest of time in flesh to men's lusts but to God's will." Allowing all the difference between the Saviour and the saved, this truly applies to His followers. When we sin, it is our own will that is active to His dishonour. One suffers in refusing to sin; one judges and hates and thwarts the will of flesh, and suffers, but does not sin. If by grace our mind is set on God's will at all cost, sin does not enter. It is suffering in flesh, and therein is separation from sin. And this is the simple normal state of the Christian with the heart resting on Him that went down below all depths for him. When the heart loses sight of Him, one shirks suffering, and the will asserts fleshly activity, and actual sin follows. But we are sanctified by the Spirit to the obedience of Jesus, no less than to the sprinkling of His blood. We are left here to do the will of God, now that we are Christ's.

There is another consideration the apostle sets before us, and truly humbling it is. "For the past time is sufficient to have wrought out the purpose [or, will] of the Gentiles, walking as ye have done in lasciviousness, lusts, wine-bibbings, revels, carousings, and unhallowed idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not together into the same excess of profligacy, speaking injuriously; who shall render account to him that is ready to judge living and dead" (3-5).

There is no doubt that these wicked ways were characteristic of the Gentiles, not of the Jews; but those of the dispersion, living among the heathen, were apt to be corrupted by their environment. Like their fathers of old, the descendants, especially outside the sharp supervision of Palestinian eyes, were too easily drawn into gross lusts and passions, and thence, with a bad conscience shutting out God and His judgment, adopted unhallowed idolatries, such as amulets, charms, and the like. This is what the apostle charges as a fact in former days, on those who now bore the Lord's name. It was natural for the heathen so to live; it was shocking that such of them as owned Jehovah had so walked: they now knew that they were no better than others. The apostle, while exhorting to consistency with that holy name, reminds the saints that their Gentile neighbours counted it strange that they do not run the same common race of impure and selfish indulgence, so generally linked with idolatrous customs. Instead of approving the change, they indulged injurious imputations, as the world still does

in its form of Christendom. In this they but follow the prince of the world, who is a liar and murderer, the marked contrast of Him who is the Truth and the Life-giver, to whom they "shall render account." But he puts it with all impressive force, when He is described here as "having it in readiness to judge quick and dead." Can any believer name a single visible event that hinders His coming?

It is indeed a certain, solemn, yet simple truth, that the Lord Jesus Christ is ordained, or determinately appointed, to this office by God. As Peter preached at Cæsarea, Paul at Athens declared that God now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent, because He has set a day in which He will judge the inhabited earth by the appointed Man, having as pledge to all afforded His raising Him from the dead. To the believer Peter taught in chapter i. 21 that His resurrection is to give him faith and hope toward God, delivered from all fear of judgment. To unbelievers, Paul at the Areopagus preached it to be God's assurance that the day hastens when Christ will judge living men as well as dead: the first when He comes in His kingdom, the second just before He gives it up for the eternal state (Rev. xx.). For He who bore our sins in His body on the tree is the same that is now raised from the dead; because God was glorified for the putting away of sin in that sacrifice of Himself, Who is the fore-runner for us entered into that within the veil; as He will come to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

But He is ready to judge, not those even now associated with Him, but "living and dead" who disbelieved and despised Him. He brings salvation to those, judgment to these. How the word of God sweeps away, not doubt only, but delay! "My lord delayeth" is the heart's language of mere professors. How sad that believers should plead excuses for the unbelief which our Lord stigmatises! True hearts love His appearing and would rather hasten the day, solemn as it is.

It is His judging that is linked with verse 6, and helps to rid it of the difficulties with which superstition loads and darkens it. "For to this end the glad tidings went to dead persons also, that they might be judged according to men in flesh, and live according to God in spirit." From the hour that man fell by sin under death and judgment, God had in His grace a gospel to shelter and give life according to God; which is therefore in the last book of scripture called "an everlasting gospel." To this olung faith from the first; and it was added to and cleared gradually throughout the O.T. till the death, resurrection, and glory of Christ gave it fulness. And those who now dead heard it in the course of ages had their responsibility so much the more increased. If they abode in their sins through unbelief, they will be judged by the coming Lord according to men in flesh. Grace exempts from that sorrowful condition by the faith of the glad tidings, and life is in Christ for all who believe, who therefore live to God in spirit. For Christ gives life no less than pardon. Those who feel

their need of God's grace do also submit to the humbling sense that they deserve judgment. Thus it is that repentance and faith ever go together.

We may add that the passage similarly mistaken in chap. iii. 19, 20 does not speak of "glad tidings" like this, and has thus another bearing. It was simply Noah's proclaiming the coming deluge as "a preacher of righteousness" and affected those who perished for their disobedience and are kept for judgment. But we hear of "glad tidings" here; and therefore as the context proves, it applies to all in the past who have heard the gospel. This if refused left them in their natural state as men in flesh, fallen men, to be judged; while those who by grace heard the good news that was sent live according to God in spirit by virtue of that word which quickens by the faith of Christ, and produces the good fruit proper to that life practically. Any one acquainted with the language must own the strict accuracy with which the apostle Peter, certainly not a man of letters or learning, was led to the precisely accurate *κηρύσσω* and *κήρυξ* on the one hand, and to the appropriate *εὐαγγελίζω* on the other.

Founded on the Lord's readiness to judge, in all its solemnity for man, is the reminder of the approaching end of all things which now subsist. This is supposed in such an intervention.

"But the end of all things hath drawn nigh. Be discreet therefore and watch (or, be sober) unto

prayers,* and before all things having your love toward each other fervent, for love covereth* a multitude of sins; hospitable toward one another without murmuring;* according as each received a gift, ministering it toward each other as good stewards of God's various grace: if one speak, [let it be] as oracles of God; if one ministereth, as of strength which God supplieth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen" (vers. 7-11).

The Holy Spirit keeps as constant and proximate, not only the bright hope of the Lord's coming for the saints, but the close of man's day for the earth. The world refuses or ridicules the warning. Even saints forget it as a living word from God for every day; and when mingling with human interests and men's thoughts, get weary, are ashamed of the truth, apologise for or gloss over the words of the Lord and the apostles, so as in effect to say, like the evil bondman in his heart, "My Lord delayeth:" alike the cause and the consequence of growing worldliness. Even watching for executive providence in the meantime undermines and destroys the separating and heart-elevating power of waiting for Christ.

But the word here flowing out of faith in the impending end of all things is, "Be discreet therefore," that is of sound mind spiritually; "and watch," or be sober, "unto prayers:" a very

* The true reading is the plural, and without the article as in Text. Rec. Also "covereth" is right, not "shall cover"; and the singular "murmuring" rather than the plural.

different attitude from absorption in the newspaper, and in each exciting movement west or east, so often to fade and disappoint the superficial readers of prophecy. Hope like faith looks to God, expects in patience, and does not make ashamed. The Christian ought never to forget that he is a Christian, and follows the crucified but glorified One, content—yea rejoicing—to endure till we reign together with Him at His appearing and kingdom. It is not our place to thunder and lighten, as those under the law were bound to do, at the revolt of Israel and at the passing enormities of the Gentile powers. When we are translated, it will be for the godly remnant on earth to take up the cry once more, "How long, Sovereign Master the holy and true, dost not thou judge and avenge our blood on those that dwell upon the earth?" Blessed saints will they be, but no more Christians in the full sense than the O.T. saints before us.

The saints now are exhorted to watch unto prayers; as another apostle bade his dear Philippians, with the Lord at hand, be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let their requests be made known unto God. Thus should the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard their hearts and their thoughts in Christ Jesus. Such is true Christian experience. Still more wide and deep is the word in Eph. vi. where the apostle says "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication."

"But before all things" (for it ought in practice

to take precedence of all), he adds, "having your love toward each other fervent, because love covereth a multitude of sins" (8): this last clause an application of Prov. x. 12. As hatred makes the worst of everything, love is entitled to bury things out of sight; and God endorses it as answering to His own nature. Needless to say that holy discipline retains its needed but sorrowful action.

Next (ver. 9) the apostle would have them, as another form of love, "hospitable unto one another, without murmuring." Surely grumbling and grudging did not become a holy and a royal priesthood. Practical outgoing of heart in this way promotes fellowship, and strengthens the bonds of grace. It yields a fine contrast to man's selfishness, which seeks its own things, and complains of all else.

Gift too (vers. 10, 11), used according to God, subserves the same end as well as much greater ones, even the perfecting of the saints, for ministerial work, and for building up the body of Christ. But our apostle as usual is eminently direct and practical. "As each received a gift," they were to minister it toward each other, "as good stewards of God's varied grace." This is just what human organising hinders. How sad for saints to sanction any meddling with God's will and ways! It is not the right of each that is pleaded, but the obligation from gifts of God to use whatever it be in responsibility to Him. "It is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Cor. iv. 2) from the greatest to the least: else God's rights are infringed, and His grace is thus far suppressed.

The apostle divides gifts into two general classes, speaking or service otherwise. "If one speak [let it be] as oracles of God." This does not merely mean according to scripture; which might be misdirected, and thus even do harm; as *e.g.* encouraging, when reproof was due, or the inverse. Not even a gifted man ought to speak without the assurance of God's mind for the moment and case in hand. How much would be spared, were this divine rule truly felt! Then again, "If one ministereth, as of the strength which God supplieth." Creature advantages might be a snare on both sides. Even in temporal service, which is thus distinguished from the word, the right strength is that which comes from God, and not human ability, attainment, rank, or wealth. We may compare with this latter "ministry," "giving," and "showing mercy" in Rom. xii., and "helps" in 1 Cor. xii. It is remarkable how scripture in this differs, as usual, from the thoughts and language of Christendom. For so ignored is scripture, even by men zealous in dispensing it in all possible versions throughout the world, that they confine "ministry" to public speaking, and never consider that God thus dignifies all real service which is *not* of that oral character.

But "gifts" in either way are so designated by inspiration; and their free and holy exercise claimed as coming from such a donor; "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is (not merely "be") the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen." For thus the fervent spirit of the apostle poured itself

out, as he wrote these things to the saints in Asia Minor ; and God has kept them for us also.

The apostle next turns definitely to suffering of the severest kind which they were called to endure, not as a question of right or wrong, which any upright brother might and does face, but for Christ's name which in a greater degree draws on faith.

" Beloved, be not surprised at (count not strange) the fire among you that cometh for your trial, as though a strange thing were happening to you ; but inasmuch as ye share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that in the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice exultingly. If ye are reproached in Christ's name, blessed [are ye], because the [Spirit] of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you : [on their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is glorified] " (vers. 12-14).

Blessed is a man that endureth temptation or trial, and the more fiery it may be, the more blessed he that endures ; because when thus proved he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to those that love Him. The danger is of entering into temptation, as even the apostle knew too sadly, when he forgot the Lord's warning in the confidence of his own love, and denied Him thrice. But grace began to restore him, when the Lord re-called to His poor servant His admonitory words, and never stopt till he could be so re-instated before his brethren, as to have His sheep and lambs entrusted to his care. Nor was this all. For the redeeming work of Christ so completely purged him, as it does every worshipper (Heb. x. 2), that he could

boldly charge the men of Israel with *their* denying the Holy and Just One. Once for all purified, he had no longer any conscience of sins : that sin and every other were effaced for ever. Such is the Christian's initiatory privilege.

Who then was more fitted than this apostle of the circumcision to strengthen the hearts of his brethren at the fire among them coming for their trial? They should not count it strange but an honour from God, especially as they had, what the apostle had not when he was tried, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, as the fruit of Christ's accomplished work. Had not the Lord said to His disciples, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from them, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as wicked, for the Son of man's sake"? Had He not bidden them to "rejoice in that day and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven, for according to the same things did their fathers to the prophets"?

The apostle had already exhorted them (in chap. ii. 20, 21) to endure as a grace and honour if one for conscience toward God endured griefs, suffering wrongfully. For as he admirably argued, what honour is there, if when sinning and buffeted ye shall endure? But if doing good and suffering ye shall endure, this is grace, or acceptable, with God. There too he points to Christ's suffering for us, as the great model to follow. This he followed up more briefly but with sharp pungency (in chap. iii. 17, 18), as better, if God's will should will it, to

suffer as doing good rather than doing evil, with the same One before our hearts in His once for all suffering for sins, as He alone could. Here he goes beyond suffering for righteousness and as well-doers; and in accordance with the fiery persecution in view, he reminds them that inasmuch as ye share, or have fellowship in, the sufferings of Christ, it was theirs to rejoice, that in the revelation of His glory also they may rejoice with exultation. The Spirit was afresh applying what the Lord at the beginning laid down on the mount, the surpassing excellence in His eyes (and who such a judge?) of being reviled and persecuted with every wicked thing lyingly said against them for *His* sake. Blessed they that were persecuted for righteousness' sake, because theirs is the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. v. 10); but in the next verses 11, 12, He rises higher, and addresses personally, and no longer as before in the abstract, "ye" that suffer for His sake. These were to rejoice and exult, because their reward was great in the heavens.

Here too His servant was given to add, "If ye are reproached in Christ's name, blessed [are ye]; because the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Christ was not here, but in the glory of God; and thence came the Spirit, sent by the Father in His name, and by Himself from the Father to abide with them and be in them (John xiv. xv.). How fitting and full of comfort the reminder! He was the seal of their accomplished redemption, and the earnest of the glory coming to them. He is the Spirit of God, which is more and

better than glory. Such was the Spirit that rested on them, both for energy to endure and for joy now and evermore. No doubt, it is generally true of all the sons of God, for He is the Spirit of sonship, which believers receive since redemption (Gal. iv. 4, Eph. i. 13, 14); but it is here said with emphasis to sustain the sufferers for Christ's name. The latter part of the verse is quite true, and said in substance elsewhere; but omitted as the words are by the best MSS. and most ancient Vv. and looking like a gloss, they are here bracketed as of doubtful authority. There is an addition also to the Spirit of glory and of God, "and of power" in A P, more than 30 cursives, some ancient versions, &c., even expanded in \aleph ; but the Vatican MS. and other good witnesses oppose; and indeed it seems still less in accord with the context.

The apostle had put forward the sufferings of the saints as fellowship with Christ's sufferings. They could not share His grace without sharing what this entailed on Him in an evil world where God is hated quite as much as He is dreaded by a bad conscience and an unbelieving heart. They were therefore to count persecution no strange thing, but to be expected where sin pervades and prevails, where darkness is put for light and light for darkness, where good is called evil and evil good, where sweet is accounted bitter and bitter sweet. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the portion of the righteous be but the rejection which their Lord had? The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the bondman above his lord. Every one when

perfected shall be as his master. It was saintly privilege and to be accepted with thanks and exultation. It was to be reproached in His name, the Spirit of glory and of God resting on them that their groans might have a divine and unselfish character, and themselves be strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory unto all patience with joy.

Now he turns to the moral side, after an earnest exhortation against the dangers for a Christian in the midst of the worst examples. Assuredly if God judges, it is for good reason; and judge He must, according to His holy nature, what is inconsistent with it, and lifts itself proudly and rebelliously against Himself. Already too men slept, and the enemy sowed darnel, and the evil could not be expelled till the consummation of the age when the Son of man takes it in hand with power and glory. The Holy Spirit was sent for the good news, the saints, the church, but not to apply remedy to the ruin. This is reserved for the Lord who will at His appearing bring in times of restoration of all things, as the prophets spoke and God through them since time began. 2 Thess. ii., one of the earliest communications to the church, is explicit that the mystery of lawlessness was already at work. This is the succession that is never interrupted, though kept in check by the Spirit of God till He departs, and the apostasy ensues, which culminates in the lawless one fully displayed in his audacious taking of his seat in God's temple, showing himself that he is God.

Hence says our apostle, "Because the time [is] that judgment begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what [shall be] the end of those that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous is with difficulty saved, where shall the impious and sinful appear? Wherefore also let those that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing* to a faithful Creator" (vers. 17-19).

So it had been in the awful judgment which befell Jerusalem and the Jews as described by Ezekiel. "Begin at my sanctuary," said Jehovah, where man assumed indefectibility; and such is the vain confidence of tradition, in the face of the plainest testimonies to the contrary in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation. The glory of Jehovah refused to dwell in His house defiled by abomination, and yet greater abominations, the last of which was that eastern attitude which has ever stamped the idolator, never the true worshipper of our God and Father. No doubt, salvation ever was of God and in sovereign grace; and this in Christianity is made more evident and indisputable than it ever had been. But God from the first maintained His title to judge every departure from Him; and none ought to be so ready and so thorough in confessing their sins as those who own that all they enjoy and boast is of His grace. Whereas the plague-spot in Christendom, as in Israel, is to claim for its most guilty and apostate state the immunity that belongs to the counsels of grace. Never was Judah loftier in its pretensions

* The most ancient authorities omit ὡς "as."

and louder in its sense of security than on the eve of unsparing judgment. And now it is still more guiltily the fact with Christendom.

Here it is where even real disciples sadly fail. Party-spirit blinds; for what is Christendom but a scattered group of parties? As another apostle taught, there were schisms even then; and there must be heresies or sects as it really means, the inevitable effect if not corrected by self-judgment; and these we now see all around and unblushing. Those that carry the head highest can hardly deny it. Their own association is of course the true one, if not quite immaculate in their eyes; but they must know of souls on earth more than themselves subject to the word and Spirit of God, devoted to Christ's name, and separate from the world. This might pierce their conscience, and lead them by grace to discover the overwhelming ruin underneath the haughtiest prejudice. But the darkness which besets all who yield to the fatal assumption of indefectibility in the Christian profession hinders the entrance of divine light as to this into their souls.

Yet the Lord in Matt. xiii. had given ample warning that the kingdom of the heavens, which He was about to set up, would be characterised by ruin through the enemy's craft, as the earthly kingdom of old entrusted to Israel had broken down. Only judgment at the Son of man's appearing could duly rid the field of the darnel here below. But the wheat, taken up to the heavenly granary, should shine forth as the sun in a higher sphere.

The testimony of Paul has been alleged: here before us is that of Peter. Jude is in prophetic vision as distinct and pregnant, as he is brief. "Woe to them, because they went in the way of Cain, and gave themselves up to the misleading of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah." John penetrates deeper than all when he calls it "the last hour" of many antichrists come, the heralds of the antichrist.

But where is this felt by saints generally and confessed with grief before God and with shame before men? If they go so far as to protest against this evil or that, they are satisfied with their part, even though they in fact join in with what they own as deplorable, or alas! seek to explain away.

Let them heed the way of the godly in Israel, though surely the Christian is bound to go farther still and judge more profoundly through far more light. From Moses to Samuel how much is there to learn in presence of the people fighting against God! From Jeremiah and Daniel, from Ezra and Nehemiah, what agony over the remnant's short-coming, what bearing the burden of all Israel's sins, of people, priests, and kings! Is the church to have no such sense of responsibility? Is the Christian, because he has eternal life and is justified, to have no sorrow because of the beautiful flock of Christ harried and scattered, and of the rashness, heats, and self-will which oft caused it?

Undoubtedly scripture provides to faith and fidelity a clean path outside corporate as well

as individual defilement. But if there be not a spirit mourning and broken that precedes recourse to it and that is kept up ever after, a hard and cold self-righteousness will rush in there, the sure proof of failure that only adds sin to sin, and that forebodes worse evil still. If we are of the church, Christ's body, it is a heartless thing that we are only to feel what wrong we have personally done. The true principle is that, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and of this suffering the spiritual are deeply sensible. But the self-satisfied is quite indifferent. He has his party, and is content. In Christ we see the perfection of His love in this respect as in all others. He bore on His spirit the burden of every woe He relieved by His power: how much more did He feel all the unworthy selfishness which impeded and weighed down His beloved ones! We are entitled and bound by grace to share this divine affection with Him. The faith which refuses sin works by love to warn the saints who yield to it, but also to intercede on their behalf. Christ would have us wash one another's feet; but what lowliness and love we need to do it aright!

Now if judgment begin from the house of God, as it does and ought (compare Amos iii. 2), what must be the end of those that obey not the gospel of God? This is the only obedience to which the unforgiven is called. What a proof of blind wickedness that any sinners should refuse! For the gospel of God is the glad news of full remission of his sins in the blood of Jesus. Yet what thou-

hundreds and millions dare hell-fire rather than believe on Him. What shall their end be?

No wonder that the apostle speaks of the righteous saved with difficulty. Yes, the obstacles are many and immense; and there is no good thing in them, that is, in all naturally theirs, while even as saints, what weakness and exposure! "Who then can be saved?" said the disciples, when they heard of special difficulty for the rich, who, as they thought, had such advantage over all others. But Jesus looking on them with His unfailing love replied, "With men this is," not difficult, but "impossible"; but (thanks for ever to His name!) "with God all things are possible." Salvation is of God, as His is the gospel which proclaims it to everyone, poor or rich, that believes. But all the more appalling is the lot of those who not only violate His law but scorn or neglect His gospel. Where shall the impious and sinful appear?

God is not only the One that raises the dead, as already shown us in Christ for the deliverance of our souls; He does not cease to prove Himself "a faithful Creator" to such as suffer on earth. "Wherefore also let them that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls" to Him thus "in well-doing." He is tender to His creatures; how much more to His children, suffering wrongfully for a little while! The sentiment is closely in keeping with the testimony to such Jews as were now Christians.

CHAPTER V.

Now the apostle turns to such as took the lead in governmental care among the saints, as he had already exhorted gifted persons (chap. iv. 10, 11), after urging the more general call to fervent love and ungrudging hospitality (8, 9).

"Elders [therefore] that [are] among you I exhort that [am] fellow-elder, and witness of the sufferings of Christ, that [am] also partaker of the glory about to be revealed. Tend (or, shepherd) the flock of God that [is] among you, exercising oversight,* not by necessity but willingly,* not for base gain, but readily, nor as lording it over your allotments, but becoming models of the flock. And when the Chief-shepherd is manifested, ye shall receive the unfading crown of glory" (vers. 1-4).

As the apostle's heart may well have bounded in writing the early verses of chap. ii. which recalled the memorable passage in his life when the Saviour gave him his new name, did it not also swell with deepest gratitude and lowly praise in now writing to elders as he recalled the grace that before his brethren reinstated the one who had thrice denied Him? Feed My lambs; tend (or,

* N B here as remarkably omit *ἐπισκοποῦντες* as N A P add after, "willingly" *κατὰ Θεόν*. The Revisers follow the latter in their text the former in the margin.

shepherd) My sheep ; feed My sheep (John xxi. 16, 17, 18). Yes, Peter was brought to feel and own that his love to the Saviour of which he once boasted had so utterly failed, that only the Lord who knew all things could see it at the bottom of his self-confidence. Notwithstanding all, the Lord did know that he dearly loved Him ! To him then and there He confided what was dearest to Himself, His lambs and His sheep, to tend and feed His flock. In like love Peter in his measure appeals to elders as a fellow-elder. Though apostle he takes common ground as far as this was possible, as grace gladly does to further its unselfish purposes. True service, as well as rule, is founded on love ; and the love of the servant flows from that of the Saviour. But self needs to be judged in its pride, vanity, and worthlessness, in order that love may be divine and pure.

Men soon perverted service into lordship, though our Lord took pains to anticipate and warn of the danger, and to implant the principle of grace which is suited if held in faith to guard from ill and form the heart according to God. So bold and inveterate was this evil that it followed the apostles themselves up to the last Passover and the Lord's Supper. "There was also a contention among them which is accounted the greater. And he said to them, The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them ; and they that have authority over them are called benefactors. But ye [shall be] not so ; but he that is greater among you, let him become as the younger ; and he that is chief, as he that doth

serve." Blessed Lord, Thou Thyself wert in the midst of them as He that serveth ! then on earth, now in heaven, by-and-by in glory, not only in that day but for ever. When the kingdom is given up, all things having been subdued, even then wilt Thou the Son be subject to Him that subjected all things to Thee, that God should be all in all ! This will be perfection in all fulness, as it is Thy grace to make it good without end.

But what corruption in Christendom, a loud contradiction of Christianity, to turn the service of the Lord into worldly rank and means, to emulate the pride of life with claim of superiority over rival grandees, in the name of the Crucified One, who here had not where to lay His head, and laid down that it is enough for the disciple to be as his teacher, and a bondman as his lord !

Nor was it only departure from scripture in worldliness ; it is as plain ecclesiastically. For the accepted tradition among the ancient systems, Catholic and Protestant, is that to the bishop or overseer belongs the authority of ordination, consecration of persons and places, and excommunication. Now the written word is positive, that what is called ordination belonged solely to apostles, or an apostolic delegate, like Timothy or Titus, commissioned for definite action in a given time and place. Even when the church looked out God-fearing men for external or diaconal service, like the seven in Jerusalem, the apostles set them over this business (Acts vi. 3). But the church in scripture never chose elders ; nor did elders, but only an apostle

or an envoy by his authority. Hence we read (in Acts xiv. 23) that the apostles Paul and Barnabas on their return to the gathered saints chose for them elders in every church. Is it needful to say that at a later day Timothy and Titus followed this model, when authorised to act similarly where Paul could not be? Their instructions are simple and clear, as we can see; and they were faithful. Even the competent advocates of Episcopacy acknowledged that in apostolic times there were elders in each local assembly, and that these elders were bishops, the distinction which is found in the second century being unknown in the first, not even a leader among equals. "The" bishop first appears in the letters of Ignatius, who (if not the inventor of that hitherto unknown official, nay in defiance of all scriptural facts and order) is the first to assume its existence and lofty position. His jurisdiction was limited to those in the city. The diocesan bishop later was another and considerable step away from scripture, as were other superior dignitaries, as the church lost its true character and sunk into, or rose in, the world, till the rivalry of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople became a struggle for primacy in honour of old or new Rome, as mistress of the earth, the office as set forth in God's word being long forgotten and despised.*

* All are or may be aware of the effort to make capital out of the "angels" of the Apocalyptic churches. But this is not nor ever was a ministerial title save among Irvingites, though Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists have each and all striven (in honour and support of their opposed theories) to divert it from its exceptional place in that great prophecy. It was really such a representative man in each of the seven Asiatic churches as the Lord viewed as identified with the

For therein eldership is never confounded with gift, whether the *χάρισμα* of Rom. xii., 1 Cor. xii., and 1 Peter iv., or the *δόμα* of Eph. iv. For this depends on Christ as the giver, and the Holy Spirit as the power, and never required human choice or appointment, as elders did. The Lord gave them direct. Neither evangelists nor pastors and teachers admitted of intermediate action, any more than apostles or prophets (who constituted the foundation, and therefore were not continued). Apostolic succession is a mere romance, conceived in honour of the bishop when elevated, after the apostles were gone, into an oversight of the overseers, to say nothing of all others, and in fact a creator of them. Thus is presented that three-fold singularity of which so many have been and are enamoured, the bishop, presbyters, and deacons, undergoing another transformation of presbyters into priests, a change still more opposed to Christianity and the church.

The claim to ordain like an apostle or his delegate would be soon made. To consecrate persons and places would and did follow ere long, although altogether foreign to the New Testament, and as clearly borrowed from the heathen rather than Judaism, which recognised but one sacred centre. The title to excommunicate was a bold contradiction of the Lord's will and word in committing that solemn responsibility to the assembled saints

good or evil of these several communities. He might be an elder, or a teacher, or both, or perhaps neither; but he must somehow be responsible for the state of the assembly to be here addressed as its "angel": a man, of course, and not an invisible being, any more than a new official.

judging in His name (1 Cor. v.). The apostle Peter dealt personally with a husband and a wife who were guilty of a hypocritical lie to which both had agreed. The apostle Paul could and did deliver blasphemers or other great offenders to Satan. But we may be assured that neither would usurp the function of the assembly in putting away from itself those members that were guilty, after previous warning, of persisting unrepentant in sins incompatible with His presence. Hence we have the latter enjoining on the assemblies distinct action in clearing the saints of what was thus done to their defilement and His dishonour. *He* (though at a distance) had reliable testimony and quite enough to judge the deed; but he insists on the necessity of *their* judging such evils as he indicates. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover hath been sacrificed, Christ; wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. . . . For what have I to do with judging those that are without? *Do not ye judge* those that are within? whereas those that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves." Such is the Lord's commandment to the assembly, not to "the bishops," not to the elders, not to the gifts many as then were there, but to the entire church in Corinth. Who can deny it?

Elders then are here exhorted by him as fellow-elders; but one who was "witness of the sufferings

of Christ, and also partaker of the glory about to be revealed." It is a fitting and precise description of the facts, and exactly in keeping with his Epistle. He was truly one of "the apostles of the Lamb," as we hear of them in Rev. xxi. 14. It has been well remarked, how distinct was the place which divine grace gave to Paul ; for his it was in the sovereignty of God to be witness of the glory of Christ, and also partaker of His sufferings, beyond the lot of any other in both respects.

It was and is of all moment to regard "the flock" as God's; and all the more, because it is the habitual way even of excellent souls to forget this truth and assume that the sheep whom they feed and tend are *their* flocks. Such a thought betrays an unwitting denial of God's rights, and falsifies the relation of His sheep, and engenders erroneous interpretation of His word to the hurt of His servants themselves as well as of the saints. Take the common misuse of Heb. xiii. 17, implying that those that guide, or have the rule, have to give account of the souls who are exhorted to obey them. The truth is, that the guides are called to watch in their behalf as having to give account, not of the sheep, but of their own conduct toward them before the Lord. Again, the unity of the flock of God is undermined by not a few who talk without the least warrant of its consisting of many folds. The Lord on the contrary is showing in John x., not only that He quits the Jewish fold, and leads His sheep out, but that He has other sheep not of that fold, Gentile believers; both of

whom were about to constitute the one flock, as He is the one Shepherd. There was to be no such thing henceforth as a fold, still less many folds, but His new flock. The one flock of Christ contains all Christians. The sheep might gather to His name here, there, and everywhere, with many an under-shepherd; but as He says, "They shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd." This is Christian truth.

"Tend the flock of God that [is] among you, exercising oversight, not by necessity but willingly, nor for base gain but readily." It is not under law but grace, and the zeal of love brightened and cheered and strengthened by the crown of rejoicing in those tended, in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming, the contrast of base gain in this life.

Of another danger they are warned: "nor as lording it over your allotments, but becoming models of the flock." If the property which flesh counts our own is not really so to the man of faith, but rather the goods of the Master entrusted to his stewardship, how much more have elders to beware of lording over the allotted charge as if it were theirs? No, they are to become models of the flock in the constant remembrance that it is God's flock, and that they must render account to the Lord how they guided His sheep, as well as of their own walk day by day.

Who then, said the Lord, is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler over his household to give the portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he

ometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say to you, he will make him ruler over all that he hath (Luke xii. 42-44). So the apostle speaks here: "When the chief-shepherd is manifested, ye shall receive the unfading crown of glory." Alas! ere long the blessed hope faded from their hearts, and the work of oversight was changed into a title of earthly honour and emolument, and the position a lordly installation if not an enthronement; so that Peter, if allowed to see things as they are now, could not recognise the office, as it was according to God, under what it is become according to man in Christendom. Is this to exaggerate, or to say the truth in love? How deep the fall really!

The apostle was fond of the word "likewise" in a spirit of grace where nature would never have thought of it but rather resented. Thus the latter part of chap. ii. in this epistle is addressed to domestics; and as he had pressed on the saints in general submission to every human institution for the Lord's sake, so he urges it on them particularly to their master in all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the crooked. For this is grace; and we are called, every one of us, to walk in it as we were saved by it. As law characterised Israel, grace should stamp the Christian, even as Christ was full of grace and truth; and who walked submissively as He? To endure when sinning and buffeted, what glory is it? But if when doing good and suffering ye shall endure, this is grace with God. And there too throughout His life Christ is the model, and above all in His death, where He

Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that being dead to sins we might live to righteousness: an all-important issue, to convict those who misrepresent, hate, and deride grace. "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands" (chap. iii. 1), says the apostle, and in ver. 7, "Ye husbands, likewise, dwell with them according to knowledge." Such was the order in which the Holy Spirit appealed to each.

Here the exhortation was first on the apostle's part as fellow-elder to the elders among them; and then he adds, "Likewise, ye younger, be subject to elders," which evidently goes beyond those in official place to all whose years clothed them with title to moral respect if spent in faithful service to the Lord. Indeed it is to be noticed that among the Jewish saints, and in Jerusalem itself, we have no record of a formal introduction by apostolic authority as ruled in the Gentile assemblies (Acts xiv. 23, Tit. i. 5). They are first mentioned as subsisting in Acts xi. 30 and recognised in their place by Barnabas and Saul. The fact is strikingly confirmed by Acts xv. wherein they are repeatedly mentioned with honour. Yet the peculiarity alluded to is no less plain in the critical text of ver. 23, which is the opening sentence of the decree determined at the council. It runs, if we heed the Vatican MS., the Alexandrian, the Sinaitic, the Rescript of Paris, and Beza's of Cambridge with other good support, not as in the A. V., "The apostles, and the elders, and the brethren," but "The apostles and the elder brethren"; and

this is adopted in the Revised Version, as by Alford, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, &c. The reading of the later copies, seems due to conforming the phrase with ver. 22. But this was implied here, as it was there expressly asserted to be "with the whole assembly." Nor was it the least likely that the ecclesiastical copyists would have dared to introduce a phrase so alien to their habit of helping on hierarchical distinction. Even Luther, Calvin, and others down to our day have felt constrained to yield to the larger sense of elders and youngers in this context.

"Likewise, ye younger, be subject to elders; and all of you bind on humility to one another; because God setteth himself against haughty ones, and giveth grace to lowly" (ver. 5).

Both exhortations have fallen too often on deaf ears. When the apostles passed away, the presbyters easily persuaded themselves, that order called for one of their number to receive or take a chief place over his fellows in a city; especially as the angels of the seven Asiatic churches in the Apocalypse could by a ready mistake be thus construed, until it rose by degrees to be a diocese of any extent. A presbyter, says a grave commentator (in loco), is not called a bishop by ancient ecclesiastical writers, but a bishop is often called a presbyter. Had he overlooked the fact, that the Holy Spirit in Acts xx. 17, 28 *does* call the elders of the church in Ephesus "bishops" (ἐπισκόπους)? Does not inspiration outweigh all ecclesiastical writers put together and demonstrate their un-

soundness when they venture to differ? So the apostle addresses the saints "in Philippi with bishops and deacons." Also Tit. i. 5-7 is almost equally plain. No doubt it is as much opposed to Dissent as to Episcopacy, "the minister" being as antisciptural as the traditional trio, bishop, priests, and deacons. After the death of the apostles the lawlessness secretly working before grew apace and became bold. The sole divine authority as to this attaches to what they authenticated in the scriptures.

As the elders by unbelieving development sunk into various sorts of clerical irregularity, so did the youngers lose all sense of their due place of subjection. It was an early error that they began to choose bishops on the plea that the multitude of the disciples were allowed to choose men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom for the apostles to appoint over their diaconal work. For where elders or bishops were appointed among the Gentile churches, the disciples never chose, but the apostles for them, as in Acts xiv. 23; or if an apostle could not go, he wrote (not to any church but) to an apostolic man like Timothy or Titus, to appoint elders. For the principle is as plain as it is important. As the church contributed its means, it was allowed to choose those it confided in for due administration. But apostles, not the church, had spiritual discernment of the qualities suitable to preside or rule; and they therefore chose elders. Besides, there were endowed with power men that were the gifts of Christ, such as evangelists, pastors,

teachers, &c., who were never appointed (like elders locally), but acted freely in their work as they were led by the Spirit in the unity of Christ's body, the church.

In our day both the clerical spirit and the democratic are so rampant that there is all the more need to heed the gracious appeals of the apostle. Let those who guide never forget that the flock is not theirs but God's; and that they are to be models to the flock, not lords. Let the younger be subject to elders on principle, instead of seeking their own will or innovations so natural to youth. No doubt blind guidance ends in a ditch; but such direction is not of a Christian type, which is rather the seeing leading the seeing, with eye and heart fixed on Christ, who thus gives singleness of purpose.

"Yea, all of you bind on humility to one another." The more numerous authorities read "all of you, being subject to one another, bind on humility," but some of the best MSS. and versions drop "being subject," which results in what has just been given. "Clothed" is too vague here. It is a word unique in N. T. usage, and occurs but rarely elsewhere. The figure is taken from the apron a slave girt on to do his work earnestly without soiling his dress. The Lord from a far different motive stooped lower still when He girded Himself with a linen towel to wipe the feet of His own which He washed clean from defilement. This was holy love; and this alone constrains us to bind on lowly-mindedness, to which we are all

exhorted by the apostle who had not forgotten his sad ignorance and error on that memorable and touching occasion.

But he also fortifies the call with the solemn admonition, that God opposes Himself to haughty men, and gives grace to humble, the same quotation word for word as in James iv. 6. See Prov. iii. 34, and Rom. xii. 16. Thus indeed it is a moral principle on both sides which runs through scripture; and it is a lesson for every soul in the church from day to day which none can afford to overlook. It is the more needed, because there is a ready danger of being haughty under a misapplied idea of position and duty, and of losing the grace God is so willing to bestow through failure in cherishing that lowliness which is only found perfectly in Christ.

Humility is a precious quality in the saints; and like other virtues it is apt to be debased by the enemy, and mistaken by themselves according to their own thoughts. It is of moment that we should discover its real nature as made sure and clear by Christ. For He is the true light who makes all persons and all things manifest; without Him its Christian character is not realised. How often it is understood to consist in our being brought to see and detest our own evil! But this is far from the standard of Christianity. For we are thus occupied with ourselves, however right it be to bewail our manifold failures and grievous shortcomings. Certainly it is far better than to be deceived into the notion that we have attained a high stage of holiness, and to thank God that we

are not as other men. In its grossest form the error is fed by recourse to a director of conscience, into whose ear we can pour our confessions and seek profit from his ghostly counsels, even if we go not on to the extreme of looking for authoritative relief by his absolution in the Lord's name from time to time. Again, while souls cling to the invention of the weekly class and its leader to hear and advise on the rehearsed experience of good or bad, others who belong to an opposite pole strive to gather a scanty comfort from dwelling on their felt unworthiness, and to find lowliness in all manners and measures of self-condemnation.

Now the work of Christ, on which the awakened soul is brought to rest, is not only perfect in itself, but it perfects him; as Heb. x. 14 explicitly declares with many other scriptures of differing form but similar import. By one offering Christ has perfected continuously—not merely for ever, but without an interruption—those who are sanctified, or set apart from the world to God by the faith of Christ. This was hard for an Israelite to accept, accustomed as he had been to fall back on his sin or trespass offering, and the priest's action in sprinkling the blood, offering the fat, and eating his part of the victim, while burning the rest with fire unsparingly. It was so significant a type, identifying the offerer by his hand laid on the head of the offering, with Jehovah's authority to the priest to atone for him and assure of forgiveness, that one can understand the need of the utmost certainty in order to relinquish the shadow for the

substance. But herein are the expressed will of God the Father, the accomplished work of the Son, and also the applied witness of the Holy Ghost in Jer. xxxi. 33, 34—a predicted remission of sins now so complete, that there is no more offering for sin.

The efficacious bearing of Christ's sacrifice is as immense to faith, as the glory of His person and the depth of His suffering for sin. It is this which lays the ground for Christian humility; because it gives a purged conscience before God. Till then it was no more than an exercised conscience, and thereby a humbling process in the measure of our spiritual feeling. But in the work of Christ it is *God* who condemned sin in the flesh, not morally alone as in all that He was and did, but as a sacrifice for sin, that it might be utterly effaced in His sight, as indeed we become His righteousness in Christ. Hence the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. They are entitled and meant to see themselves so clear in His light as to have done with themselves, and free with a pure conscience and a peaceful heart to enjoy the fulness of Christ. What a deliverance to have done with self! It was humbling to feel and have to own how vile we learnt ourselves to be. Is it not a truer deeper humility to know in His light, that our careless perhaps and certainly unworthy failure cost Him to be as it were consumed to ashes in God's unsparing judgment of our iniquity laid upon Him? and that *we* are, that *I* am, not worth thinking or talking about? How easy this ought to make

it for each to esteem the other as better than himself ! Such is the basis of Christian lowliness of mind. It is through divinely given faith.

“Humble yourselves (or, Be humbled) therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, having cast all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you” (vers. 6, 7).

It was that mighty hand of God which made the sinless Jesus sin for us, when He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. So Israel will yet confess, the generation to come when this unbelieving and adulterous generation shall pass ; and Christ’s words are more widely and manifestly verified than ever. We who now believe, whether Jew or Gentile, while He is unseen, delight to see the truth as before God ; and blessed, as Himself said, are they that saw not and believed. We rest on the depth of that atoning work when darkness shrouded the cross, and His voice attested that God hid His face and forsook Him, the rejected Messiah, the Son of man giving His life a ransom instead of many, yea for all ; that we who believe might be healed by His stripes, and made meet to share the portion of the saints in the light.

Under that mighty hand which has thus wrought and given us everlasting redemption are we called to be humbled. We fail alas ! in the abiding sense of this marvellous light into which God called us. But therein it is our privilege to walk, as 1 John i. 7 tells us ; and it is our fault only if we do not walk consciously there. Thereby is that humility

secured to which we are here exhorted. Would there be defect if our souls were ever realising that most solemn yet most gracious presence? Yet it is into this grace that faith in our Lord Jesus has brought us, and gives us to stand (Rom. v. 2).

Nor is less than this the proper and constant standing of the Christian. It is our shame to forget or slight such favour. And those who deny the new privilege (out of a Puritan jealousy on behalf of the O.T. saints) are indifferent servants for the honour of Christ or the Christian faith. It may sound lowly for the believer to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" But this ignores that it was a passing state, and that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set me free from the law of sin and death." Thus my confession now on failure becomes a deeper self-loathing. O blessed man that grace has made me, what shame to Him as well as to me that I should now defile my feet! that I, perfectly atoned for, should have sinned against grace as well as holiness, and need to be sprinkled with the water of separation to restore my communion! What agonies my sinful folly cost the Saviour!

In God's blessed presence let us be ever humbled, and all the more because it is always open to us through the rent veil. We contributed nothing to Christ's cross but our sins: the grace therein was God's sovereign grace. The effect of Christ's work is that divine righteousness which we became in Him; and we boast (for it is more than "rejoice")

in hope of the glory of God. And indeed He will exalt us in due time. For it will be the day when Christ shall be manifested, and we also shall with Him be manifested, in glory. While He our life is hidden, it is inconsistent and incongruous that we should now look for any glory in this world, least of all from that world whose princes crucified the Lord of glory. As loyal to the crucified One we wait for the appearing of His glory, in order to share it with Him. For did He not tell us, that the glory which the Father had given Him He has given to His own, that they may be one as the Father and the Son are one, that they may be *perfected* into one; that the world may *know* (not believe, as now) that the Father sent the Son, and loved the saints even as He loved the Son? Then the world shall behold Him and them in the same heavenly glory. Never will there be our perfection in unity till then, and only of that future day does the Lord say it. Truly God will exalt us in due time. Our call is to suffer meanwhile with Christ, and also for His name, that we may be also glorified together.

But of another privilege the apostle here reminds us in connection with being humbled now and waiting for His glory in the day of Christ. He says, "having cast all your care on him, because he careth for you." He assumes this relegation, in faith, of our every anxiety on our God and Father, who loves to bear burdens too great for His weak ones, for whom He has joys and service which demand freedom of spirit for their right aim and end.

How enfeebling is the unbelief that fancies it our duty to be weighed down outwardly and inwardly ! Why, Christian, have you not rolled upon Him the weight that oppresses you ? Is not His word to us plain and certain ? Does He not care for you—He that gave His Son for your sins, He that numbers all the hairs of your head ?

Here again the apostle exhorts to be vigilant and to watch. In his former injunction (iv. 7) it was in view of the end of all as being drawn nigh ; here it is because of danger from their great adversary.

“Be vigilant, watch : * your adversary [the] devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour ; whom resist, steadfast in faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brotherhood that [is] in the world” (vers. 8–10).

It is of interest to note how distinctly the enemy is presented as the power of evil with which we have to cope, no less than our God and the Lord Jesus to care for us. Here, as the apostle regards us, not as the Epistle to the Hebrews in view of the sanctuary, but as at the same time exposed to the peculiar stress of the desert, he appropriately sets forth our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walking about, and seeking whom he may devour.

To the Roman saints, exhorted to be wise for that which is good, and simple as to evil, the word is that the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly, and the grace of Christ meanwhile

* The best authorities do not support the “because” of the Text. Rec. followed by the A. V.

with them. What a blessing had they so continued, instead of human wisdom and ambition, leaving room in time for the most loathsome system of impurity, imposture, pride, and bloodshed !

To the Corinthian assembly, not adequately weaned from philosophic wisdom and the persuasive words of excellent speech, the warning is, as the serpent beguiled Eve by his craft, lest their thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to Christ. False apostles can thus pass as ministers of righteousness, as Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

The Ephesian saints, carried up to the highest plane, are characteristically reminded of the victory over the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience now led captive, but having wiles, with towering pretensions in the heavenlies, against which we need the panoply of God. The Colossian saints have a somewhat similar reference, though much shorter.

Nor need we here dwell on the hindrance of Satan to the apostle, or on his temptation of the saints in Thessalonica, as spoken of in the First Epistle ; nor on the awful prediction of his future power at the end of the age as in the Second.

We can passingly notice what more affects leaders, the fault and the snare of the devil endangering an overseer, as in 1 Tim. iii. 6, 7 ; and the possible recovery from his snare, as in the Second Epistle (ii. 22, 26), for adversaries that repent.

In Hebrews ii. 14, 15, he is the one that has the might of death annulled through the Saviour's

death ; and in the Revelation he is shown fully both as to the church and in the world to his utter ruin.

We are entitled to resist him as the Epistle of James (iv.) also urges, however loudly he may roar, and menace with destruction. He is a conquered foe, as faith knows ; and the name of Him we confess is ample to terrify him. But confidence in our wisdom, or righteousness, exposes to inevitable defeat. Our strength is in Christ, whose grace suffices, and power is perfected in weakness. Therefore we are bid to resist, steadfast in faith. Some understand "in the faith ;" but I question the strength in such an encounter of faith only viewed objectively. It appears rather to be encouragement given to our subjective faith in the Lord. Our apostle is eminently practical, however important it is that we be sound in the faith. It is no strange thing to be thus assailed. So he reminds us that we know that the selfsame sufferings are accomplished in the brotherhood that is in the world. They have like relationships to God which expose them to persecution through the spite of Satan against Christ, even more than against themselves.

If the apostle does not hide from the pilgrim the power and malice of the enemy in this desert world, what fervour characterises him when he sets God before us in that love which is above every danger and difficulty, turning all for good to those that love Him !

" But the God of all grace that called you unto his everlasting glory in Christ Jesus, after having

suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground: to him [be or, is] the glory and the might for the ages of the ages. Amen" (vers. 10, 11).

It is more than a closing prayer, a most confident assurance based on a full knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, and on the already accomplished work of redemption displayed in the power of His resurrection. As Peter began the epistle, so he concluded it. He, like Paul as to his beloved Philippian brethren, had confidence in this very thing, that He who began in them a good work would complete it until Jesus Christ's day. Satan might roar and devour. But, as Paul wrote to the Roman saints, if God be for us, who against us? He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him grant us all things? Who shall lay accusation against God's elect? God is He that justifies: who is he that condemns? Christ is He that died, yea rather that was raised, who is also at God's right hand, who intercedes too for us: who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay in all these things we more than conquer through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to

separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The apostle of the circumcision followed the apostle of the uncircumcision in tracing all blessing to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, not rising to the height before us in Ephesians but alike pointing to the same source in his opening words. As the resurrection was the mighty key-note to the one, the ascension gave the heavenly mark to the other. Both were led of the Spirit to present the divine source flowing in the richest streams of goodness suited to the varying circumstances of the saints addressed. None is so characterised as Paul by revealing the eternal and immense counsels of God for the universe with the glorified Christ at the head of all things, heavenly and earthly, and the church, His body, above any question of Jew or Greek, the sharer as His bride of all given to Him.

Yet Peter was inspired here to speak of "the God of all grace," a title of peculiar significance, and for all saints wherever and whatever they might be; but how divinely wise and suited to the Christian elect of the Jewish dispersion! Many of them had, no doubt, heard Paul and his companions who long laboured in their part of the East, as Peter had not. Paul indeed was called to write elaborately and powerfully to the believing Hebrews, and bring them definitely out of the old legal elements which had so straitened and hampered them, before judgment was actually accomplished on the earthly city and sanctuary. So on Peter devolved the task of feeding and tending by his epistles those sheep who needed

comfort and confirmation, now that their great teacher was no more to see their face.

Thus, while there are the clearest tokens of identity between what Peter writes and his preachings in the Acts of the Apostles, he too teaches here, as we have already seen, much beyond what was then required or seasonable. This wondrously beautiful summary before us reflects that advance with all due meetness and forcible compression. Not the God of our fathers which glorified His servant Jesus, but "the God of all grace that called you unto his everlasting glory in Christ Jesus." It is not merely the God of the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the God of all overcoming love as manifested in Christ Jesus, superior to, not weakness and failure alone, but the hatred of the enemy seemingly successful to the uttermost in the cross, which His grace turned to be the ground of deep and righteous judgment of sin, yea, making them, the believers, now as spotless in His eyes as the Lamb, through His precious blood. Nor this only; for He called us, not to salvation of souls alone, great as this grace is, but to His everlasting glory in Christ. For it is a glory which far exceeds the earthly kingdom, with its thousand years of righteousness reigning, and Satan shut up, and creation rejoicing after its long thralldom of vanity and groan.

The God of all grace, who called saints to His everlasting glory in Christ Jesus, is the best security against all that creature can or cannot do meanwhile; and the more, because as Father He carries on a constant, watchful, and righteous government of His

children all through the wilderness (chap. i. 13-17).

But there is another needed and weighty consideration. As Jews, they might associate with the Christ immunity from suffering and promotion to high honour ; but as Christians, their portion is to share His sufferings for righteousness and love and truth. No mistake more common in Christendom than looking for present reward and distinction and ease through the gospel and the church. But it is a hateful lie of Satan. The Corinthian saints slipped easily into this snare, to the apostle Paul's pain and horror (1 Cor. iv. 8-14) ; it was still more natural for such as had been Jews. So the apostle Peter seeks throughout to impress suffering as the necessary path of the Christian, and " after having suffered a little while," as his beloved brother to the Hebrews (x. 32-39), fortified by not a few even of old (xi. 35-38) but above all by His case who sums up all as our perfect exemplar (xii. 2, 3). It is through suffering in faith and patience that we are disciplined and bear fruit to Him who deigns thus to prune the branches of the vine.

And what more emphatic than the cheering declaration to which he that wrote put his seal, as one who had proved it so truly in his own experience that the God of all grace " Himself shall perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground." Could those addressed, could we, lose one of these mighty encouragements ? Could we allow them to lack the most definite meaning, or to be heaped together as a faggot deriving its virtue from the binding together of the weak ? Are they not each strong and expressive,

to give without bands the utmost possible confidence in His all-sufficient love to us? It is much that He will "perfect" those who in themselves lack all, in the sense of a complete furnishing and adjustment. It is more that He will "stablish" those who need to be turned inside out, as Peter once in his self-confidence, to lean on Himself and His word by faith. It is precious that He will "strengthen" those that know themselves as weak as water spilt on the ground, and changeable as the wind. It is if possible more, that on the Rock that never moves He will "ground" those who learn deeply their nothingness, and worse still.

Be it ours to join with his immediate object, in the apostle's ascription of praise and thanksgiving, "to Him be (or is) the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen." Assuredly "the glory" is His also; but the connection here seems to strengthen the testimony of the few witnesses (A B 23, ancient Latin copies, &c.) which express only His "might" in the face of the adversary. The great majority however read "the glory and the might," which was a frequent phrase, as in 1 Peter iv. 11, Jude 25 enlarged, and Rev. i. 6. But "dominion" answers to *κυριότης*, rather than to *κράτος* as to which translators vacillate.

The Epistle thus concludes.

"By Silvanus, the faithful brother, as I account, I write to you in (by) few [words], exhorting and testifying that this is God's true grace in which stand (or, ye stand). She that is in Babylon elect with [you] saluteth you, and Mark my son. Salute

one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you and that are in Christ " (vers. 12-14).

It is of interest to learn that Silas, or Silvanus, the fellow-labourer of Paul in Achaia and Macedonia was the messenger through whom Peter sent his first Epistle to the saints of the Dispersion. Once Peter had himself been far from faithful to the Christian truth of liberty for Gentile as for Jew that believed the glad tidings; and Paul withstood him to the face. For it was not to walk straightforwardly according to the gospel, but to compromise it to the Lord's dishonour. Now Peter writes fearlessly to confirm with his apostolic testimony the yet bolder and deeper witness which the apostle of the uncircumcision had borne in Asia Minor, through one who was in his estimate as in Paul's a faithful brother, a suited link between them. It was to hold fast the Head from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.

His words were few but weighty from one who was justly looked up to by Christian Jews who had already profited in those Gentile lands by him whose province lay there especially. But God took care that so conspicuous a pillar of the circumcision as Kephas should write without doubt and fervently in the same strain of grace to the sheep whom the Lord confided to his love and care. Who can fail to recognise an unjealous largeness which was quickly forgotten, or rather never known, in haughty Christendom with its little yet evergrowing fences, bound up by official pride,

mis-called rights, far from the Lord's mind as possible.

Nor can any description of the Epistle be more exact than "exhorting and testifying that this is God's true grace in which" he calls them to "stand." It is what every intelligent saint cannot fail to discern as distinguishing Peter's letter beyond James, Jude, John, or even Paul, though each wrote from the heart, with solemn sense of divine authority, and in abundant love to the saints, each with his own distinctive excellency as a good steward of God's various grace, and as of strength which God supplied. How earnestly Peter exhorted! How freely and pertinently he testified as from his Master, full of grace and truth, to the glad tidings of God's true grace! Yes, in his glowing words is no exaggeration. He adhered to what he bore witness at a great earlier crisis (Acts xv.). He believed, and would have them to believe, "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved as they," not merely they even as we: then a noble testimony in Jerusalem above all.

He believed in the same grace still. It is not man conceding or yielding, it is not fearing nor yet pleasing man. It is God's true grace, in which, he says, "Stand," as he did not doubt they were standing. Nor was it needless so to exhort as a last call. What one of our own poets says of his imagined angel, a saint should here and now surely be,

"Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind."

We owe it to God, and to our Lord Jesus ; but His grace can alone make us thus stand.

The subjoined salutation is strikingly instructive. Not from the Apocalyptic Babylon did Peter write, but from the great ruined city in the East, to which Jews strangely clung, when the natives migrated elsewhere. Many Jews still lived there as they did for hundreds of years after as before, and there had a famous school of Rabbinical lore, which issued in their most copious Talmud completed about 500, A.D. There, it appears, Kephas led about a sister wife, like the other apostles and the brethren of our Lord (1 Cor. ix. 5, 6) ; as scripture fails not to inform us, and thus gives the lie to the false and demoralising tradition which Romanism prefers to the plain and holy word of God. For this seems the real bearing of "the co-elect* [sister] in Babylon" who salutes those addressed, no less than does Mark his son.

The apostle, we see, was careful not to speak of "the church" as such in either of his Epistles : they are essentially individual in their character. It was an oversight, therefore, to interpolate "the church," even in italics. We have no ground to think there was an assembly there, and can readily conceive that the apostle (with his wife, and Mark caring in love for them both in advanced age) should yearn to impart the gospel to the benighted Jews,

* It is interesting and fair to note that the Sinaitic Uncial does read here *ἐκκλησία*, or "church." In this it stands alone among primary authorities : a thing almost impossible, if true ; but easily accountable, if spurious. Old versions in such a question count little or nothing, as probably but expressing an ellipse.

so dear to him in that distant quarter, far away from the fabulous Episcopate of which tradition dreamt in the West. How forced and unnatural to borrow from the future symbol of John in Rev. xvii. for an epistle so simple, fervent, and matter of fact, as this of Peter unquestionably is !

Assuredly, too, one likes to think of Mark in happy and devoted service, as none other than he whose early failure is recorded when he ventured in zeal beyond his then faith to accompany Barnabas and Saul on their first circuit among the Gentiles. If he then so soon grew weary or discouraged, he at a later day, when it was peculiarly sweet to the apostle of nations, became serviceable to him for ministry (2 Tim. iv. 11), and even before this had won back his confidence (Col. iv. 10). As his mother's house had been a house of prayer, when his spiritual father's life was in extreme danger, he is now the attendant on those so long dear to him, and shares their visit of love for the gospel's sake as well as the saints, where of old their forefathers had been sent in captivity. Any other Mark, like any other Silas, we might expect to be distinguished from each of those familiar to us in scripture ; whereas those we have already known appear in this new phase with natural propriety.

It was meet in this world of selfishness and sin for the apostle Paul to invite the saints in Rome, Corinth, and Thessalonica to salute one another with a holy kiss ; and not less so that Peter should bid the Christian Jews, scattered in lands devoted to dark paganism, salute one another with a

kiss of love. The affections are apt to grow cold, as the world's spirit prevails ; and Jews needed the intimation as well as Greeks and Romans.

And how precious is "peace" as the suited portion to us all that are in Christ ! How unseemly among such is difference and dispute, self-seeking and strife ! Were Christ the object as He is entitled to be, these things could not be. Peter had not forgotten His words, so welcome to their hearts on the resurrection day, "Peace to you ; and having said this He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord. He said therefore again to them, Peace to you : as the Father sent me forth, I also send you."

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

PREFACE.

It will be observed that this Exposition of Peter's Second Epistle, does not extend beyond the 7th verse of the concluding chapter, this being as far as was written by the Author when called away to his rest.

Whilst it would have been easy to have added some comments on the remaining verses of this Epistle from the Author's other writings, yet, as they would not be of the same detailed character as is here presented, it has been thought best to issue this little book as it now stands, with the earnest desire that the Lord may graciously bless it to the refreshing and edification of the reader, to whom its writer, though dead, yet speaks.

INTRODUCTION

THE authenticity and genuineness of the First Epistle needed not a word. It seems never to have been disputed from the first. Not so the Second. Eusebius P., who died about A.D. 340, tells us (H.E. iii. 25) that among those scriptures that were controverted, but recognised by most (the many), was this Epistle. Even he did not dare to class it (as the Epistles of James, Jude, and John's second and third, or the Revelation) with the spurious; but he does not count it like the other books of the N.T. accepted by all without question.

Yet on its face the writer declares himself with yet more carefulness than when he wrote before, not "Peter" only but "Symeon Peter," name and surname. So, at the Jerusalem conference on the Gentile question, James speaks of him (Acts xv. 14) as "Symeon" (the Aramaic form of "Simon"), though historically designated "Peter" just before (ver. 7). A forger would have strenuously avoided any such shade of difference, superficial though it be; as he never would have conceived still greater care to attest thus minutely the Peter who added this Second Epistle. For

he now was led with all holy energy and apostolic authority to denounce the false teachers that were to corrupt more and more the Christian profession, and the scoffers walking after their own lusts, wilfully blind to the day of the Lord, through unbelief and materialism.

The late Bp. Christ. Wordsworth, though loyally defending the true inspiration of this Epistle, seeks to palliate the hesitation raised (at least in the third and fourth centuries). He pleads that, as "Writings were forged in early times by heretics in the names of Apostles, especially in the name of St. Peter," it was therefore incumbent on Christian churches to be on their guard, and not to receive any book as written by an apostle and as dictated by the Holy Spirit, before they were convinced by irrefragable proofs that it was apostolic and inspired. "Little harm would arise from a temporary suspension of judgment. *If the Epistle was* what it professed to be, viz., a work of the Apostle St. Peter, then in due time it would not fail to be universally received as such. *But* if it was *not* what it claimed to be, then perhaps heresy might steal into the church under the venerable guise of an apostolic name, and the church might be convicted of reading a forgery as the word of God; and then the credibility and inspiration of those *other* books, viz., the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the thirteen

Epistles of St. Paul, which *had already been received* by the Church, would be impugned; they too might be exposed to suspicion; and thus the foundation of the faith would be in danger of being overthrown. It was therefore the *duty* of all churches to *take time* to consider, before they received any book as the writing of an Apostle. It was their *duty* to *doubt*."

The error here is serious enough; and Dr. W., a grave and sincere prelate (far above trickery), puts it in its naked deformity. "It was the *duty* of all churches" to *doubt*! How little did he mean to surrender the ground of faith! Ecclesiasticism led him thus astray. It is *never a duty*, even for the simplest Christian, to *doubt Scripture*, but only to believe; and if so, what about the duty for all churches, or even for any church, to doubt? Really it was suicidal, and an utter dishonour to God who inspired the Scriptures, and a shameless failure on the church's part. One of the haughtiest sins of Popery is to set up the claim of the church to decide what is scripture. Whether they vest this prerogative in the church, in the œcumenical council, or in the Pope, makes no radical difference. In every form the bringing in of any authority but God's is treason against His glory.

So far is man, whatever his position, privileges, powers or responsibilities, from having the duty of judging God's word, it is what judges man. For

man to doubt God's word, or to sit in judgment to pronounce it His or not, is an overthrow of all righteousness and of all grace, one might add of all decency. It is at the peril of any soul, and peculiarly inconsistent with the Christian, or the church, to question what He has written. The Lord has decided for the intrinsic authority of His own words, to say nothing of His unvarying reverence for all scripture as the full and final sentence of God's mind. "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings hath him that judgeth him: the word which I spoke, that shall judge him in the last day. For I spoke not from myself, but the Father that sent me, himself hath given me commandment what I should say and what I should speak; and I know that his commandment is life eternal. What therefore I speak, as the Father hath said to me, so I speak" (John xii. 48-50).

The Holy Spirit is no less precise in affirming the same principle in Heb. iv. 12, 13. "For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." What words could more directly refuse the monstrous assumption of the

church in pretending to accredit scripture, or the still more unseemly assertion of its duty to doubt?

There is no evidence that the question as to 2 Peter was raised in the first century. We hear of it much later in the fourth century when unbelief and unspirituality had long prevailed to the decay of faith and the prevalence of heterodoxy, to which the open and sanctioned worldliness that followed gave great impetus and wide currency. The death of Peter no more invalidated his Second Epistle, than Paul's death did his Second to Timothy. This is a mere imagination of circumstances to account for a much later and a wholly ungrounded hesitation about our Epistle. The supposition of delay at first, and the collection of evidence from various parts, before the Epistle was received on the church's verdict of its genuineness, are but an amiable dream.

The Second Epistle, like the First, eminently bears on daily life, but with less doctrine, as is natural, being avowedly written afterward to the same persons. Both are hortative; but the Second pronounces, as the First does not, a solemn warning on closing evils, with the severest denunciation of false teachers denying the Sovereign Master that bought them. These bring on themselves swift destruction, and mislead many into their dissolute doings, whereby the way of truth shall be blasphemed; as also by covetousness with feigned

words they make merchandise of the saints. Hence prominence is given to these appalling enormities under the garb, not only of professing Christians, but of accepted teachers. This, at a later date at least, struck superficial observers so strangely as to raise a question of the authorship. But they ought to have recognised the selfsame spirit in the early episode of the apostle's dealing (Acts viii. 18-24) with Simon of Samaria, the sorcerer of old. The fervour of love which characterised his evangelising kindled into a flame against the profanity of the baptised man, who thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Peter therefore pointed him out for the warning of others, yea, of himself too, as in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. The advance and spread in corruption now descried by the Spirit called for still more energetic terms of abhorrence; as the last chapter exposes the latter day mockery of infidels in a philosophic form.

After the suited salutation in chap. i. 1, 2, the apostle presents grace's foundation of all things for life and godliness in what was already given, even to becoming partakers, not of human nature ameliorated, but of a divine nature through God's precious and exceeding great promises, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But for this very reason there is need of diligence to make our calling and election sure (3-11). This

he shews them in view of his speedy departure, not by any hint of apostolic succession, but by leaving the truth with them, and recalling the wondrous sight vouchsafed to him and two other chosen witnesses of the power and coming of our Lord on the holy mount, even in the days of His flesh, and the Father's voice out of the excellent glory: the divine miniature of the kingdom, in confirmation of the prophetic word, with a hint of a blessedness and hope more surpassing still for their hearts (12-21). And he explains that no prophecy is of its own solution, but rather forms a whole by divine purpose and power converging on God's kingdom in Christ.

Then in chap. ii. is the apostle's indignant prediction of the ungodly issue, the germ of which was already at work, and its judgment sure and unswerving from God. It is thus the complement of the First Epistle. As the latter was occupied with the suffering of the righteous from a hostile world turned to their good; so the former tells of the doom that must fall on the corrupting false teachers who hypocritically made truth and righteousness a mockery. The judgment on angels that sinned, on Noah's ungodly despisers, on godless and unclean Sodom and Gomorrah, are set out as fore-runners of the punishment that awaits the still more guilty that now follow Balaam in his unrighteousness. Whatever their highflown words of van-

ity, they despised lordship, and were slaves of corruption.

Chap. iii. follows up God's righteous government of the world to the uttermost, in dissolving the heaven and earth that are now, and so, purging the world of all associations with ungodliness, to bring in new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwelleth. But the apostle is not content with withdrawing the veil from the destruction, not only of the corrupt, of the covetous and insubordinate, but of the sceptical who rest on the stability of things material, which also perish. The saints who believe in God's promise, and wait for these awe-inspiring displays of divine retribution to come, he would have to be found of Him in peace without spot and blameless.

Thus any unbiassed Christian apprehends clearly, even if he had not the inspired writer's word for it, that the two Epistles came in the power of the Holy Spirit from the same hand, mind, and heart: the one specially regarding God's present government of the righteous; the other as specially that of the unjust in the future. Only together do they complete the great theme, and this in the style of the great apostle of the circumcision wholly different from that of James, or John, or Paul, while Jude has his own distinctive character, as can readily be proved in its season. "Ye therefore, beloved, as knowing [things] beforehand,

take care lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness; but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him the glory both now and to eternity's day! Amen." The close is as directly practical as the beginning; so in measure, rightly applied, is all scripture, and every scripture, as surely profitable for man, as it is inspired of God. But through Peter it is peculiarly evident, and in his Second Epistle no less than in the First. Yet all is based on Christ's accomplished redemption, the possession of a new and divine nature to preserve from corruption, and a living hope through His resurrection Who is gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.

But the Catholic principle is false, that the church teaches; for it is taught by those given as teachers by the exalted Head. Nor is it the church that preaches, but evangelists equally given by Christ in glory. The Protestant is just as false, who asserts the right of every man to private judgment. This directly tends to rationalism, and defies man, as the Catholic does the church. The truth is that God has the right and the authority to send His gospel to every man; and woe be to every man that despises it. So God addresses His word in general to the christian and the church; and woe be to such as do not bow and bless Him

for it. Hence it is quite exceptional when those divine communications, however deep, are sent save to the faithful as a whole, either in this or that place, or quite unrestrictedly. There are three letters to two chief rulers, who had a special place as His servants in the word, and as apostolic envoys. Yet the richest unfoldings of grace and truth in the Epistles were not addressed to officials, but expressly to all the saints or to the church. Now is it not almost blasphemous to say that the saints or the church addressed had the duty of doubting? How a Christian could be beguiled so to think is the marvel. But human tradition and prevalent ecclesiastical habits account for many a mistake.

Take the N.T. facts. Did the church of the Thessalonians doubt the first of Paul's Epistles, unexampled as it was? Did they not accept without question his written testimony, as they had his oral a little before, not as men's word—but just as it truly is—God's word, which also works in the believer, certainly not in the doubter? It is the more pertinent, because the Second of these Epistles exposes the fraud of a letter pretending to have come from the apostle, which had imposed on some at least. Thenceforward his salutation with his own hand in every Epistle is the token to guard the saints; yet far from him, or even them, the pestilent and unbelieving thought that their church,

or any other church, was temporarily to suspend judgment,—no, not even when they, or some of them, had just been drawn into error by a deceiver.

And if the sign-manual of Paul sufficed, surely also that of Peter, or Symeon Peter! The name might be a possible question; and this it was not difficult to ascertain. Silvanus a prophet (Acts xv. 22) was the bearer. But this settled, there was nothing, when the Second came, but to receive as from God what His inspired servant conveyed to the same saints who had his First Epistle. Examining its contents for the church to accept it would have been a snare of the enemy. The inspired word was to judge their conscience; not they to judge it, but to have their hearts invigorated and souls cheered by His grace and truth through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Again, not only did the inspired writer preface his name and apostolic title in fuller fashion than when he wrote before, but he refers to personal facts, one of the weightiest import, the other of the most exclusive nature, early in the Second Epistle. He pathetically tells them of his knowledge that he was speedily to put off his tabernacle, as his motive for sending them a permanent testimony of what they needed for their continued remembrance. Then he introduces the most magnificent and unique scene ever vouchsafed on earth to saints, himself, and his two companions: the transfiguration

of the Son of man, acknowledged by the Father as His beloved Son, far above Moses or Elijah, with whom the apostle then foolishly placed Him, as if they could be on common ground. "*Hear Him;*" and as the voice out of the cloud came, Jesus was found alone. Therefore this Epistle must be either a base imposture, or the last words of love from that apostle.

Nor is there a part of the N.T. more pregnant with wise and holy counsels, suited to the wants of the saints, or more characteristic of him that wrote it, following up his former letter. For as his First set forth God's righteous government of His children, founded on His grace which called unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, so his Second adds that righteous government about to fall on the corrupt false teachers, such as bring in by the bye heresies of perdition (chap. ii.), as well as on the sceptics that rest on the world's stability to mock at the coming of the Lord (iii). The Second accordingly is needed to complete the First; just as that to Colossian saints from the apostle Paul completes what he wrote to Ephesians (the fulness of the Head, and the body His fulness). It is to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The two Epistles of Peter dwell alike on the all-importance of the gospel, so blessed already, yet on the one hand surrounded by a world of persecutors

as well as by immense dangers from evil men within and without. It is this development of evil which draws out the energetic sketch of the misleaders in all the second chapter, and of the sceptical enemies and their doom, down to the dissolution of all things, in chap. iii. Both led speculative persons, like the untaught and ill-established of whom he himself speaks in chap. iii. 16, to question that Peter wrote it. No doubt that solemn warning has a stamp of its own necessarily different, not only from the First Epistle, but from what precedes and follows it in the Second. But can any objection be shallower? Its nature demanded an unsparing denunciation entirely out of season elsewhere. But when he is occupied with the souls of the saints as in the First Epistle, his style in the Second is impressed and instinct with the same ardent, fervent, practical earnestness in love and godliness, peculiar in its manner to him beyond any other writer in the N.T. And how beautiful his allusion to "our beloved brother Paul also" and how marked the contrast with well-known patristic impostures which set the one against the other!

The case of the Epistle to the Hebrews illustrates that of 2 Peter, though the circumstances differed widely. For there were reasons of gracious consideration why the former had no name prefixed, whilst it contains marks at the end only

appropriate to the sole apostle who could have written a letter so comprehensive, profound, and wise in a style that rises in grandeur to the height of his argument, as he employed when required to the Romans (viii.), the Corinthians, and the Colossians. Here it is sustained from first to last; but he is teaching the latent value of the O. T. to saints familiar with its letter, rather than as an apostle and prophet communicating the mysteries of the N. T. of which he was the most honoured steward. Paul was here inspired outside his allotted province to write the final call to the believing Jews, that by it they might realize, as they had not hitherto, their proper Christian place of entering within the rent vail, and of going forth to the rejected Messiah without the camp, and bearing His reproach. The "new" covenant, the spirit of which is embodied in the gospel had made the first old; and what grows old and ages is near vanishing away. Now God claimed this after long patience before providential judgment fell on the city and its sanctuary. Nor should we fail to admire the divine care in sending God's last message to the converted Jews by Paul as He sent His first apostolic call to the Gentiles by Peter.

Yet leading men in the Roman church stood in doubt of Paul's writing to the Hebrews. So Eusebius P. tells us (H. E. iii 3; vi. 14, 20) not only of Caius and Hippolytus (commonly called

bishop of Portus R.), but of others till his own day. Baronius labours in vain to get rid of this shame : but Photion confirms it in his Bibl. *μὴ. ρκα* Ed. Hoesch. 1653. So does Jerome, more than six times in his letters, expositions, etc., to the general effect that "the Latin custom did not receive it among the canonical Scriptures." Nevertheless the Roman church as such never went so far as to reject the Epistle ; and from the middle of the fourth it was as fully owned there as elsewhere. The Novatian trouble had tended to its prejudice, because such passages as the early verses of Hebrews vi. had been abused to justify their extravagance as of others before that. Nor was one known in those days of faith to broach the idea that it was the church's duty to sit in judgment on an inspired communication. The danger lay rather in the second century, at any rate of publicly reading what was not inspired, as we know was done.

Had people but known the Scriptures in faith and power, no such question had ever risen about the Epistle to the Hebrews. God had taken care to cut off all excuse for unbelief by the unusual verification of 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16. For as it is certain that Peter wrote his two Epistles to Christian Jews (1 Pet. i. 1., 2 Pet. iii. 1), so is it that he declares Paul to have written to such also. What can this be other than that to the Hebrews ? Therein are the same topics as spoken of here : the

Lord's longsuffering and salvation, far more than in the letters to the Galatians, the Ephesians, or the Colossians ; His coming for the blessed glory of His own, and the judgment of all that refuse His voice and are adversaries. Nor is it to be passed by, that, as Peter speaks of some things therein, as in all his Epistles, hard to be understood, which the untaught and ill-established wrest to their own destruction, so Paul in that Epistle (vi. 11-14) tells the Hebrews that he had much to say and hard to be interpreted, because of their dulness in hearing.

So in the next chapter (vi. 1) he exhorts them, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ (certainly not the principles of His doctrine, but what was known before redemption and the descent of the Holy Spirit), to go on to perfection *i.e.* full growth by the truth. Luther and Calvin were as unappreciative of this as Cajetan and Erasmus, and indulged in dreams from which some few have not recovered down to Dean Alford and others in our own day, putting forward Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, Silas, Clemens Rom. and even Tertullian ! With equal show they might have contended for sixty more, besides those six ; for there is no sound reason for any one of them. What more frivolous than the pleas for attaching any one of these names to this noble Epistle ? What can excuse the slight of the Holy Spirit's attributing it to Paul, as we have just seen ?

It is interesting to note too that the letter from the Roman church, which passes under the name of Clemens R., refers repeatedly to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and proves that no doubt of its inspiration existed at that early date (probably before the first century had run out). Its chap. xxxvi. not only makes much use of Heb. i. but this under the solemn formula *γέγραπται*, It is written. The doubts of individuals were long after.

Calvin, whose repute as an expositor is high enough, passes this over, as indeed his comment is meagre and vague. Yet he did not doubt that Peter wrote the First to the converted Jews in Asia Minor, but (painful to say) he was guilty of the same hesitation as Origen and others as to the Second. He holds cheap the anonymous doubter of whom Eusebius speaks, but is influenced somewhat more by Jerome's mention of such as reasoned on the difference in style. "I confess however that there is the manifest distinctness that indicates (or, proves) different writers." . . "At the same time by consent of all it has so far nothing unworthy of Peter as to express everywhere the force and grace of an apostolic spirit. But if it is received as canonical, Peter ought to be confessed its author, since not only has it his name inscribed, but he also attests that he had lived with Christ. Whereas to personate another would be a fiction unworthy of Christ. So then I

determine that if the Epistle be counted worthy of credit, it must have proceeded from Peter; not that he himself wrote it, but that some one of the disciples by his command composed the things which the necessity of the time required." Who can fail to see a vacillation unworthy of one who could be firm in matters of less moment than what touches the honour of the written word? (J. Calv. Opp. vii. Arg. in loco.) Real ground for a doubt among ancients or moderns there was none.

It is remarkable that the only other Epistle to the Hebrews once suffered without any just cause from a similar doubt of unbelief. There may be occasion to treat of this fully where it is more directly called for. Here a few words will suffice in confirmation of what has been said against any question of Peter's Second Epistle. And it is a pleasure to say that Dr. Wordsworth's prefatory defence of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews is as excellent, as any palliation of the hesitation as to 2 Peter is deplorable.

The church in Rome, or some of its notable leaders, it was that indulged in this unwarrantable prejudice. So Jerome says in more than six places that "the Latin custom did not receive it among the canonical Scriptures." Baronius in his history combats the allegation of Eusebius and tries to excuse Jerome as misled by him. Yet the Novatian dispute, with its mistaken abuse of Heb. vi., did

dispose those in Rome against the Epistle, till that bias gave way before the bright light of truth chased away all clouds and mists.

But the remarkable fact is that at the beginning no doubt was entertained. Nor can evidence be asked earlier or weightier than its frequent citation as the written word in the letter from the church in Rome, which goes under the name of Clemens R. to the Church in Corinth. So many are they that Moses Stuart, the American Prof., even divides these quotations into four classes. And Justin M., following not long after in the first half of the second century, makes clear references to it, both in his Apology, and in his Dialogue with the Jew Trypho. But we need not here say more on these external evidences. There is not a little to show that, notwithstanding its peculiarities, no doubt was expressed till long after it had been received as an undoubtedly inspired document. Peter himself affords a divinely given proof that Paul wrote to Hebrew saints, and that this is the blessed Epistle in question. That to the Christian should be the end of controversy. "But if any one is ignorant, let him be ignorant."

These two Epistles are eminently characteristic of the two apostles, whatever the peculiar features in each owing to the urgent need which called for them. Nor is there any real ground to infer that any one but Paul and Peter had to do with those

peculiarities. Both display the unmistakable power of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Both wrote with the moral power and doctrinal precision and divine majesty and love to the saints proper to the grace of God, with authority and not as the scribes.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER.



CHAPTER I.

THE first notable trait in this Epistle is that the writer not only repeats the new name Christ gave him (Matt. xvi. 18) with his apostolic office, but adds his old one, object of divine mercy, with the confession of absolute subjection to his Master conveyed in "bondman." Paul loved so to call himself, and Jude, and John. The Lord Jesus had drawn it out of that shame and degradation which only it could have in the estimate of the first man, and had invested it in His own person, when the Word became flesh, with all that is right and lovely and devoted in the sight of God, and of all moment to the faith of those who have communion with Him.

For who such a bondman as He that, being originally in the form of God, counted it not an object for grasping to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, becoming in likeness of men; and being found in figure as man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even to death, yea death of the cross? Nor did it stop there; for He gave before His departure the beautiful pledge of carrying on

in heaven the lowliest service of washing the feet of His own, as the Advocate with the Father. Nor did this satisfy His love; for He also intimated that, when those bondmen of His, whom at His coming He shall find watching with girded loins and burning lamps, are thenceforward blessed on high at His coming again, He will gird Himself, and make them recline at table and come forth and serve them. Nay, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to the God and Father, all things having been subjected to Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all. As He will never cease to be man, He will abide throughout eternity bondman, without derogating from that deity which He ever shares as Son equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is Christ who alone gives us the full truth, and so of bondman as of all else. It is in an evil world, the place of active and suffering divine love which He loved so well that He will never give it up.

The same privilege and duty of love the Lord laid on His disciples, as we read repeatedly in all the Gospels, and in varying form. Let it suffice to quote what Luke (xxii.) gives us at the last Supper; for he it is who brings together the deepest moral contrasts, if to man's shame, for the believer's profit, and above all to Christ's glory. "And they began to question together among themselves which of them it could be who was to do this [*i.e.*, give Him up]. And there arose also a strife among them, which of them should be

accounted to be greatest. And he said to them, The kings of the nations have rule over them, and those that exercise authority over them are called benefactors. Ye however [shall be] not thus; but let the greater among you be as the younger, and the leader as he that serveth. For which [is] greater, he that reclineth at table, or he that serveth? [Is] not he that reclineth? But *I* am in the midst of you as he that serveth?"

The apostles by grace were enabled to make His bondman character their own. O what a contrast with His servants too soon, and ever since, especially with such as claimed to have the succession, though by no means confined to them! It is no doubt a hollow name of pride where taken up in word only; but what is comparable with it when in power? To be somebody is the desire of fallen man, the world's spirit; to give up all in love and obedience is Christ's, who alone really had all things. It is our pattern now. Greatness according to Him is to be a true servant; and to be chief is to be a slave, as He became, who not only served every need, but gave His life a ransom for many, His peculiar glory.

Peter therefore in his later Epistle, while he does not hide his Jewish name of nature with all its failure, puts forward before his apostolic title that lovely name of "bondman"; which more than ever shone in his eyes, so needful and good for the saints to ponder, delight in, and appropriate.

"Simon Peter, bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ to them that obtained like precious faith with

us in virtue of [the] righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ " (ver. 1).

"Bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ, he writes to the same saints as before (iii. 1). But the terms now employed strikingly differ, yet have they an equally appropriate application to those of the Jewish dispersion in Asia Minor, who believed in Christ. In his First Epistle he was careful to describe them as sojourners elect according to foreknowledge of God the Father by the Spirit's sanctification unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ. This was a pointed and elaborate contrast with their previous position as of a chosen nation to Jehovah, severed from others by the fleshly ordinance of circumcision, and held to obedience of the law under the penal sanction of the blood of victims (Exod. xxiv.) which kept death before them if guilty of transgression. Here in the Second Epistle they are said to have obtained like precious faith with the apostle and his brethren and theirs, in virtue of their God and Saviour Jesus Christ's righteousness.

"Like precious faith" raises no question of measure of faith in those who believe, but asserts that what is believed is equally precious for the simplest Christian as for an apostle, in its source, agent, object, and result. It is that full revelation of God in Christ, and not merely from God as had been from the first.

There is however a remarkable expression that follows, differing wholly from "the righteousness of God " as used by our Lord in Matt. v. 33, as

this does from its use by the apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere. Yet one is as true as the others, and all are in harmony as alike from God. It is therefore of interest and moment to distinguish them, whilst they all three agree in meaning God's moral consistency with Himself in varying aspects. In the First Gospel the disciple is enjoined to seek first, not the supply of our natural wants for which we may count on our Father's care, but "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This was then revealed in Christ, God's power and authority supreme, and in all goodness but consistency with Himself. To this the new nature responds in subjection and love; and this the disciples were to seek first, assured that He would see to all their need. But there is not a word about redemption, or saving lost sinners, but saints answering to what the Christ brought out to faith in Himself and His teaching.

Again, in Rom. i. iii. viii. x. 4, we have the gospel of God based on the work of Christ, and sent out to all mankind on the very ground that they are lost. It is therefore a righteousness that justifies the sinner through the faith of Christ; God's righteousness, not man's, grounded on His redemption, so that he, believing His witness to Christ, is justified by Christ's death and resurrection. God can afford through the Saviour to bless him, whatever may have been his ungodliness, according to His cleansing blood and risen power.

But in our text it is not the believer obtaining God's righteousness through faith, but obtaining

faith by the righteousness of their God and Saviour Jesus Christ*: a quite different truth, and peculiar to the remnant which God ever has in Israel. Branches may be and are broken off, but some, not all. There are ever the elect that obtain, while the rest are blinded; so it is at the present time, and so it was of old. They only of all men have this privilege, a remnant according to the election of grace. Of no other nation can it be predicated. As theirs were the fathers, so still better the promises. Accordingly the apostle here attributes their receiving like precious faith to the righteousness of Jehovah-Messiah, Jesus their Saviour and God. He at least was faithful to the promise, and in virtue of it they were given to believe, no less than the apostle and the saints in Jerusalem. So Peter had preached on the day of Pentecost; "for to you is the promise and to your children, and to all afar off, as many as Jehovah our God may call." Them too He called, and they by grace believed; but it was in His righteousness—"our God and Saviour Jesus Christ's."

"Grace to you and peace be multiplied in knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (ver. 2).

* It may interest the reader that the most learned and able theologian among the Congregationalist Puritans did not understand "the righteousness of God" here to refer to Christ's obedience of the law, as so many moderns have argued. Here are his words:—"In 2 Pet. i. 1, the saints are said to obtain 'precious faith, through the righteousness of God.' It is a righteous thing with God to give faith to them for whom Christ died, because thereby they have a right unto it. Faith, being amongst the most precious fruits of the death of Christ, by virtue thereof becometh their due for whom he died" (Works of John Owen, D.D. Goold's ed., X. 468). It is not that he understood its true bearing, but he was too intelligent and logical, not to say conscientious, to force the text as his followers and others commonly do. It did not occur to him to connect it with the believing remnant of the Jews and their peculiar hold on the promise; from which indeed his high Calvinism tended to preclude him.

The text of the salutation in ver. 2 differs from that in the First Epistle only by the addition of the words, "in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"; which reappear in its course substantially elsewhere. They are characteristic of the Second Epistle, and of great weight and worth where living faith accompanied that full knowledge.

Yet the solemn fact is shown in chap. ii. 20-22 that such a full knowledge might be only in the flesh, and end in a last state worse than a first, or total ruin. So we read in Rom. i. 18 of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness: very zealous for an orthodox creed, but quite unrenewed, and hence holding fast the truth with unrighteousness. The faith, Christianity, is so rich in knowledge of the utmost interest, that the natural mind, where the conscience is not before God, nor the soul purified by obedience of the truth, may deceive itself and readily acquire much, which only puffs up, instead of building up. It is never in this case receiving the love of the truth, that they may be saved; but their mastering the truth, as they would any department of art or science, rather than being searched by truth, and subject to it, unto salvation. In a word there is no repentance Godward, but intellectualism. When Christ is the object and the life, the truth is known and loved, while it also frees from bondage of every sort to make one all the more bondman of Jesus. Thus it was that the apostle desired "grace and peace multiplied in full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

It was of great moment for the Christian Jews to learn (and indeed it is imperfectly understood in Christendom) that, before our Lord came, the knowledge of God though true was vague, comparatively speaking. Yet all the O.T. saints looked away from themselves to Him in the sure hope of the woman's Seed to destroy the enemy. They knew Him as a faithful Creator and Preserver and Saviour, and by sacrifice too. His ways with Adam and Abel, with Enoch and Noah, gave ever-increasing light; though but partial, it was blessed. To Abraham more was vouchsafed, and the name of the Almighty, as a present help in the midst of the race ripening for judgment, was no small thing. Much more became known when through Moses He gave the name of Jehovah the Eternal, as the grand national watchword to Israel His people, the security of their final and everlasting blessing on earth under His government, whatever their changes meanwhile.

But the Lord Jesus has given us the knowledge of God His Father as He knew Him, generally in the days of His flesh, fully in His resurrection and ascension, that we might know Him as His Father and our Father, His God and our God, in the new creation consequent on His atoning death. What was all before in many modes and many measures, compared with this fulness? As the "beloved" disciple says in his First Epistle (v. 20), "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son

Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Is anything so wonderful, gracious, and practical, as the truth now made fully known? It could not be till He came who knew it Himself perfectly, and died and rose and ascended that we might be brought, as far as is possible, into His relationships, and have the Holy Spirit given to know it this day (John xiv. 20). Such is Christian knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As the Father is revealed, so the Son reveals, and this only in its living reality by the Holy Spirit. It is the full revelation of God, confessed in our baptism, and needed, as it ought to be enjoyed, every step of the way till our pilgrimage closes in His coming to take us on high that where He is, we also may be.

"As his divine power hath granted to us all things that [are] for life and godliness through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and excellence" (ver. 3).

Such is the apostle's testimony to the intervention of God's grace in salvation. Who knew better than the chief workman on the great Feast of Pentecost when three thousand souls were added in one day? Who could testify as he of the power of God that wrought outside to save multitudes, and against evil within judicially, and assuredly not less in the devotedness with one heart and soul to Christ in love, which rose above all selfishness? Who could speak more nearly of the miraculous energy vouchsafed in those early days when, notwithstanding the awe that reigned, the sick were

even carried into the streets and laid on beds and pallets, that, as he passed by, at least his shadow might overshadow some one of them; and this not of Jerusalem alone, but from the cities round about, the sick and the possessed, who were healed everyone?

Here however he speaks only of the divine power in its ordinary but supernatural operation. It is God's prerogative to quicken souls that were dead in their offences and sins; the Father in communion with the Son gives life. He calls out of darkness into His wonderful light—yea, makes us, once darkness, now light in the Lord; once hateful and hating, to love because *He* first loved us. Think, too, of the relationships He confers on the Christians, His children and sons, also, as the First Epistle said, a holy priesthood, and a royal one. Others we might recount; for, being Christ's, all things are ours, with the Holy Spirit ever indwelling since we rested by faith on Christ's redemption, that there might be power as well as capacity. How truly His divine power hath granted all things that are for life and godliness!

Jews, we know, ask signs, Greeks seek wisdom. Never were such signs of power and of goodness as in Christ; yet the Jews rejected Him. Never was such wisdom of God as in Jesus; yet the Greeks, the world, disdained Him. Had the rulers of this world known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but none knew. They were blind in unbelief. Alas a new thing was brought in; not yet the expected kingdom restored to Israel in power and glory, but "some better

thing " in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord," who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him. Hence, carrying out what was surprising even to the Twelve, His divine power has granted to us even now all the things that pertain unto life and godliness. For the Christian is called to the life of faith in all reverence and godly fear, as having nothing yet possessing all things, sharing now Christ's reproach, while looking at the things unseen and eternal.

Such is Christian faith, which the apostle set before these saints, once Jews, in his First Epistle; and confirms with point and solemnity in the Second against all corruption and scoffing. Therefore from the start he would establish their confidence in the provision of grace for all wants, weakness, and dangers. Even the Jews were counted Atheists, because they had no images. How much more open to the charge were Christians without visible temple, altar, or sacrifice! Yet they, and they alone, knew the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent. They alone had, now that Christ was on high, the other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father sent in the name of Jesus to be with them for ever, and to be in them, consequent on Christ's death and their acceptance thereby.

This was but part of the "all things" His divine power has given us for life and godliness. For we have now also an entirely new revelation,

fully conforming to the O.T. which they had from of old, but conveying what was now suited to God, no longer hidden in the holiest whence His people were strictly debarred, but fully manifested in Jesus, His Son yet Man, perfect God and perfect man in one person. This involved a total change for all who now believe. We have redemption through His blood, and we await His coming for redemption of the body as well as of the inheritance. We are baptised in the power of the Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, all fleshly distinctions therein gone which were strictly maintained in the O. T. We have a great High Priest gone through the heavens as He is, Jesus the Son of God, to sympathise and intercede; and if any one have sinned, we have with the Father Him as Advocate, the Righteous One that is the propitiation for our sins. And we have a hope no less precious and high, that He is coming for us, we know not how soon, to receive us to Himself for the Father's house, as well as to display us in the same glory with Himself before the world when we shall reign with Him. Hence we need, and we have, a new and special revelation in what is called the N.T., to guide us, not of the world as Christ is not, in His path till He comes. The Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation furnish this perfectly by the Spirit as our guide into all the truth.

We see how carefully the apostle guards the truth from mere speculation or sentiment. Knowledge that puffs up is as far as possible from his thought, save in those who had nothing else along

with their dissolute or unrighteous ways. There may be a knowledge of God and of Jesus which never rises above the human mind, leads into no communion with God, has not even moral roots in the conscience and heart, and is ever liable to heterodoxy, because it is only natural. But the knowledge which he commends to the saints is what his fellow-apostle John treats as life eternal, and he himself as the means of life and godliness; for our apostle is ever intent on practical result. For this indeed divine power cannot but be needed, as the saints are here cheered by the assurance of it.

Its working is strikingly expressed, "through the knowledge of him that called us by his own * glory and excellence." Man is fallen, and thus is in a condition wholly different from his first estate. Then his duty was to obey, in thanksgiving to God for all the goodness that surrounded him. But with his disobedience came ruin not only for himself but for the creation of which he was head. Departing from God, he was an exile from paradise, a sinful dying man; and so the race in and by him. All deliverance hung on Another, the woman's Seed, who crushed in heel should crush the serpent's head; a Man, but necessarily more than man thus to deliver by the utter defeat

* The Vatican supports most copies in reading "through glory and excellence," as in the Text. Rec. But N A C P and other good witnesses warrant what is here given, and followed by the better critics save Westcott and Hort. It is peculiar to our apostle to predicate *ἀρετή* of God, whether plural as in 1 Pet. ii. 9, or singular as here in the Second Epistle. Virtue or moral courage suits the word, where man is meant. God's excellence works virtue in the saint.

of Satan. From that day forward faith clung to the Coming One, later called Son of God, and Son of man, Messiah, in Psalms and Prophets. But only the N.T. brings out the truth with all simplicity, clearness, and depth; and not His personal glory alone, but His reconciling work shining out in divine light.

This salvation is by God's call; and one quits self, man, the world, sins and all, for the object of faith He sets before us. Hence God calls us by His own glory and excellence. It is in Christ, but it is His own glory and excellence, not ours. Instead of staying where we are, which had been quite right if sin and ruin had not come in, we turn to One in heavenly glory who here suffered for our sins, that we should be not only forgiven but with Him there; and even here and now, while we are weak indeed, to enjoy that excellence which goes out of Him to preserve and guard us in the present scene of evil. We leave all by faith for Him. Our calling is the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii. 14); and there will the prize be. But there is He, dead and risen now; and to Him the sinner looks to be saved, for His is the power that keeps from the paths of the destroyer. He that rests where he is rests in self and sin, blinded by the enemy. The voice of Christ awakes him to his lost condition; and he, obeying the word, repenting toward God, and believing on the Lord Jesus, is called by God's own glory and excellence. The Saviour is there, and associates him who believes with Himself above

in hope, thus separating him from the evil in him and around him.

It may help souls if we illustrate the same by the words of the apostle Paul in Rom. iii. 23; especially as their sound is as familiar as the sense is not. "For all sinned, and do come short of the glory of God." The first clause is plain; but what of the second? By sin man lost his place on earth as well as his life as it was. It became a question of meeting the glory of God, or of being cast into hell. And this is only met by the Saviour and His work on the cross to fit the sinner by faith in Him for heavenly glory. Otherwise he is content with himself, neglects so great salvation, and refuses the Saviour who will judge him at the last day. He verily comes short of the glory of God; whereas the believer rejoices in hope of it. Without the blood of Jesus we could not stand by faith before the glory of God; but, knowing that His blood cleanses from all sin, we are entitled there to stand in spirit even now, and thus do not come short of it. We are called by His own glory and excellence.

Justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we repent toward God, we judge ourselves, and (instead of resting here on ourselves) we go forward in faith to Him who is at God's right hand, thereby entitled to boast, no longer in self, or man, or the world, but in hope of the glory of God. Meanwhile we are guarded in (or, by) His power through faith for the salvation even of our bodies in that day. But it is by

His own (not our) excellence and glory that He called us, instead of licence for ease, worldly honour, or natural enjoyment. Hence says the apostle Paul as the right experience of a Christian, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, that which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith," etc. "Not that I already attained, nor am already perfected, but I pursue, if also I may apprehend, seeing that also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 8-12). Instead of abiding as unfallen man ought in his first estate, there is but one thing, forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things before, to pursue toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The apostle proceeds to explain through what God has granted now, not the manifested kingdom of the Messiah (for this is postponed to the day of His appearing in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory), but the greatest promises, as he calls them and precious, whilst we await Him, walking by faith, and not by sight. For what are those of earthly glory and power for Israel on earth in comparison? Ours are association with Christ in heaven. In short another and higher order of blessing now goes on. It is what we call Christianity.

"Through which he hath granted to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these

ye may become partakers of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world in (or, by) lust " (2 Pet. i. 4).

These words are the weighty expression of truth peculiarly appropriate to and needed by the persons addressed, but of permanent value for all saints since then to our day. "Which" refers to God's own glory and excellence, whereon we have dwelt the more because the force is quite lost in the common Greek text, and the current translation. No less a standard suited His call. He would have the called to estimate the total difference of that object which was familiar to them as Jews under law. To live long on the earth and be blessed in basket and store presented an incomparably lower prospect; and a hopeless ground, if one applied it spiritually to such sinful creatures as they were in God's sight, a ministry indeed of death and condemnation. The gospel proclaims grace reigning through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord; it is a ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness, even of God's righteousness which we become in Christ. Therefore are we always confident, even in view of death and the judgment-seat of Christ, because God holds us for the very triumph we know in Christ, and has also given us already the earnest of the Spirit till we too are glorified. Even the new covenant for Israel under the Messiah's reign falls quite short of our heavenly associations with Christ already.

Hence we can understand the bounteous provision of His word that we may enter intelligently

into what He has communicated to us in the carrying out of His gracious purpose. Through His own glory and excellence He has granted us the greatest promises, far more elevated than any given to His earthly people Israel. Take as a little example what the apostle himself had said in the early verses of his First Epistle, and of its first chapter. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His much mercy, begot us again to a living hope through Jesus Christ's resurrection from among the dead, unto an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in [the] heavens for you who are kept (or, guarded) in (or, by) God's power through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in [the] last time." He does not, in the verse we are considering, repeat what these precious promises are, now proposed to the precious faith of the Christian. But this one sample may suffice to show their general character, in contradistinction from the earthly hopes, which once sufficed to fill them with satisfaction and pride in the highest degree, and so greatly contributed to their unbelief in the Messiah.

The Christian promises do not at all lend themselves to human feeling or worldly ambition. We can easily understand how the Jew might carnally delight in looking on to the day when, as Isaiah predicted, kings shall be Zion's nursing-fathers and Gentile princesses her nursing-mothers. Then they shall bow down to her with the face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet. Then

the sons of the strangers shall build up her walls, and their kings serve Zion, and her gates remain open continually day and night, to bring in to her the wealth of the nations, and their kings in triumphal train. For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve Zion shall perish; and those nations shall certainly be laid waste. It would be easy to accumulate, as any Christian can verify from the prophets generally, no less glowing visions of earthly glory assured to converted and restored Israel, when the day of Jehovah dawns. But here too a single inspired voice is surely enough.

Flesh in its unbelief and vanity among professing Christians may abuse every word of God. But the exceeding great and precious promises held out to the Christian do not in themselves afford any real handle to carnality. They presume the Lord's coming, and our body of humiliation transformed in order to be conformed to the body of His glory. In that day assuredly there can be no perversion for the Christian in heaven, nor will there be for Israel on the earth, all righteous under Messiah and the new covenant. It is now, in an evil world ruled by Satan, and with flesh still in us that we are ever exposed to danger. But those promises has God granted to us, says the apostle, "that we may become partakers of a divine nature." For it is in the exercise of His own will that the Father of lights begot us by the word of truth.

It was not a mere operation, however excellent and powerful, on the mind. This of course there was. Conscience was penetrated and over-

whelmed with a just sense of our sins and evil state; the heart was exercised truly before God by His manifested love in Christ and His work. But, besides, a new nature was imparted, and this no less than supernatural in character. We were born of God, not only sons by adoption, but given the title and reality of His children (John i. 12, 13). Throughout the Fourth Gospel the divine design was to declare life eternal in the Son of God, to manifest its character in Himself and His ways and words, but also to announce that this life He gives, all the more distinctly because He was the rejected of the Jews and man—the world in short. From chap. iii. to xx. this is written with more than sunbeam brightness; and if now denied by those who once rejoiced in that light, it can only be through the darkening power of Satan.

O.T. saints had life in the Son; they were God's children: without it they never could have walked in faith and fidelity as they did, nor share in the resurrection at His coming, nor reign with Him. But it was only revealed as a known, conscious, and present reality in John's Gospel. Its future privilege for converted Israel and the Gentile sheep (Ps. cxxxiii. 3, Dan. xii. 2, Matt. xxv. 46) is plain; but then, and even before, we shall have it, if deceased, in a resurrection for the body, as now we have it in our souls as a revealed and existing certainty. To doubt, darken, or deny this fundamental truth of Christianity is of the evil one; it is connected with false doctrine as to Christ's person, and more or less the loss of almost all the

truth characteristic of the Christian and the church.

Nor does it depend only on the phrase life eternal, or on the Gospel and First Epistle of John—the revelation of that blessed phrase which some would pare down to extinction. The apostle Paul intimates the same gift of grace substantially in other forms of speech suited to the scope given for his teaching. Let us look at the Epistle to the Romans only, though others are just as plain and abundant. He tells us of life in the future (Rom. v. 17, 21), but of “newness of life” too in which we should walk now (chap. vi. 4); he bids us reckon ourselves alive to God in Christ Jesus whilst here, and yield ourselves to God as alive from among the dead already (11, 13). In chap. vii. 4 he says to those knowing the law that they were made dead to the law through the body of Christ to their being Another’s that was raised from among the dead, in order that they might bear fruit to God—an impossibility without life in Christ, serving too in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter. It would be mere letter in the way of exposition to deny that such a life is eternal, though the term is not employed. Again in chap. viii. 2, what else was life in Christ Jesus?

No doubt in Christendom, and in its most evangelical circles there is the utmost feebleness as to a real spiritual life communicated now to the believer. Hence there is a dangerous tendency either to the amelioration of the old man, or to a miserable blank, as if we had but the flesh, and the Spirit of

God only to guide and reprove according to need. It is a sad loss to overlook Christ in us, Christ as truly the life of the saint as the fallen Adamic life is shared by the race.

This is, according to Peter's line of things, implied in "a divine nature" of which, he tells the saints, they had become partakers through the divine promises God had granted them, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust," the spring of the evil. He does not speak of life eternal as John was given to do, nor of death and resurrection with Christ as Paul; but he presents the moral result, inseparable from the truth as each of them put it, and as important for the believer to apprehend and enjoy. Therefore he speaks of the same substantial privilege as partakers, or possessors in common, of a divine nature, with the moral blessing annexed of "having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." The one description looked more at the divine character into which the believer entered to form his practice day by day; the other, the negative side of the evil and danger from which grace had given the saints escape through faith: both eminently falling within the range of the truth on which the apostle loved to dwell. Of its source in Christ the Mediator, John delighted to testify; as Paul, on the association with Him to which His work entitles the believer in deliverance not merely from sins but from sin, on the eternal counsels of God for heavenly glory with Christ, and on His present power by the Spirit that should

work in the inner man above all that we ask or think.

We have seen how carefully from the first the apostle was led to point out the distinctive character of Christianity in dealing with souls. It was not now the law, as they had known, demanding consistency with obligations to the God of Israel from a people in the flesh already formed and owned, as well as directed by a divinely appointed priesthood to maintain them according to the legal covenant for the trial if thus they could stand in His sight. The result was not only idolatry but the rejection of their own Messiah, the Righteous One, and, as He told them, in the consummation of the age the reception of the antichrist (John v. 43), the man of sin, and the destruction of that generation with him. The gospel is founded on the wholly different principle of sovereign grace; another character of things follows with results in manifest contrast. It addresses Jew and Gentile as alike guilty and lost. It calls them by faith in Christ to the God that reconciled us to Himself by the sinless One whom He made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Therefore is the ministry of reconciliation to win sinful souls through the saving grace of God; and the ministry of the church to nourish and guide the saints into and by all the truth, Christ being the great Priest, Advocate, and Head, etc., and the saved made kings and priests now in title and enjoyment, manifestly so in the day of glory.

Hence the stress here laid on their having

received like precious faith (ver. 2), and (vers. 3, 4) on the same knowledge of Him that called by His own glory and excellence, through which He hath granted to us the greatest and precious promises, far beyond those to Israel, that through these they might become partakers of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world through lust. For Peter ever insists on plain moral realities. For these no ordinances or institutions avail. In Christianity there is and must be the direct communication of God's grace and truth in Christ to the soul, and the consequent knowledge of God, with approach to Him in the confidence of His love and of our own nearness to Him in known favour, all sins being forgiven. For it is indeed no energy or desert on our part, but His divine power that has granted us all the things that pertain to life and godliness. Faith is the appropriating means.

Yet is much more needed on our part, which the apostle proceeds to enforce. A divine nature requires all care and diligence that it may grow; and as its spring and fulness are in Christ, and it is communicated and revealed to us by the word through the Spirit's agency, so is it formed in all that is suited to it by its requisite food and exercise, aims, and objects.

"But for this very thing also, bringing in besides all diligence, in your faith supply virtue, and in virtue knowledge, and in knowledge temperance, and in temperance endurance, and in endurance godliness, and in godliness brotherly affection, and in brotherly affection love" (vers. 5-7).

It is evident that the apostle is here enforcing experimental reality in the saints. But the Auth. Version hardly gives the force adequately. It is not "And besides this," but an energetic call for what is due to the grace of God in communicating the signal blessing of being sharers in a divine nature through faith in His very great and precious promises. Even a fleshly mind might and does deduce from the power and certainty of divine grace that there is room for earnest and practical purpose of heart on the part of the believer. But scripture enlarges the argument, warns against sloth and easy-going, and summons to assiduous diligence on all sides. For this very reason also are they, along with what they had already, to apply diligence in every way.

Thus it may be seen that salvation, as Peter was given to view it, is not regarded (as in Eph. ii. 8, 2 Tim. i. 9, and Titus iii. 5) as complete in Christ, but rather a process going on to the end of the journey through the desert (as also in the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Philippians, Hebrews, etc.). They are distinct aspects of the truth, and one as true though not so elevated as the other, but both highly important to hold fast and discriminate. For it is our privilege as fullgrown, or in that sense "perfect," Christians to enjoy the unclouded certainty and comfort of a salvation so complete, that we are not only quickened together with Christ, but risen together, and seated down together in the heavenlies in Him. For this we must turn to the later Epistles of the apostle Paul.

Yet none the less are we, as full grown also, to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure, with the prize in view, and at the goal of His coming as Saviour to conform our body of humiliation unto His body of glory (Phil. ii. iii.).

We are already by grace partakers of a divine nature; but we are still in a body not yet redeemed, and passing through a world of corruption through lust. And we that are in the tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not as once when in bondage, but because we are only freed in the spirit and have still to await sonship in full, the redemption of our body (2 Cor. v., Rom. viii.). Hence we need meanwhile to bring to bear all diligence in presence of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Nor is it only a question of our weakness and exposure, if unwatchful to prayer or in any measure heedless of the word; for we belong to the Father and the Son, and are bound to witness a good confession by the Holy Spirit in word and deed.

It is assumed that all those addressed have faith, and are therefore not told to furnish it. But that we might be formed spiritually, or grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as is said later, we are exhorted here, not exactly to "add to" our faith, but to "supply in it" virtue, or spiritual courage before a hostile world. Phil. iv. 8 has been cited vainly to oppose this: whether moral worth or spiritual vigour, it is just as clearly the sense there as here. A sense

more vague would enfeeble both texts. It is the first out of seven requisites here laid down for practical need and power. The Christian has urgent occasion for them all, and it might be on any day and every day; so that we are not to conceive a progress from one to the other by successive stages, however wisely the order is here given by His power who inspired the writer. There is a perceptible rise in their character; but the principle of each and all more or less marks the believer from first to last, though here he is called very impressively to make them all practically his own.

Assuredly the youngest saint quickly finds the value of supplying in his faith virtue or moral power. This he needs to support faith, that he may not swerve from his new-born capacity of seeing things in God's light, instead of using the light of his own eyes or those of other men. As the Lord Himself, after He was divinely acknowledged the Son of God, was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, so it is with each son of God by faith in Christ Jesus. We too in our measure are put to the proof, and need courage to resist the adversary, steadfast in faith, and subject to scripture. The confession of faith makes one an immediate mark for Satan's attack. But we have to apply scripture in due season. It may be for the babe the guileless milk of the word; but this is just the food whereby he grows unto salvation. It may be rather the solid for those of full age. In any case it is not the mere bread

of man's labour, but the revelation of God which is the means of growing up unto Christ in all things. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." His word quickens. It reveals Christ the life-giver, and thus associates the quickened soul with God Himself immediately.

But clearly spiritual vigour is not all. Knowledge is necessary as well as courage. Scripture supplies it reliably, and in the N. T. both amply and with special precision to Christian privilege for direction and instruction. How beautiful the scene which Luke ii. presents of our blessed Lord, at twelve years of age, sitting in the midst of the Jewish teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions, when all that heard Him were astonished at *His* understanding and answers! He was true man as well as God, advancing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. As partakers of a divine nature we have a new capacity from above; and yet more we received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is of God, that we might consciously know the things freely given us by God. There is thus the fullest provision made for these wants, and no excuse for a Christian's ignorance of divine things. The natural or soulish man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual discerns all things, and himself is discerned by no one. For which knew Jehovah's mind, who shall instruct Him?

But we have Christ's mind. How wondrous yet true is this abiding privilege of the Christian !

Again, "in knowledge" supply "temperance" or self-control. Knowledge, however precious, has its danger of puffing up, and begetting contentions ; and in itself it is a poor safeguard against lust, ill-feeling, or passion. There is therefore the utmost need of self-restraint. Against such a guard there is no law : rather is it a calm preservative against inflation, and so falling into the fault of the evil one, as well as reproach and his snare. At no time do we more need to watch than when our feelings are acutely wounded. For they only blind us to the character of any hasty impulse and hurry us to sacrifice every Christian consideration to self. But this we are bound to distrust. It was exactly what in no case or degree wrought in Christ, who ever bowed to His Father in accepting from Him the utmost slight, dishonour, and contempt which came from those among whom He went about doing good, especially from God's people in their unbelief.

No doubt, there is the deeper pain if our trial come from His children, and the keener if from such as we specially trusted and valued. But the point for the soul, and above all for God, is not what this one has done or that said (lest it should rankle and inflame), but am *I* above it all by grace? am I self-restrained through (not self, but) Christ working in me? This enables one not to brood on what provokes, but to think on the things lovely, and of good report, which heat on

our own account makes us forget. If others stumble, am I manifesting Christ?

But there is suffering for righteousness, if not for Christ's name, which is never far or long from a Christian's path; and thus he has need of self-control supplying "endurance." He is not to quail if called to suffer ever so wrongfully. How unworthy, natural as it is, to complain because of this! Would it be any satisfaction, or real alleviation, if one deserved it? "For it is better, if the will of God should will it, to suffer as well-doers than as evil-doers." "But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but glorify God in this name." Yes, believers have need of endurance. Let us then, in "self-control" that puts a quiet but needed check on ourselves and on every device of self-will, supply "endurance" under any wrong inflicted by others. This is quite compatible with, not reserve, but plain rebuke of a saint who so errs.

Yet another want of at least equal or greater weight is next urged: "in endurance godliness" or piety. What more momentous for the soul than to preserve the links of reverence and affection, of dependence and obedience, in fresh and constant exercise with God and our Lord Jesus! Yet such is the pressure of work, to say nothing of the course of the age, the deceitfulness of riches, the disappointment at loss, or lusts of other things, that the peril from any earthly preoccupation is great. But here we are reminded to supply godliness in its constant place. To confide in Him, to bow implicitly to His will assured that it is the best, is all the more blessed

in the pressure of the persecutions that try our endurance. For indeed He is good, and does good, overcame evil in our case with His good, and strengthens even us not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good. If we do not know what we should pray for as befitting, we do know that all things work together for good to those that love God. And surely this true piety feels. To the same end he bade them in his First Epistle (iii. 14, 15) not to fear the world's fear, nor be troubled, "But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord," as He had Jehovah always before Him.

Then we are reminded that paying God His due takes nothing from "brotherly affection," but on the contrary both cherishes and controls it; for in godliness, which is fitting and necessary to be supreme, we are told to supply this exercise of grace. As the apostle Paul wrote concerning it to the young and dear Thessalonian converts, "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. For also this ye do toward all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, to abound yet more." Nevertheless brotherly affection has its limits because of its nature and its objects; for it is not God, and it may often let in what shuts Him out. Thus brethren too frequently slip into evil of one sort or another; and if brotherly affection be pressed (as commonly it is) as the acme of love, what mischief must arise for the saints! and what dishonour to the Lord and the truth!

Therefore mark the divine wisdom and the

profit for us, in that the apostle here distinguishes, instead of confounding, "love"; for he closes with "in brotherly kindness love." Higher than this last he could not rise; for not only is love of God, but God is love. It is of all moment that in brotherly kindness we should supply that love which is of God, and which God is. Nothing here evinces the wretchedly fallen state of Christendom more than the chorus of commentators who think of nothing beyond brotherly kindness save love to all mankind, even enemies, overlooking the source and power of all good. So Alford and Wordsworth, Bloomfield, Webster and Wilkinson, &c., among moderns speak for most shades of modern theology; and the ancients as far as one knows are no better.

Even John Calvin's remarks, which were consulted after writing thus, are singularly meagre, passing by the beautiful circle of truth here given us. From virtue and knowledge he turns off with few words to brotherly affection, and has no more to say of love than "*Charitas latius patet, quia totum humanum genus complectitur*" ("Love extends more widely, because it embraces the whole human race"). This is enough to represent the mind of the Reformers, of whom Calvin was regarded as the chief expositor. It is wholly defective and erroneous; for such a view loses what one of them calls "the crown of Christian virtue." Surely it would be, not a meet climax, but a descent from the deep and faithful character of special affection toward the holy brotherhood

to universal and benevolent love for men as such. He speaks like the author of *Saturday Evening*, chap. xii., who was far too humanitarian.

On the contrary it is an immense and blessed elevation from that affection, high as it is, to "love" in its fullest nature. And so speaks the apostle Paul who communicated not a little to his brother apostle of the circumcision for both his Epistles, and wrote to the Galatian brethren, after pressing on them "bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering," with a forbearing and forgiving spirit. "And over (or, to) all these, love which is the bond of perfectness" (iii. 12, 14), as he wrote to the Colossians at a later day. Nor need we quote the Epistles of John, rich as is their contribution of proof to the same effect. The reason too is quite plain. God's nature in its active energy of love is the complement of all, the standard withal that strengthens us against every evil. Love, as known in Him, of which Christ is the full expression, while the most expansive of affections as it is necessarily, maintains all His character intact, refuses any sacrifice of His rights to indulge or palliate a brother's fault or error, and rises to its full height in God.

Yet how deep and wondrous this is in the God who gave His beloved Only-begotten Son that we, lost and dead, might live through Him, who was sent into the world with life eternal in Himself for every one that believed! yea, to be the propitiation for our sins, that the evil in us, intolerable to Him and grief and abhorrence to us,

might be blotted out for ever ! Not that we then loved Him, but He us to the uttermost : wherefore we do love Him whose perfect love casts out fear. We love, because He first loved us. God is love ; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God in Him. Thus love gives its best force but also its preservative guard to brotherly affection ; whilst it has its own highest and deepest scope according to its divine spring, nature, and character. " Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another " (1 John iv. 11) ; but he never says that we " ought " to love God ; for this we do, if indeed called according to purpose. It may be hard sometimes to love a brother when naughty : but we do love God always. What does it tell to leave this out ?

It may be of interest for some to know that the too famous Bp. Warburton preached a sermon on these three verses, entitled, " The Edification of Gospel Righteousness " (Works, v. 123-143, 4to, 1788). But able as it is in his peculiar fashion, and not without his strong impression of its divine wisdom, it is vitiated by his ignorance of grace and truth, and so completely that he takes for granted (p. 127) that the N. T., here as elsewhere, refers us to what the Religion of Nature (!) taught concerning virtue for example.

The apostle enforces the importance of that diligence to which he had exhorted saints by a twofold consideration expressed in verses 8, 9. In the first of these he points out the blessing of being thoroughly furnished in our practical state

for every good word and work ; and in the second, the blighting effect of negligence as to our state.

" For these things being in you and abounding make [you] not idle nor unfruitful for the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ : for he with whom they are not present is blind, shortsighted, having forgotten* the cleansing of his old sins."

These varied qualities, set forth in a just order, were all of them requisite for the Christian character. The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the bondman above his lord. The Christian follows Christ and is His witness in the ways of every day. " Ye are our epistle," says Paul to the Corinthian saints when recalled to obedience, " written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested that ye are Christ's epistle ministered by us, written not with ink but Spirit of a living God, not on stone tables but on the heart's fleshy tables." The new divine nature does not imitate outward points of moral propriety, but beholds Christ objectively, which with delight in His perfection works inwardly. Hence it participates in every thing that pleases God, and is particularly vigilant where an awakened conscience has felt and judged special failure. So we read here " These things being in you." Divine life works energetically in every right direction.

But the apostle was led to seek more. He urges that these things should "abound" also; and this they do where Christ dwells in the heart

* *λήθην λαβών* here may be compared with 2 Tim. i. 6 and the simpler cases of Heb. xi. 29, 36. It occurs in both classical and Hellenistic Greek, as in Jos. Ant. ii. 9, 1, is precisely the same phrase.

by faith. No doubt the words in Eph. iii. 17 go out immensely farther ; but Christ is and must be the spring and strength of the heart for all that is acceptable to God. The exercise of the heart in the full confidence of Christ's love promotes growth in what is good. These things are therefore not only a real subsistence in the Christian, but also abound through dependence on His grace. Nor do troubles distract, if instead of intensely occupying ourselves with them, we are simple in casting the burden on Him, who cares for us, and delights in hearing the cry of faith's confidence in Him, and gives His own peace to guard our hearts and our thoughts by Christ Jesus. If we be ever so pained, the new nature, while in no way sparing self in ourselves or others, gives us to turn to its own congenial occupation with what is pure, true, noble, just, lovely and of good report, to think on these things, rather than to be occupied with evil, where it is not a positive duty.

What is the effect ? They "make you not idle nor unfruitful for the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." It was a change for the worse when the A. V. for "idle" rendered the word "barren," and led so many readers and preachers to guess what the difference could be between "barren" and "unfruitful." But there is no room for doubt or difficulty. The first word is properly translated "idle" elsewhere in the A. V., as it should be here ; and so Tyndale, Cranmer and the Geneva V. had given. Wycliffe and his follower, as well as the Rhemish, have "voide" or "vacant"

(as the last), which can hardly be said to have any just sense.

If the practical characteristics of Christianity abound in the saints, they themselves would be neither idle nor unfruitful. How unworthy to be idle, not only as standing in so blessed a relationship and possessed by grace of a new nature so excellent and repellent of every evil thing! How unworthy to be fruitless, if branches in the True Vine, such as those whom the Father purges that they may bear more fruit (John xv. 2, 1 Pet. i. 17)! "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; and ye shall be my disciples" (John xv. 8). So the apostle Paul prays for the Philippian faithful that they might be pure and without stumbling for (or, against) Christ's day, "filled with the fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ unto God's glory and praise" (Phil. i. 11).

The holiness of the new nature makes all sin to be hateful in the believer's eyes. But as the flesh is still in us, and ready to work and manifest itself, there is the constant necessity of prayer and the word watchfully applied in self-judgment. The brotherhood too has unceasing claims that we should never wink at sin but abhor it both in brotherly affection and yet more strongly in that love which strengthens us in keeping His commandments and in rebuking a brother's disobedience and every iniquity. And if we cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord, can we be insensible to mankind around who remain, as once we were, unintelligent, disobedient, serving divers

lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another? If idle in confessing earnestly according to our measure the saving grace of God in the gospel, we cannot be but unfruitful "for the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Where is our heart then for God and His Son, for saints or for sinners? For what are we, since our deliverance, left in such a world as this? Is it not that God in all things may be glorified, as far as His children are concerned, through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might for the ages of ages, Amen?

But the other side is next noticed, and we do well to take heed. "For" (this is the true connective, not "but") "he with whom they are not present is blind." How sad that such a description should apply to one bearing the Lord's name! For had not Peter in his First Epistle set forth Christians as loving Him whom they had not seen, and not now looking on but believing, they exult with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Theirs was no mere natural but supernatural sight in God's wonderful light. What a fall from divine privilege to be "blind," or even short-sighted! It is the lack of spiritual perception by the neglect of communion with God, the result of habitual indifference and self-seeking, to the slight of Christ, and grief of the Spirit.

It is explained by the next word, "short-sighted": the things afar off, the heavenly, are no longer the objects before the eyes of the heart. Thus things that are near and before all mankind

absorb the mind. It is a worldly spirit actively at work alter the things of the world, and not those which the Father loves. Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world, as the apostle John urges. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is hindered and its separating power annulled, if we thus look, not at the unseen, but at the seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

Another immense loss too follows: "having forgotten the cleansing of his old sins." It is not that a soul may here deny the truth of the gospel, or oppose his justification by faith of Christ and His work. But enjoyment of peace with God is gone. For the Holy Spirit, instead of bearing present witness to his spirit that he is a child of God, testifies to his inconsistent and evil state. The doctrine, however certain and true, that the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins ceases to be his joy, and becomes forgotten. His conscience is not clear but troubled as to his condition, instead of being trustful and bold before God. Till he is thoroughly self-judged, he feels, when he reflects, that his own heart condemns him: and if so how much more must the God who is greater than our hearts, and knows all things!

Is it not in this duty and sense that he incurs forgetfulness of the cleansing of his old sins? It is

not that he either gives up the truth or despairs as to himself ; but there is no comfortable consciousness of that cleansing of our sins which the very gospel proclaims to every believer. How can it be otherwise in that government which God as Father keeps up with His children in our time of sojourn here? When the cleansing of one's old sins is truly remembered, it acts on the soul to cleave to Him who for us died and rose, and strengthens us to hate evil of every kind, especially in our own ways. To forget the profession of being purged from one's sins is to lose the power and duty of practical purity ; and to be a Christian becomes but a name.

Here again in these concluding words of the introduction we may see the practical earnestness which eminently characterises our apostle. His aim is not dogmatic clearing up but spiritual power for every day.

" Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure ; for in doing these things ye shall never stumble. For thus shall be richly furnished to you the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ " (vers. 10, 11).

The true knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord is characteristic of Christianity, and rises far above what the law and the prophets conveyed, excellent as they were and are. But that knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the gospel communicates, is meant to make us, as partaking of a divine nature, neither idle nor unfruitful mean-

while. Flesh has to be judged, and the world he'd aloof by such as have escaped its corruption by lust. We need, as all life does, to grow by suited divine fare ; and we are called to do God's will.

There are the due affections to cultivate around us and upward. The pointed warning was just given of what surely follows indifference to the moral side, the blindness that ensues, the short-sightedness as to God's own glory and excellence, Jesus crowned with honour and glory in all that becomes our relationship, and dangers here ever present. Otherwise one forgets the gracious and solemn remission of the gospel, and the meaning of baptism to Christ's death at the start of the Christian profession.

Thus the diligence called for in vers. 5-7 is impressed in another way in vers. 10, 11. There it was in faith as the starting-point to furnish the necessary and blessed elements that form Christian character, from moral courage to divine love reproduced in the heart and ways, with the happy result where they exist and abound, with the saddest effect where they are lacking. Here looking at both sides the apostle exhorts his "brethren" all the more to give diligence, not merely to bear in lively recollection, in thankfulness, and exercised conscience, their first confession of divine grace to them as guilty sinners, but "to make their calling and election sure." In our fallen state, as in the world, there is nothing at all to help for life and godliness. The fairest show in flesh is the most deceptive and dangerous ; and

if Gentiles, like the Galatian and the Colossian brethren, were so prone to this snare, how much more were those who had been Jews, both to slip back from grace, and to make it a creed to own, instead of the spring and proof and joy of faith?

It is plain that the fresh appeal is to our state and consequent course and character of walk. The very order of the terms indicates this; for on the side of divine grace election according to scripture necessarily precedes calling. God's choice of the Christian is in eternity; as His calling of us is in time out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Pet. ii. 9). So in the opening of the First Epistle the saints were said to be elect according to God the Father's foreknowledge; but it was in virtue of the Spirit's sanctification that they were separated unto the obedience and blood-sprinkling of the Lord Jesus Christ. The well-known summary in Rom. viii. 28-30 is still more precise and full. "And we know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those that are called according to purpose. Because whom he fore-knew he also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he should be firstborn among many brethren. And whom he predestinated, these he also called; and whom he called, these he also justified; and whom he justified, these he also glorified." Thus the chain of blessing is completed when the many brethren are brought even as concerns the body into conformity with their glorified Lord. The order is as clearly of God's grace; as that in our

text, where calling comes before election, is of its actual application to man. And this is in keeping with the context which deals with the present moral government of souls.

The passage answers in its place to what we have in 1 Peter i. 17, 18: "And if ye call on him as Father that without respect of persons judgeth according to the work of each, pass the time of your sojourn in fear, knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptibles, silver or gold, from your vain manner of walk handed down from fathers, but with precious blood of Christ as of a lamb unblemished and spotless," etc. The fear enjoined is not from lack of certainty in our redemption, which on the contrary is enforced with all power and clearness. It is filial fear strengthened by the only efficacious sacrifice, but tempered because a Father holy and impartial watches over every step of our pilgrimage; and as He will not condemn us with the world, He chastens because He loves us too well to gloss over our failures. Here Christian responsibility is pressed, that there should not be inconsistency in our ways. His calling like His election is a matter of sovereign grace, and admits no question. But the case is different when we hear of our calling and election. Here negligence disorders the walk, and compromises our profession of His name, takes away our joy and enfeebles or hinders our testimony, and all the more if our conscience be tender. The heart condemns us, as is said in 1 John iii. 20; and how much more does God, who greater than our

heart knows all things, and draws us into self-judgment, so that it should not condemn us!

Practical fidelity, then, is urged the more with diligence to make our calling and election sure; "for doing these things" which please God, and are His will concerning us, they are made firm to our enjoyment, instead of being loose and unstable by a careless state; and so one may add, they are to others who look for our ways agreeing with our words. Walking in dependence and obedience we shall never stumble. It is therefore a most humbling thing when one thus trips by the way, and mistakes his own will or the enemy's suggestion for the Lord's guidance. How painfully it is learnt that all knowledge here fails; and that we must be brought to deep self-judgment, and vigilance in looking to and leaning on the Lord that we may follow Him closely. For any one can see a failure, and flesh can censure without measure or heart. Grace alone can purify according to the standard of the sanctuary; but this may be retarded by failure in penetrating to the roots of what misled. And here it is ourselves who are to blame; for there is in Christ and the word all resource to meet the need, yea, so as to strengthen one's brethren also, as Peter himself had to learn, and learnt so well.

But more encouragement follows here. "For thus shall be richly furnished to you the entrance 'into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'" Here again it is not a predicted fact that is prominent, but the full

realization even now by the soul that walks blamelessly before God. Thus it is that the entrance into the kingdom should be furnished. One is thus enabled to anticipate in rich measure the everlasting kingdom. So the Spirit was pleased to describe it. At any rate it is not put as a mediatorial display of glory in reigning over the earth for a thousand years, blessed as this will be; but rather what is unchanging. For there is also revealed that His servants shall serve Him and see His face, and reign for ever and ever.

Here then to those walking by grace faithfully "shall be richly furnished the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Not only is evil avoided, but there is nothing to dim the eyes or burden the heart. And the future glory is made richly to fill the soul as that which, as it belongs to Him, is shared with us, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. We are thus led into it for heart enjoyment; for the Spirit, being ungrieved, is not stopped by our errors and wrong-doing to humble us, but can show us things to come. "He shall glorify me, because he shall receive of mine and shall declare [it] to you." The entrance into it shall be richly furnished in the case described for practical joy and power over all that is present, whereby Satan seeks to dazzle and occupy the unwary.

A great principle of God appears in the words that follow, to which we do well to take heed. For the proof is abundant and plain, and a serious warning at this very time, and at all times, of the

peril to God's glory, so far as His saints are concerned, from neglecting it.

"Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in mind of those things, though knowing [these] and established in the present truth" (ver. 12).

Can any thing give clearer evidence of the all importance of the written word, not only to communicate the truth on divine authority, but to keep it intact in the living remembrance of the saints, than the earnestness with which this inspired bondman and apostle of our Lord impresses its need in his last message?

We learn, from Gal. i. 6-10, how prone those mercurial Gentile brethren were, under evil influence, to forget even the fundamental principle of the gospel they had heard from the greatest preacher that ever lived. "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another [one]; only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But if even we, or an angel from heaven, proclaim a gospel to you besides [or, other than] that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, now also I say again, If anyone preach a gospel besides that which ye received, let him be accursed. For am I now persuading men or God? or am I seeking to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be Christ's bondman."

We learn also from 1 Corinthians, that the vain Greek mind in the capital of Achaia, where the

same apostle had preached and won much people to the Lord, was soon slipping away, when his back was turned, from the ways and will of God, even to the compromise of the resurrection, though not of the immortality of the soul, which philosophy favoured and the first man might and did misuse to exalt himself. Hence that first Epistle, early as the date was, reproved their carnal schools with leaders, their low moral sense, their worldliness in going to law, their tampering with idol feasts as if nothing, and the laxity as to natural relationships. Even the gospel demanded re-statement in chap. xv., as their disorders at the Lord's supper, and in the assembly, called for rebuke and rectification in chaps. xi. xii. and xiv.

Nor need there be more than a reference to the "doubtful disputations" which endangered the peace of the saints in Rome; nor to the preaching for envy and strife of some at Philippi, nor to others who caused weeping to the apostle while he named it, enemies as they were of the cross of Christ, whose end was destruction, whose God was their belly, and their glory was their shame, who minded earthly things. Nor does the Epistle to the Colossians here call for notice, though it might well be a lengthened and appropriate one in view of the havoc which threatened those saints from the inroads of Gentile philosophy and of Jewish elements on the glory of the Head and the unity of the body with Him. We know too that the Epistles to the Thessalonians were written among other things especially to disabuse those young

Christians of error: the First, as to the departed saints at Christ's coming; the Second, as to His day for the living saints. Then the letters to the trusty fellow-labourers, Timothy and Titus, explicitly deal with falling away from the faith, profane babblings, with vain talkers and deceivers, specially those of circumcision; and in every case supplying the adequate remedy in God's grace and truth, as we ought to learn.

Eminently instructive is the opposite snare exposed in the grand Epistle to the Hebrews. Therein the apostle sets out the glory of Christ in person, office, and work, to deliver the circumcised believers from their traditional attachment to Judaism with its priesthood, ordinances, and sanctuary, from which they had not got clear after so many years of knowing Christ. But the Spirit of God would no longer tolerate this dulness, natural to babes, but inconsistent with the solid food of full-grown men, who have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil. There is therefore exhortation from God to take their true Christian place of entering with boldness into the holies by the blood of Jesus, and of going forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. This was expressly before the destruction of the city and the temple; that the saints might shake off their old swaddling clothes, to be thoroughly and only Christ's by faith, before the coming acts of God's providence.

The later Epistles are just the fullest on the impending ruin of the professing church, the latest

of all (Jude's and John's) pointing out apostasy at the end with the Lord's unseparating judgment. For "the last hour," however it might be prolonged in divine patience, was characterised even then by "many antichrists," the sure token of "the Antichrist" to be destroyed in the day of the Lord.

Even this short survey of inspired correction is the most convincing proof how dependent the Christian saints were on fresh scripture to guard our souls from forgetfulness of the truth and the aberrations from all round its circle provoked and promoted by the spirit of falsehood. But, besides this, food was provided in due season. To the Roman saints the apostle only refers to revelation of a mystery or secret as to which silence had been kept in everlasting times, but now manifested, and by prophetic scriptures according to the eternal God's command made known for obedience of faith unto all the nations. But it was not here revealed. Nor was it to the Corinthians in its heavenly side but only in its earthly working; still less to the Galatians or the Thessalonians. Not till he was a prisoner in Rome did he unfold it fully to the Ephesians and the Colossian saints, and thence to the church gradually far and wide. The word is the truth, and its written form under the inspiring power of God adds to it His abiding permanence as alike the supply and the standard for His children.

Nor can it be doubted that to-day beholds the most fearful and widespread and deadly on-

slaught on scripture ever since the apostles departed. At all times bad men had yielded; and with more or less daring circulated their doubts and disbelief. But now so shameless is unbelief that the seats of human learning are its citadels; and theologians vie with scientists and literary men in thinly if at all disguised denial of God's word from Genesis to the Apocalypse. Divine revelation is therefore a burning question to-day; and the more because it taints largely and deeply every sect in Christendom.

And how fares it with such as abjure a sectarian place? Has it not been affirmed among such, orally and in print, that the church needed not scripture, at least if walking decently and in order? Again, "it is no good sending out Bibles if there are not preachers"? Again, "the word of God is *in* the scriptures"? Not that scripture is the written word but Christ is the word of God? That "the scriptures are more the record of it, than the thing itself"? We are all familiar with such language among adversaries of the truth; but how solemn that such praise of incredulity should pass as from God's Spirit among the more ignorant of those once most staunch for the Bible! And how still more solemn that such impiety has not been judged on the guilty, and repudiated with horror and humiliation by the more intelligent! Are there not some true-hearted enough for God and His word to be above the dread of consequences?

There is another phase of unbelief which prevails among such brethren as claim to be the

faithful in disowning and separating from that depraved confraternity. Their danger made itself manifest from the time when both these parties, now opposed, staked all on what they called assembly-judgments. It was a phrase unknown in days when faith and patience reigned, and scripture was demanded and given for every legitimate judgment. No right-minded saint conceived of a godly action save in obedience of the word. What honour the Lord habitually put upon it! But just when party-spirit was beginning to blow up ecclesiastical fire to a white heat, and scripture was found unavailable to justify an extreme and revolutionary action desired, the strange proceedings brought in strange phrases.

Scripture was denied to be necessary, when it could not be produced. Very distressing became the course of these brethren who claimed all the faithful qualities and denied them to those who blamed their doings as without and beyond scripture. It was laid down that all were bound by an assembly-judgment, however partial or hasty, nay, *even if known to be wrong!* And this, not only *prima facie* but excluding in future any revisal, when it was distinctly urged that the right should alone be done by such as were assured of error.

No, there could be, there ought to be, no rectification, no owning of a wrong! An assembly-judgment, once made, must be accepted as irrevocable, even if known afterwards and certainly to be unrighteous and erroneous! This did not matter; it was bound on earth and in heaven!

Therefore the prime duty henceforth of the intelligent saint was to accept this as due to the Lord's word and name! The natural home for such fanaticism seems to be Babylon.

No doubt in regular cases of discipline, conducted according to scripture, the assembly is entitled to pronounce in the Lord's name, and individuals are bound to hear. Even then elder men acquainted with facts well knew that, in ordinary times, errors if unredressed might be fatal, and that unsound decisions were abandoned to the Lord's honour and the assembly's shame, yet so done heartily for His name's sake. How much more was it called for, when souls were perplexed, agitated, and prejudiced on all sides; when the unprecedented step was taken, as in the world's way to change the venue, and this not as even there to secure impartiality, but to judge a question where strong bias for and against was known to exist! Hence some were satisfied that there was no scriptural authority for such a case, declined even going to hear, and only staid in fellowship till there was no remedy, and a case occurred which compelled them to act according to conscience guided by the word.

These samples of the need, not exemplified among the distant denominations, but among saints who were once simple, gracious, and faithful, may help, as really existing facts, to show how invaluable was the help of which our apostle here speaks to the saints. He should be ready always to put them in remembrance of these

things, just before urgently pressed on their heed, though they knew them, and were established in the truth present with them. How considerately he appeals, and gives them credit for the utmost possible! He was truly a bondman as well as apostle of Jesus Christ, and ruled not over their faith, but as with Paul a fellow-worker, not only of their joy, but of their stability and safety.

It was not enough then that the saints should know the things which the gospel communicates to them, nor even that they should be established in them. Those grand facts of divine grace with the moral responsibility they involve are "the present truth": Jesus the Messiah actually come, rejected by the chosen nation, as the prophets did not omit to announce and the basis of all, yet easily let slip, because of the glowing visions of His kingdom not yet accomplished but apt to eclipse what was deepest and essential. Hence the earnestness of the apostle to impress on his brethren the truth which was then before them, so distinct from the past and from the age to come.

It is, as he had said, the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (ver. 2); the knowledge in particular of our Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 8), without which none can know God as He now needs to be known. In vain people cried up that which was so precious in foregoing time. All the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and none greater than John the Baptist had arisen among those born of women. But from his days the kingdom of the heavens suffered violence, and men of violence

seize on it. It is now a question of faith breaking through every difficulty and obstacle in the power of the Spirit to receive the Son of God come, which necessarily tests every soul of man. For this is life eternal, that they should know the Father revealed by the Son whom He had sent to this end. What was any knowledge compared with that? In vain they talked of "father Jacob," or of all the fathers from Abraham, who exulted that he should see Christ's day, as he by faith saw and rejoiced. For One was come, who, though man also, could say, *Before Abraham was, I AM*. This changed all for faith, and made inexcusable the unbelief that only stuck to the past.

To slight "the present truth" was to lose God and His Son. For it alone puts the believer into living relationship with God, and makes available His divine power which has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness; for this is inseparable from the knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and excellence. It is in fact what we mean by Christianity, as the life no less than the faith we confess; and therefore it involves growth practically as we have seen in all that becomes the Christian, of which God is the judge, who deigns to instruct us with all precision, as having become partakers of a divine nature, and thus escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous

import (or, requirement) of the law might be fulfilled in us that walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit. For He slights mere forms now and will have reality in those that are His. The greater the present privileges, the more are saints to be diligent to make their calling and election sure, avoid stumbling, and have richly furnished to them the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For as another apostle dear to Peter says, "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

But practically believers are exposed to such injurious influences, distractive of spirit and attractive to flesh, that they are like watches in need of habitual winding up. It is not enough to know and to be established in the present truth. Therefore the readiness of the apostle always to put them in mind of these things (ver. 12). Here again he reiterates it as their urgent need while he lived, and in view of his speedy departure.

"And I deem [it] right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting [you] in mind, knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is speedy, according as our Lord Jesus Christ manifested to me" (vers. 13, 14).

Whoever believes, as every Christian is bound to believe, that the great enemy sets himself most against all that God has actually in hand, can readily understand the importance of this care for the saints. It was always so. Cain and Abel were severally put to the proof by the then urgent truth of sacrifice, which faith prized and unbelief dis-

dained. Enoch and Noah both recognised the old truth, but were tested by, and faithful to, what God revealed to each in their day. Abraham held all that went before, but believed in the promises and confided in the divine revelation of "God Almighty" to himself, a pilgrim among races to be destroyed for their iniquity. Israel again had God bringing them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the land of Canaan, under condition of the law which they undertook to obey in their self-confidence. The Christian begins with redemption by His blood who gives us life eternal, walking in the light of the true God revealed in love and calling us to His eternal glory. In every case power of faith shows itself in specially appropriating "the present truth," whilst valuing all that had been made known previously, because it was all God's doing and communicating.

But, if this be true as a principle, the infinite nature of God's revelation of Himself in Christ makes the actual deposit of faith precious and momentous beyond all comparison. It is not merely revelation from God but of God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are now made known through our Lord a man, and in His work of redemption who is now consequently in heavenly glory, and, by the Spirit sent forth from heaven, the Spirit of God and of glory rests on the Christian. Not that our apostle makes known all these wondrous privileges, individual or of the church, Christ's body; but he does insist on the all-importance of the knowledge of God, which is now the

portion of faith, beyond what could be before Christ came, or what is to be displayed in the kingdom to the world by-and-by.

It was the inspiring Spirit who laid this duty on the apostle, knowing that his time was short, and the putting off of the earthly tabernacle at hand. Of tradition, in the sense of handing down man's oral addition, he never thought. What had this done for men before the deluge or after it? What was the issue of pretending to it in Israel or in Christendom? The prophet spoke out on the worthlessness of the fear of Jehovah taught by a commandment of men; the Lord still more decidedly, as transgressing the commandment and making void the word of God on account of their tradition. Inspiration makes it not a word of men, but as it is truly, God's word, which also works in those who believe, and clothes it with divine permanence as being written in the Spirit.

So the apostle Paul bade Timothy abide in the things which he had learnt and was assured of knowing of whom he learnt, and that from a child he had known the sacred letters that are able to make wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. This of course refers to the O.T. But he adds more: "Every scripture [is] God-breathed (or, inspired), and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work." It is a sentence framed expressly to embrace not only whatever of the N. T. had already appeared, but every part of

it that remained to be written. Terms could not be devised more simply or absolutely predicated of God's authority of every part of the written word. To call it genuine or authentic was wholly short of what is conveyed. It was inspired or God-breathed, that we might know the things freely given to us by God; and this spoken in words, not taught by human wisdom, weakness, defect of any kind, but taught by the Spirit. Thoughts and words were alike spiritual, that the result might be God's word certain and complete.

Our apostle, like Paul, had his dissolution before his eyes as well as the increasing evil through false teachers in depravity, and scepticism. Both are distinct in pointing to scripture as the great safeguard. As they alike set aside tradition, so they exclude any thought of apostolic succession. Grace might raise up faithful men to teach the truth they had learnt, or even to instruct others competent to communicate it. But scripture alone is the rule of faith, the sole unerring standard given of God to all His children whereby to test what they hear; and it is all the more blessed and necessary, as wicked men and impostors advance for the worse, leading and led astray. Scripture alone has divine authority. Therein God speaks directly to every soul; as indeed the apostle John also expresses it in his First Epistle, *We* [the inspired, apostles and prophets] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. From this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (chap. iv. 6). No one honoured scripture

as Christ did from first to last, on the cross, and when risen from the dead. He even set the written word as a definitive witness beyond His own spoken words (John v. 47).

These are but a portion of what might be cited to explain what the apostle here felt as guided of God to write these last words of his. Tradition must be a foundation of sand; and the foundation of the apostles and prophets is too well laid by divine grace to admit of a supplement, either of a vague and imaginary apostolic succession, or of a rival twelve set up by modern (?) prophets. Scripture must be itself complete to make the man of God complete and fully equipped for every good work. But divine power is needed to receive, enjoy, and carry out the written word; and this is imparted to every Christian in the gift of the Holy Spirit abiding in and with us for ever. Yet that word is the only standard. With his departure in near view the apostle would write his last inspired words to stir up the saints by recalling what is easily forgotten, but by his speedy departure made the more urgent, "according as our Lord Jesus Christ manifested to me."

Peter remembered the grave lesson he had learnt through Paul at Antioch, when he himself failed to keep in mind the truth conveyed so vividly by the vision at Joppa and its fulfilment in Cæsarea, the grace of God to Gentile now as to Jew. The pillar of the circumcision stood condemned, and he who was intrusted with the apostolate of the uncircumcision resisted him before all, and for the

truth's sake recorded so great a failure in scripture. For little as it might seem to carnal eyes, it was dissimulation to please certain that came from James, compromised Gentile liberty, and surrendered the truth of the gospel. God thus took care to register it as such, the overwhelming disproof of an infallible Roman see, even if there had been evidence, which there is not, that Peter was the founder of the church there, or its first bishop. So tradition says, and the credulous believe, not only without but contrary to the clear testimony of the written word. Nor did Paul found it, but wrote his Epistle to the Roman saints before he was carried there a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, as at length also His martyr there.

Yet Irenæus, who stands above all the fathers in the second century as Clemens of Rome above those in the first, tells us, in his book III. against Heresies, that Matthew brought out his Gospel in Hebrew, "when Peter and Paul were evangelising in Rome and founding the church." This the famous and we may say first ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, adopts (H.E. v. 28), though an error irreconcilable with scripture; as he had before (ii. 25) from Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, that Peter and Paul had founded the church in Corinth before going on to Rome for a similar work. Paul we know to have been *its* planter, not Peter. Can any thing more plainly indicate the absurdity of trusting tradition even of early days, in presence of the sure light of God's word? Yet all goes to justify our apostle in his zeal to leave nothing for

edification to such a haphazard channel, but to write all needed to help, guard, and stimulate the saints in words taught by the Spirit, that they might thereby be brought face to face with Him who inspired these exhortations. Thus only can we know and have communion with God.

In a third form the apostle presents the urgent importance which he felt in the Spirit for the written word; here expressly that "after his departure" they should be enabled also at any time "to call to mind these things."

"And I will be diligent also that at every time ye may have [it, or the power] after my departure to call to mind these things" (ver. 15).

This is one of the many and immense advantages of scripture above the oral word, no matter how distinctly this might be given by the highest authority. No one lays it down more clearly than our blessed Lord in John v., where to the reluctant Jews He recounts the varied testimonies to Himself as grounds of faith. (1) "Ye have sent unto John, and he hath borne witness to the truth." (2) "But the witness I have is greater than John's; for the works which the Father gave me to complete, the very works which I do bear witness concerning me that the Father hath sent me." (3) "And the Father that sent me hath himself borne witness concerning me." (4) "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have life eternal, and those are they that bear witness concerning me. . . . For if ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote concerning

me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

Never spoke man as this Man, His enemies themselves being judges; yet in His great climax of witnesses the Lord does not hesitate from that point of view to set the written word in the superior place of authority with a permanence peculiar to itself, so that the reader or hearer can weigh it again and again with prayer. Those who slight scripture to the exaggeration of ministry ought to consider His decision. And how remarkable that the Lord should thus speak of the books of Moses, which beyond fair question were then what they are now as many citations show, and not least His own! Yet modern audacity has lifted up its heel against those books quite as much as against Isaiah's or Daniel's. But He who knew what is in God no less than what was in man anticipated and pronounced against all this self-vaunting criticism of unbelief.

It is equally plain that the apostle followed His Master in abhorrence of tradition. Never was it trustworthy since God saw fit to convey His mind in holy writ; least of all then, when a fresh body of truth was being revealed for the enlargement, instruction, exercise and comfort of faith in what we call the N. T. The higher the truth, as is necessarily due to the person, work, and offices of Christ, opening out to an unlimited sphere, even of heavenly things morally, as well as of things to come, the more was new scripture needed imperatively and supplied bountifully, with the same

Spirit personally given to help the believers as had inspired the chosen instruments for its perfect communication.

One of the greatest perils which the apostles foresaw on their own departure is the rise and increase of impostors, corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith. These men withstand the truth: some by superstition, fables, and tradition; others by scorn and scoffing at God's word generally, and at prophecy in particular. As it may be read of Paul in 2 Tim. iii., so here of Peter, the great safeguards are (1) knowing of what persons the truth had been learnt, not teaching only but conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings; and (2) not only the sacred scriptures, the O.T., able to make wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus, but "every scripture," divinely inspired as it is and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness; that the man of God might be complete, out and out furnished unto every good work. The value of a known source in immediate relation to the God who communicated His mind and grace and will is thus shewn to be of the highest degree, as well as the divinely assured certainty that the words were as unequivocally Spirit-taught as the thoughts themselves. No safeguard entrusted to the church, not to ministers only but to all the saints, is so sure and unfailing as scripture.

It is merely a cheat of unbelief to argue from the infirmity of the men employed for this all-

important work. Granting all the infirmity, we are assured (from what God tells us in 1 Cor. ii., as well as 2 Tim. iii.) that His inspiration precludes the action of human weakness to impair the absolute reliability of what is revealed to bring our souls who believe it into direct subjection to God.- Conscience, understanding, and heart, are all addressed suitably; but the aim is that we may have fellowship with the inspired messengers, and thus by the Holy Spirit have communion with God Himself, with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and have power in the new life for holy walk.

Hence the prime duty for the Christian to turn away from these evil men, no matter how learned humanly they may be, and sanctimonious in manner, who either undermine the scriptures or substitute tradition for them. The form of godliness only makes such self-deceived deceivers more dangerous. It is in vain to reason on the scriptures as partial or fragmentary. It is an essential feature of them that God therein selected, out of much more that was given by the Spirit orally, all that was intended to be permanent and useful, all that was requisite to make the most advanced and honoured complete, fully equipped for every good work. Even if we could have from an uncertain source stray words carried down from the Lord's teaching or that of any apostle what could it add to produce the spiritual result which scripture claims for itself? Nor is it the least of its merits that scripture, so astonishingly full as it is to meet every want and to refute every

error, should be also unburdened by superfluity. How worthy of Him who gave it as it is!

Nor is it only against the sceptic we have to be on our guard. Corruption comes in through those who do not openly deny but pare down inspiration, allow errors in history or other (as they call it) secondary matter, and attribute the selection of what is written to the instruments without God. But this is to deceive themselves and others, to say and unsay. If God inspired the writings, He suggested, He selected, He included, He left out. He gave the thoughts and the words; He guided and controlled all. This is scripture.

The first and grandest characteristic is that God inspired every scripture, every whit that was so written when Paul wrote his last to Timothy, his final to any. Every scripture is God-breathed, even anything that He would add afterwards. This is enough for all that know God, and have every reason to distrust themselves or other men who were not inspired. As the apostle John later still and most trenchantly says, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them [the deceivers and antichrists], because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world; therefore speak they [as] of the world, and the world heareth them. We [the inspired] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." What an awful warning to "higher critics," and their victims! Scripture possesses beyond all else

the indelible authority of God, not only what was meant but what is written; but if this be so, it is in the fullest way profitable. Their value, not only as the ultimate source of truth but as the standard by which the highest ministry, even an apostle's, was to be tried (Acts xvii. 11), is without a rival.

Ministry is the exercise of a gift from the ascended Lord (Eph. iv.) who not only gave His precious gifts at Pentecost, whether to lay the foundation by the apostles and prophets, or to perpetuate other gifts till the body is complete in the fullest sense (ver. 13). But its basis and its supplies depend on the authority of the written word; and so He led the way when on earth who was the supreme Apostle of our confession as He is the Great Priest. Who so honoured, loved, and used the scriptures with God, with man, with Satan? So we see with all the inspired writers. Whatever new truth had to be imparted, they were led by the Spirit to impress on the saints the divine claims of the old holy writ to the uttermost. Nor is anyone more notable in this way than he who calls himself the least of all saints, to whom we are indebted as to none else for the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, but now revealed (Eph. iii.), minister of the church (as he says in Col. i.) to complete the word of God.

We may next observe how carefully the apostle Peter excludes all dependence not only on tradition but on ecclesiastical office of any kind after his

departure. When faith decays and the power of the truth proportionately, then man's energy displaces the Holy Spirit, and the world enters with the love of worldly things to dim, darken, and destroy the love of the Father; external things gain an undue and growingly false place. Baptism and the Lord's supper, instead of being kept in their true niche, become at length traps of error, and engines of destruction, being invested with the reality of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. So it was with the elders, especially when they had no longer apostolic authentication, direct or indirect. And so yet more proudly when the figment of apostolic succession was conceived, to say nothing of the modern dream of a whole twelve-fold apostolate nominated by prophets as pretentious and as false as those apostles themselves. Peter is silent on every such resource for the future. He was led of God to provide scripture for the saints. "And I will be diligent also that at every time ye may have [it, or the power] after my departure to call to mind these things."

It was exactly so that the great apostle of uncircumcision charged the elders or bishops of the church in Ephesus who met him at Miletus (Acts xx.). "I know that after my decease grievous wolves shall come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I ceased not admonishing each one with tears. And now I

commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build up and give an inheritance among all that are sanctified." The very elders were to become a danger and evil to themselves and the disciples, not they only but they prominently ; for out of them emerged ere long the clergy (not gifted men) unknown while the apostles lived. Had the word of Christ dwelt in the saints richly, such a change could not have been. Man was looked to, and the word of God's grace became more slighted, forgotten, and powerless.

And who that looks at Christendom, or even at that part of it which boasts of an open Bible and separation from the idolatries and mummeries of Popery, can doubt that the apostle's warning has been verified, and that far worse is in rapid progress? Who can survey the enormous change during the last seventy or eighty years, for spreading and deepening evil, whether in superstition or in free-thinking, without humiliation or horror, unless he be under either delusion? One of the most painful and certain signs of the great enemy's work is the all but universal-spread of error and worldliness, not in the greater communities only but throughout them all, down to the least. So it is in the new or western hemisphere as in the older world; so it is in almost every land and tongue, and very markedly in those which once hailed whatever of truth the Reformation recovered to hungry and thirsty mortals.

How little those who glory in the light and liberty and progress of the opening century are

aware that both the sensuous and sentimental church revivalists, and the irreligious intellectualists who mangle the scriptures, are fast preparing the way for what the apostle Paul calls the falling away, "the apostasy," when both the O. and N.T. will be cast away with scorn; when the Saviour and His cross, His glory in heaven and His coming again, will be objects of open derision and general ribaldry! Christianity as a whole will be rejected by Papists and Protestants, by Episcopalians and Presbyterians, by Independents and Baptists, by Wesleyans, &c., by Quakers, passive resisters and disputers of all sorts. The prevalent neglect of the prophetic word will only hasten the awful catastrophe.

His zeal in furnishing the saints with divine grounds of faith the apostle fortifies, by reminding them of an unique-display of glory, into immediate vision of which he had been admitted personally and with adequate witnesses.

"For we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, not following cleverly devised fables, but made eyewitnesses of his majesty" (ver. 16).

A sight more marvellous than any miracle, a scene more impressive and august than any other vision on earth, a living miniature of the future kingdom more instructive, vivid, and glorious than any prophecy could present, was there given to saintly eyes and ears, that it might be divinely recorded and strengthen the hearts of the faithful. All the Synoptic Gospels had already recorded it.

But manifestly it did not fall within the scope of the fourth Gospel to describe it, though many have conceived it alluded to in the latter clause of John i. 13. But here our apostle attests it as one of the chosen three who actually beheld the glory and heard the Father's voice about the Son, by a word in the N. T. peculiar to Peter, capable of a wide application, but going beyond eye-witness and appropriated to those admitted into the highest grade of the mysteries among the Greeks. For *εἰσὶν* here is not the same as *αὐτόπται* in Luke i. 2.

Nevertheless, without going into details, we can all perceive that the Epistle omits one most important lesson for the Christian which the Gospels were inspired to convey: "hear Him," the Christ, the Son of God. It was drawn out by Peter's hasty, shallow, and irreverent proposal to make here three tabernacles, one for the Lord, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For, as Mark adds, and Luke too, he knew not what to answer, being affrighted as the others also. And their fear could not but be aggravated by the bright cloud (the pavilion of God's presence) that overshadowed them, into which they entered and out of which the Father's voice said in gracious rebuke, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I found my delight: hear Him," Moses and Elijah disappearing.

Yet "hear Him" Peter alone omits, as he alone gives the emphatic personal expression of the Father's complacency (ver. 17). To impute to men's shortcoming either the omission or the addition

is to betray one's own unbelief in God's perfect word. These differences are as much intended as their concurrent evidence; they are in no real sense discrepancies, but distinct intimations of the truth to carry out the Holy Spirit's special design in each part of holy writ. The Gospels were to initiate and maintain the primary value and authority of Christ's word, not only as spoken but to be communicated permanently in due time in what is commonly called "The New Testament." Peter is here corroborating the testimony to Christ's kingdom by the magnificent scene witnessed on the holy mount of the Transfiguration. But no body had such reason as himself in every point of view to remember "Hear Him" in that never to be forgotten incident. His omission is therefore the fruit, not of weakness but of divine design. He is here, as he says, making known to his believing Hebrew brethren "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," to which that blessed oracle was comparatively as uncalled for here as indeed it was of the utmost moment for God's purpose by the Synoptic evangelists.

Let us then briefly consider the character and teaching of what came to pass on the mountain. What drew out the display of His glory in the kingdom before the time of its establishment was to strengthen His own in taking up the cross and following the Master. For the disciples, like the unbelieving brethren, like Christendom too, looked for progress and triumph, and overlooked faith and love put to the proof in suffering with Christ,

the pattern of all holy endurance. Hence the Lord told them plainly of His own sufferings and the glories *after* these. So indeed it must be for sinners to be saved righteously; and for saints that, suffering with Him, they may also be glorified with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign together. "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man also be ashamed when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say to you, There are some of those standing here that shall in no wise taste death till they see the kingdom of God come in power. And after six days Jesus taketh with [him] Peter and James and John, and bringeth them up on a high mountain by themselves apart. And he was transfigured before them" (Mark viii. 33, ix. 2). Not only did the fashion of His countenance become different as He prayed, shining as the sun, but His garments were effulgent as the light. Again, not angels but Moses and Elias appeared in glory, and spoke of His departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Here then was an anticipative and unparalleled sample of the kingdom, not as it has ever been since in mystery, but in manifestation as when He comes in its power and glory. As there was so much to try the disciples in His yet to be deepened humiliation, what could be more gracious on His part, or more suited to their need, than to grant chosen ones of the twelve who were to be

alone with Him in His anguish, to be also with Him beholding so unexampled a foretaste! For here were the great elements of the coming kingdom.

It is not at all a picture of eternity, when the kingdom is given up to Him that is God and Father, after Christ shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power, and the Son Himself shall be subject to Him that put all things in subjection to Him, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may be all in all. This we easily recognise in Rev. xxi. 1-8. But here it is the exalted Man, made both Lord and Christ after man crucified and slew Him. Here He is seen as He will reign in power that all shall see, with the dead saints raised and the living changed, answering to the two glorified men. There will be also the righteous in their natural bodies, like the three honoured disciples made free of the blissful vision.

This may seem to Corinthian minds, that savour the things of men, an abhorrent mixture. But what an utter prejudice! For the kingdom is God's grand scheme and answer to the shame the world puts on the faithful Christians, as before on Christ to the uttermost. If they in their devotedness to Him became a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men, how righteous in the coming day of glory their exaltation with Christ! Then the world shall know that the Father sent the Son, however low He stooped in grace, and that He loved the saints, however weak and unprofitable they feel themselves to be, as He loved Christ (John xvii. 22, 23) There will be "the world" of men not glorified ;

there will be Israel and the nations on earth to learn this ; not indeed in the eternal state, but in the kingdom which Christ will establish and manifest during the "age to come." When eternity follows the "white throne" judgment, righteousness *dwells* in the new heavens and a new earth, instead of *ruling* as in the millennial earth. For the latter the Son of man receives the kingdom and returns (Luke xix. 15) to reign ; for the former He gives up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all, after the mediatorial reign and judgment are quite over, and the universe is brought into perfect harmony with God's counsels and ways in grace and in righteousness, and as to good and evil, for His glory for ever and ever.

It was reserved for Pope Leo X. to avow without a blush that to the Roman communion and its chief the gospel had turned out a profitable fable ; and St. Peter's in Rome stands as the monument, built out of part of the cash paid by benighted souls for indulgences ! the base traffic in sins, which brought on the Reformation. What a contrast with the holy man whom they falsely claim as their first pope ! Here is the simple and true averment of a true fisherman of souls : " For we followed not cleverly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but were made eye-witnesses of his majesty." What the three witnesses saw and heard on the mountain was a glorious display which God alone could accomplish. But it was not merely the manifestation of the highest honour

put upon the rejected Christ. It was also a most instructive type of His glory in the coming kingdom in due time to close all suffering, when His church should be complete which began to be gathered on and from the day of Pentecost. Of that kingdom the vision shewn was the wondrous pattern and the certain pledge. Hence the apostle expresses its difference from His first coming by the phrase "the *power* and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." First He came to suffer and to die; "for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he being rich became poor, that ye by his poverty might be made rich." Yes, He was crucified out of (or, as we say, in) weakness. But when He appears again, He will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, the indisputable Lord of all.

Hence we must avoid the error of godly Puritans who apply the verse to the power of Christ in the preached gospel for saving from the guilt as well as the corruption of sin. So they applied it either exclusively, or including His future advent also. But such vagueness as this last implies is the way to lose the precision of the truth, and at best a makeshift when men are not sure, and seek to cover it by that style of accommodation. For the Transfiguration was significant, not of grace to perishing sinners, but of that glorious kingdom of God to come, which will consist of heavenly things as well as earthly, and the Lord the glorified chief and centre of them all. Compare Matt. vi. 10, xiii. 41-43, xix. 28, Eph. i. 10.

It is to be noticed that angels are not seen on the mount of Transfiguration. Yet we know that, when the day arrives for the establishment of His kingdom, the Son of man will come in the glory of His Father with His holy angels, or, as Luke puts it fully, "in His glory, and of the Father, and of the holy angels." Here not a word is breathed about them. Men are prominent, two saints in glory of the past who represented the law and the prophets, three of the present followers of Christ in their natural bodies. The delights of Divine Wisdom were with the sons of men; the Life was the Light of men, and so when He deigned to enter on His earthly mission and work, He takes not hold of angels but of the seed of Abraham, not only for all that the promises to the fathers assured, but for heavenly and eternal counsels.

But there is more that we do well to observe, the unmistakable voice out of the cloud of the Divine Presence, not in thunder but in accents of the tenderest love, and in evident answer to Peter's well-meant but utterly unmeet desire to exalt His Master. The Father alone knows how His Son should be honoured; as He indeed loves the Son supremely, and has given all things to be in His hand. Let us too hear the Father; for He is Christ's Father and ours, His God and ours.

"For he received (literally, having received) from God the Father honour and glory, when such a voice was borne to him by the magnificent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom *I* found my delight (or, complacency)" (ver. 17).

The Lord Jesus was Man, the Messiah, on the road to the most extreme humiliation, even to the death of the cross, and by none so keenly consigned to it as by His own people, the Jews. Such was the ruinous blindness and the guilty unbelief which pervaded mankind. Hence to encourage His feeble followers in a path of suffering, least of all anticipated by themselves, it suited Him Who is wise and good and righteous to rise above all natural limits which ordinarily prevailed, and to manifest in the most unwonted fashion and impressive way His predestined exaltation in the coming kingdom. This indeed is not even yet come; while Israel abides in hard incredulity, and the church is meanwhile being called to its special blessedness in heavenly places. Then the Jew too shall become object of God's healing mercy, as the Gentile now does, though rapidly abandoning the truth for the crisis at the end of the age like the mass of Jews.

Hence, in view of Christ's sufferings, and His glories to follow in due time, not only in the heavens but on the earth, grace gave to chosen witnesses this extraordinary anticipation on a small scale but with divine depth and power. As He prayed (so tells us Luke, who speaks most of His human perfection), the fashion of His countenance became different, and His very raiment white, effulgently so. And the two men of olden time, so renowned for fidelity to Jehovah and His people, talked with Him, the central Object for saints above or below. They appearing in glory spoke of His departure which He was about to

accomplish in Jerusalem. How full of interest and instruction! One was the promulgator of God's law, the other its restorer and vindicator when Israel apostatised and worshipped Baal. Yet it was of our Lord's death they talked, not of the law. Where was anything comparable to His death? and how ominous, "in Jerusalem"! Thereby alone was God glorified morally as to sin; there Satan for ever defeated; there man's sin, there the Jew's was darkest; there grace shewn to the uttermost; there the judgment of our sins so borne, that God can only justify the believer in Jesus. What had either Moses or Elijah revealed to them that could fairly be put alongside of these truths? Yet they are the common faith of Christians, the faith once delivered to the saints.

Peter who was there does not say a word about His wondrous converse; and Luke who was not there is the only one to record it. Nor was Paul at that time anything but a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to law a Pharisee, ignorant of Christ after the flesh, only to know Him as dead, risen and ascended to heaven, and in no way cognisant of the days of His flesh. What it proves is God's design and power and will as to inspiration; who gave to each writer what consisted with His purpose by each. Here the apostle, having before him the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, testifies the honour and glory He received from God the Father, when initiated into that mystery which transcended all the secret mysteries of the heathen; as much as the Father and the Son in truth and love transcended

their wretched divinities, morally contemptible on their own showing, whether in their fables or in moral effect on their votaries. But it was in view of the coming kingdom and Christ's revelation to introduce it, with which this and the former Epistle teem.

Peter does however speak here of "such a voice being borne (or uttered) to him by the magnificent glory: This is my beloved Son in whom *I* found my delight." Soon, soon, would be proved by His departure in Jerusalem, that the city over which He wept saw in Him no form nor comeliness that it should at all desire; yea, hid as it were its face from Him, as an aversion of men and as smitten of God and afflicted. But here is attested by the voice out of the glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I found My delight. So it had been in eternity before creation; so it was when the world was made by Him, and in all the dealings of providence, in the secret working of grace with individuals, and in the public government of Israel under the law. So still more when the incarnate Word presented that object of His everlasting complacency as man on earth in unwavering dependence and obedience on His way to death for His glory, for man's salvation, for the church's blessedness, for His people's deliverance, and for the reconciliation of all things.

But Peter here too omits, what all three Synoptics tell us, the "hear Him" so important for their purposes, but not for God's task assigned to himself. Christ had lost nothing of His eternal

glory by His extreme humiliation even to the cross. On the contrary, as He had thus glorified God both as Father and as God, so He was the object for God the Father to glorify ; and here in view of His coming kingdom, incomparably more glorious in itself and in Him who would display its full character and power than ever Rabbi had conceived. Their aspirations and anticipations were as short of it as of Himself, the true Messiah and the beloved Son of God.

As the apostle once more recurs to the Father's voice, let us follow him also.

"And this voice *we* heard uttered (or, brought) out of heaven, being with him on the holy mountain" (ver. 18).

The three apostles were truly eye-witnesses of the Lord's majesty, all the more wondrous because it was His power and coming for a brief view in the midst of His humiliation in grace for God's glory. Every part of the scene before their eyes was a magnificent testimony to the future kingdom of the Son of man beheld on a small scale, before the Lord come to establish it in its visible grandeur and its appointed season before the universe. But the emphasis is manifestly laid on "this voice *we* heard," borne out of heaven as it was, when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Already had the Father's voice been heard in terms identical with these now recorded, save the pregnant construction of εἰς ὁν for ἐν ᾧ in the Gospel which makes no difference in translating. But none, as far as we know, heard the first time

but the Lord Himself and the Baptist, though the Lord adduced it as one of the four testimonies to His personal glory which proved the Jews to be thoroughly unbelieving: John the Baptist His predicted herald; then the greater witness which the Father gave Him to complete; next, the Father that sent Him had Himself borne witness concerning Him by His voice; and lastly the scriptures, to which He assigned a very great place (John v.). But man's will can resist any and all, as the Jews then verified to their ruin, and will another day and in another form, as He then warned them.

The occasion too was quite different. For the grace of the Lord Jesus led Him to take His place with the feeble remnant of the Jews who obeyed John's call to repentance, and came to the Jordan to be baptised as they did. Holy, guileless, undefiled, He associated Himself with those who had nothing but sins; yet as they confessed them, the first mark of awakened conscience in bowing to God's call, He would not stand aloof though He had not the least evil to confess. It was the perfection of man's position in lowly active love; and so He, the Righteous One, corrected John's reluctance in the gracious words, Thus it becometh us (you and Me) to fulfil all righteousness. "And Jesus being baptised went up straightway from the water; and, behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him; and, behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The heavens opened

to Him, the Holy Ghost's descent as a dove on Him, the Father's voice expressing His delight summed up there and then, bore witness to the divine delight in Him and never so much as in that act of humiliation in grace.

Yet at the mount of Transfiguration the immediate occasion of the voice again heard, and by the chosen witnesses, was Peter's own attempt to honour his Master in the highest way he could then suggest. But to put Him on a level with the chiefs of the law and the prophets would not suit the Father. "This is my beloved Son : hear Him." And the terrified disciples fell upon their faces; but lifted up at the touch and the comforting words of their Master, they saw no one but Jesus, alone with themselves. *He* was to be heard, He paramountly, He the truth. Others at best were His forerunners.

As noticed already, Peter here was not led to recall this last part of the utterance given in all the synoptic Gospels. His aim was to concentrate attention on Jesus as the centre of divine affection and glory; theirs was also to attest Him as the complete fulness and revealer of all the truth. Matthew gives the Father's voice undiminished : as his province was to show the full consequence of the rejected Messiah, His larger glory as Son of man, and higher still as the beloved Son of God, the Rock on which the church was to be built. Mark and Luke omit here the expression of God's complacency in Him, so as to throw stress on hearing Him; the former as the Servant Son in the gospel, the latter as God's Son, yet fully man. Our apostle

omits the clause they carefully record, not because he could or would forget it, but to make the more prominent the good pleasure the Father had in Him, His beloved Son.

We next hear of the confirmation given by the vision on the mount to the prophetic word, the light of which, however valuable, is very briefly shewn to yield to the superior brightness of a heavenly light for the hearts of saints, not a display to the world.

"And we have the prophetic word firmer, to which ye do well in paying heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawn and a (or, the) morning star arise in your hearts" (ver. 19).

The prophetic word of O.T. and of N.T. alike converges on the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus; and this, the apostle here declares, was made firmer, or confirmed, by what the witnesses were there given to behold and hear, the glorious anticipation and precursor of that day of power and glory for the universe. The predictions were absolutely true and reliable; but it seemed good to the All-wise at the first coming of Christ and in view of His death of shame (so essential to lay a basis for the ways and purposes of grace), to confirm the truth of His second coming and kingdom by a sight which set on the word another seal more. A vivid though brief realisation of its chief elements confirmed the prophetic word in a way beyond aught else. No season was so appropriate for it as when He earnestly charged and enjoined His disciples to tell no man that He was

the Christ, saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and the third day be raised up. This was a fact wholly unexpected by all, even by him who had just owned His personal dignity as the Son of the living God. It was the substitution, for the Messianic testimony and hope utterly rejected by the people and their rulers, of the death and resurrection of the Son of man and Son of God. This laid the basis for introducing not only the kingdom of the heavens but the church, which now occupy the place which Israel once had in an earthly way under law, and when they repent shall have under Messiah and the new covenant.

The Christian Jews, as the apostle says, were doing well in paying heed to all that the prophets had announced of those coming days of glory. They did not misapply their words, as Christendom soon began to do, to the different character of the parenthesis which runs on between the first and the second comings of Christ. It is now an unseen victory which faith beholds in Christ raised from among the dead and seated on His Father's throne, and in Christians united to Him on high by the Spirit sent here below, whilst they suffer on the earth as their Master did (His atoning death excepted), not of the world as He was not. It will not be so in that day when Christ will appear and sit on His own throne, and they shall reign with Him, who now suffer with Him, if not also for Him.

Then Israel, instead of being lost in unbelief, shall be saved, and become Jehovah's witness in truth of heart and in power. And all the nations shall bow to His behest, not only having learnt righteousness when His judgments are on the earth, but truly subject to His anointed King on Zion, the centre of all the world's kingdoms, whence the law goes forth, their idols of silver and gold consigned to the moles and to the bats. For the great invisible organiser of iniquity is shut up in the abyss, whilst this display of righteousness, peace, and glory is enjoyed by all the earth, till the hour strikes for God to sift those who have multiplied when war and want and pestilence are unknown. But those who are on the earth (the risen being above), as many as are not born of God, will fall under Satan's power once more, when he is let loose to tempt, and prove that man's fallen nature is as unimprovable under a dispensation of glory, as of grace, or law, or anything else. Man ever prefers Satan to God that he may have licence for his corruption or his violence.

Dull as the Jewish Christians were as to our highest privileges, they were not so beguiled as to imagine that the prophetic word, save quite exceptionally, describes the Christian state which is now our portion. Their danger was rather to make the future kingdom to be their hope, instead of reading in the prophets the hope of Israel and of all the peoples who in that day accept Jehovah's word from Jerusalem. It is the delusion of Christendom to appropriate it now by what they call spiritualis-

ing, and relegating to eternity what they cannot thus force. The believer called to heavenly hopes meanwhile does not forget that Jehovah will renew and restore Israel to their place of promise on the earth.

Here accordingly they were told that, however well it was to heed the word of prophecy, it is but "as a lamp shining in a dark place;" for so the earth is and must be till the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings. But he just glances at the higher light of heavenly truth, which they might have as yet but feebly entered into, however truly they had received Christ Jesus as their Lord. The prophetic word did show the ruin of Israel as a whole for its idolatry, and the special further sin of Judah for the rejection of the Messiah. The propbetic word made clear the rise of the four Gentile empires while the Jews are Lo-ammi (not-my-people), and between Daniel and the Apocalypse also the reappearing of the last or Roman empire with the apostate Jews, who set up the Antichrist in Palestine, to be destroyed by the Lord shining out from heaven.

But the prophetic word nowhere reveals those heavenly counsels which the mystery (hid from the ages) made known through Paul. Nor does Peter here do more than allude to it under the strikingly distinct figures of "day" and "morning star." The lamp is excellent to cast adequate light on this dark world, its evil and its doom; and they did well in paying it heed, "till day dawn and a (or, the) morning star arise in your hearts." That is to say, till they apprehend with enjoyment the bright

heavenly relationship which Christianity fully understood gives us now in Christ, and the heavenly hope of His coming to introduce us into the Father's house. The prophetic lamp is good to help us against the squalid place; but how much more is "daylight" in Christ to lift us above the world in all our associations of faith, and the bright hope, Christ as Morning Star, which He not only is, but has promised to give the overcomer (Rev. ii. 28, xxii. 16, 17)!

The apostle adds an important caution to the commendation in ver. 19. They did well in taking heed to the prophetic word. God alone can speak with certainty of the future, for a world in confusion and change, prone to sin; and He has been pleased, not only to speak but to write by chosen instruments, that those who believe may profit by His communications, where otherwise they were liable to stray, but thereby were enabled by faith to enjoy the measure of light thus afforded. His people could not despise it, save to His dishonour and their own loss.

Before the deluge Enoch prophesied as to the ungodly in deeds and words, whose daring would bring on the Lord's coming with His holy myriads to execute judgment on their ungodliness: a prophecy preserved and cited by the inspired Jude as yet to be accomplished on those that deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Later still by faith Noah, oracularly warned concerning things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by which he con-

demned the world, and became heir of the righteousness that is according to faith (Heb. xi. 7). Abram had not only prophecy but a prophetic vision, centuries before the facts of his seed's oppression in Egypt and of deliverance from the oppressor by divine judgments, which should also deal in due time with the enemies who filled Canaan (Gen. xv). Further, he was given as a mark of divine friendship to learn from Jehovah Himself the imminent destruction of the cities of the Plain.

Nor is it otherwise with us Christians; for if given an incomparably "better thing" now in and with Christ glorified after the accomplishment of redemption, we do not lose the present value of prophecy. The same Holy Spirit, who guides us into all the truth (as He empowered the apostles and prophets to make it known to us), was to declare unto us the things that are to come, and He is in us to make all good instead of leaving us to unprofitable guesswork.

But for this reason we need the authority of God's word, and here we have it, "Knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is (or, becometh) of its own interpretation" (ver. 20). "Its own," which is the simplest and the strictest and the most frequent usage of the disputed word, alone satisfies the context. It is hard to see why the A.V. and the Revision adopted "private" except that they did not know what to make of it. So does Dean Alford, following in his commentary Luther's idea "that prophecy springs not out of human prognos-

tication." Such a view may be intelligible where the freethinking of higher criticism prevails as an antidote; but it could only be regarded with horror by the Christian Jews, whom the apostle was addressing. Nor was the canon which the apostle lays down directed against such humanizing sceptics; it is a serious caution to the believer for his profit in seeking edification and intelligence in studying the writings of the prophets.

Dean A. says "two references seem to be possible" (to us, and to the prophets themselves). He has overlooked a third, which is even grammatically the most exact, the prophecy itself, "No prophecy of Scripture is, or comes to be, of its own interpretation." If you isolate prophecy and make each part its own interpreter, you counteract its origin and character, and lose its force as pertaining to God's grand scheme for glorifying His Son, the Lord Jesus. It is divine design which gives prophecy of Scripture, like the rest, this character.

The apostle is therefore guarded in his language beyond what the commentators in general have apprehended. He does not deny that many a prophecy had its scope only in a particular and passing event of sufficient moment to call for it. And not a few such are mentioned in scripture. Take in Genesis the dreams of Pharaoh and of his two chamberlains previously. Take in the Acts of the Apostles the prophecies of Agabus as to the famine and the apostle Paul. Many such are recorded in the O.T. Yet none of them is a prophecy of Scripture as here intended, not for instance so much as

Jacob's in Gen. xlix. or Moses' in Deut. xxxiii., nor yet Balaam's in Numb. xxiii., still less the Prophets' so-called. They had their importance at the time, as the Scripture intimates.

By "prophecy of scripture" the apostle, to my mind, appears to mean exclusively such as look on to the future Kingdom of God for Christ's glory; and this is the object in the prophets, so that it may be predicated of every "prophecy of scripture" whether in O. or N.T. They may speak not a little of the moral evil which necessitates God's intervention to put down Satan and a revolted world, and to bring in the long promised reign of the Lord in righteousness, peace, and glory. But it is of that blessed Kingdom as His theme that the inspiring Spirit delights to speak, because it will then be the sphere of Christ's glory manifested in the universe; as He has already in the N.T. made known to the Christian His hidden glory as the exalted Man on high.

Hence it is that from Isaiah to Malachi no "prophecy of scripture," whatever the importance of any event in God's providence and the application of prophecy to it meanwhile, stops short of the grand fulfilment, "when the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," Satan loses his bad eminence, and Israel shall be saved, to blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. It is what the first man never attained, neither Nebuchadnezzar nor Cyrus, neither Alexander nor Cæsar. It will be verified in Jehovah Jesus when "Jehovah shall be king over all the earth; in that day

shall be one Jehovah, and His name one" (Zech. xiv. 9).

We need not here speak of Christ's exaltation over all the heavens as well as the earth; nor of the church's union with Him, as Head of the body over all things: the two parts of that mystery which, hidden from the ages in God, was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit's power, and hence to us Christians in the N. T. But the kingdom was in full and increasing view from God's sentence on the serpent throughout the ages; and any turning aside at the comparatively small events within their compass frustrates the design of God in the testimony of them all to the coming Deliverer and King.

Yea, this was so notorious that the very heathen were aware that His birth was expected at or about the time when our Lord appeared and had the cross assigned Him by the Jews and Gentiles, instead of the crown. Tacitus and Suetonius attest this; and so does their own historian of the siege of Jerusalem. Yet prophecy of scripture predicted that so it was to be, and in the true moral order of "the Christward sufferings, and the glories after these" (1 Pet. i. 11). For thus only could those who believe be rescued from evil and share His glories. To reign first, and afterward suffer, would be nugatory and purposeless, with utter confusion. But because Christ was thus faithful in His infinite love, the unbelieving Jews rejected Him; and therefore God rejected them for a season of rich mercy to the Gentiles meanwhile.

We can understand accordingly that "prophecy of scripture" is fraught with God's mind about Christ's kingdom in power and glory, and this after His sufferings, though the latter element is not so frequent as the former, yet well attested in one form or another in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. But where is not the future kingdom over the earth held out?

One exception may be alleged, the very peculiar but deeply interesting and instructive book of Jonah, which on the surface has no "prophecy of scripture," but only a conditional threat of judgment arrested by repentance. Yet it conveys a true prophetic narrative on which the Lord affixed His seal, not only as preaching to the heathen Ninevites that repented, but as a sign of His own death and resurrection, when the Gentile that believes enters the blessing of grace, and the Jew who refused reaps the judgment of his unbelief. For Jonah shows us Israel shut up in a selfish prejudice that despised the Gentile, unwilling to warn, and jealous lest, if Nineveh repented, God should be gracious enough to arrest the judgment, and thus set aside the prophet's denunciation.

In the way of a contrast Jonah typified Christ, though himself an unfaithful witness, and hence cast into the sea, and even for three days and nights swallowed by a great fish. Even then whilst going to the Gentiles, he sulked at God's grace, at the time when God made him feel his folly. Whereas Christ was the Faithful Witness, saved His ungrateful people, delighted in grace to the Gentile, and for the joy

lying before Him in love and obedience endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God's throne. Jonah's course was a true type prophetically of Christ, but as much to his own shame as to God's glory in the end; as to which his writing the book by inspiration is the best proof of his repentance. It also contrasts strikingly with the perfection of Christ, and prefigures the mercy God as a faithful Creator will show, not only to the dark heathen but to the meanest of His creatures. Had He listened to the Jew, yea and a real Jewish prophet, not a Ninevite had been spared in honour of his woe on the city. But God is righteous to the claims and worth of Christ's atoning death, which in the coming kingdom will shine in the mercy and blessing of all nations, so that "beasts and all cattle" shall join the chorus of praise to His name from the earth (Ps. cxlviii).

Thus even the book of Jonah in its exceptional way differs only in its form from other prophecies of scripture. All point to Christ's coming Kingdom over the earth, which was so soon forgotten after the apostles, that there is no proper statement of it in a single ancient creed, any more than in the symbols of the Reformation. Neither the Fathers, nor the Reformers, were at all versed in prophecy. The Oxford revival of the Fathers accordingly in no way helps; still less does the Rationalist school, which denies it in principle. Nor has Non-conformity any light of God as to the future, least of all since it has entered the arena of politics, and

become as worldly as Popery itself in setting its mind on earthly things.

The last verse of our chapter gives the reason why no prophecy of Scripture can be limited to its own isolated solution, but forms part of a vast circle of divine predictions centering in Christ and His kingdom.

"For no prophecy was ever brought by will of man, but [holy] men* spoke from God, moved (or, borne along) by [the] Holy Spirit" (ver. 21).

It is not surprising that those who are only conversant with man, his thoughts, sayings and doings, believe not in prophecy any more than miracle, and despise grace and truth. For all these are of God, and utterly impossible save by His power: grace and truth are only in and through our Lord Jesus. If we now turn our attention to prophecy, consider how Isaiah the prophet was led to triumph over heathen prognosticators and idolatrous stargazers, as Moses did over the magicians of Egypt, and Elijah over the priests of Baal.

"Produce your cause," we read in Isa. xli. 21 &c., "saith Jehovah, bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob; let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things what they [be] that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may

* The MSS. are here very confused, both in order which is of less importance, and in words added or omitted. Yet all the uncials omit the article before *ἄνθρωποι* (men) as the best do *ἅγιοι* (holy).

know that ye [are] gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold [it] together. Behold, ye [are] of nothing and your work of nought: an abomination [is he that] chooseth you. I have raised [one] up from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name; and he shall come upon princes as [upon] mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. Who hath declared from the beginning that we may know? and before time, that we may say, [He is] righteous? Yea, [there is] none that showeth; yea, [there is] none that declareth; yea, [there is] none that heareth your words."

Here the challenge was beyond any votary of a false god to take up, though the demand was small compared with prophecy of scripture. It was beyond man's will to speak even in an isolated way of a future person or event. But those given by God's intent are each part of an immense web which He has woven, on which is indelibly traced His purpose of glorifying Him who gave up the glory proper to Him as divine, that He might become man and by His death and resurrection conciliate the most jarring principles and join the most opposed persons. He will take away all the sins and iniquities of believers; He will establish righteousness, peace and joy over all the earth where self and will wrought only evil and mischief. He has defeated and will defeat the subtle and mighty adversary and all his host. He wins back the weak rebels (deceived to set God at defiance) into repentance, meekness and humility, rejoicing to be the ready

servants of His will ; for God deigns to make them His children, and His sons, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. They enjoy even here and now fellowship with the Father and the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit by His working on life in Christ ; and they reign with Him when He reigns before the world, as for ever before God.

Nor is it only that the reconciliation is what we receive now ; but it will embrace the heavens defiled by the enemy's evil, and the earth where he, through man's servitude, set himself up as prince and the god of the world. Through Christ's death on the cross all things shall be reconciled unto God, the things whether on the earth or in the heavens ; *not* those who live and die despising alike the unseen God and His Son who stooped so low and suffered infinitely for sin that God might be able to say righteously to the worst, Be reconciled to God. As He will have the risen saints above with Christ, thus giving His children their special joy in the Father's house, so they share Christ's glory before the universe. Nor shall anything fail of His magnificent plans for the earth, when Israel shall be delivered from his stiffneckedness, and adore the crucified Messiah, and rise out of all abasement to be God's son, His firstborn nationally upon the earth ; and all the nations shall abandon their shameless idolatries, and willingly own the long guilty people to be the seed Jehovah has blessed. " And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister to thee ; and the nation and kingdom that will not serve

Zion shall perish," when Messiah reigns, and Israel are under the new covenant.

To all this the will of man is adverse; but were it ever so zealous to help, who is sufficient but God to take in a range so vast, deep, and high? Hence the only possible power is that of the Holy Spirit; and God has deigned, in His great love of man's blessing, to tell us beforehand of those coming glories of Christ, as by holy men He also predicted His sufferings. It was a competency so entirely conferred by God's grace, that now to pave the way for the apostasy Satan has raised up a new school of men in all the world's seats of learning, and very largely among the clerical and ministerial ranks, who agree in nothing so much as that true prophecy is impossible. They thus bear on their forehead and hands the stain of infidelity, and spend their activities in propagating their lie about a large part of both Testaments as God's truth.

Yet the fact is that direct, formal, and avowed prophecies abound in scripture, positive and definite, some of the largest and loftiest character, and others minute to a degree that none could expect who is not familiar with the most condescending tenderness in God. But also the narrative of persons and facts from the first book of the O.T. has a deep scope of prophecy below its surface. The same principle applies to His instructions for His earthly people which none but the unspiritual fail to see running through not Genesis only but Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and in a less degree Deuteronomy, and really scripture

in general which is not open prediction. Who but God was sufficient for these things? Truly when we accept and understand as well as believe that no prophecy was ever brought by will of man, but men spoke from God moved by the Holy Spirit, we can but say, How gracious of God! how needed by us! But how base that man should be so deaf to His word, so ready to heed the shallow reasonings of Satan's emissaries who add to their guilt the pretence of bearing the Christian name, though sinking lower than decent Jews!

CHAPTER II.

THE apostle turns to the first of the evil classes among those of the circumcision who, if not now, had once professed the Lord's name; the class of corruption in word and deed (ii). Chap. iii. deals with the philosophic and sceptical class.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, as there shall be also false teachers among you, such as shall bring in by-the-bye sects of perdition, denying even the Sovereign Master that bought them, bringing on themselves swift perdition; and many shall follow their dissolutenesses;* because of whom the way of the truth shall be blasphemed. And in covetousness with feigned (or, well-turned) words, they shall make merchandise of you: for whom judgment from of old is not idle, and their perdition slumbereth not" (vers. 1-3).

Thus we see that the downward progress in Israel was to have its counterpart in Christendom, and a similar tide of moral pravity both cause and effect of hateful heterodoxy. If God of old, as we were told, raised up for the evil day prophets as marked for the truth as for holiness of life, Satan

* There is no doubt that the Text. Rec. must here yield to much better authority, and the intrinsic sense.

was not slow to supply prophets as shameless for their lies as for their selfish and corrupt ways. This the O.T. shows but too abundantly ; and here the apostle foretells it would be no better but more guiltily where grace under the gospel was more open to be abused than the law.

Let me refer to a modern development as a sample ; the party extensively spread over Great Britain and America which adopts J. S. Russell's Parousia, London, 1878. It is the antithesis of the Seventh-Day Baptist school, which destroys the gospel by its extreme judaizing, and is therefore too repulsive to attract any save those completely under law. But the Parousia delusion captivates the wider and more refined minds who cannot shut their eyes to the "better thing" that Christ has introduced, and the ministry of the Spirit with its subsisting and surpassing glory ; yet all herein is taken up in a way merely natural. It starts with the assumption that the Lord's second coming or presence took place at the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70 ! and that thenceforward the promised glory is fulfilled, so that we are now reigning with Christ ! and therefore the fullest change so long looked for in both O. and N.T. has already taken place ! !

Hence dogmatic and practical Christianity are alike and absolutely annulled in such a pseudo-scheme. For the N.T. contemplates us and our communion ; and our walk and our worship are in view of the blessed presence of Christ to receive us glorified to Himself for the Father's house, where

He is now (not we till then). Not only the Gospels cease to apply but the Epistles, to say nothing of the Revelation; for they unquestionably exhort us to a path of suffering, both for righteousness' sake and for Christ's name, in a world wholly opposed to Him and His reign. When He really appears, God will use His solemn judgments, so that the world will learn righteousness, especially as Satan cannot then seduce. In short, the enemy has beguiled these visionaries into an entire abolition of all the state and duties of believers on which the Bible insists till "that day," when all things become new, however true now to our faith and hope, as they will then be in fact and to every eye.

Nor need one do more than glance at another egregious folly under the strange claim of "Christian Science." It is worthy of a female teacher who cannot be ignorant that the apostle by the Holy Spirit calls her to learn in quietness with all subjection, saying by St. Paul "I do not permit a woman to teach nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in quietness." He forbids "*exercise*," and not usurpation only. Here too the notions are too preposterous to need anything but a rebuke for their presumption and impiety. If these set up to be new inventions, it would be a very long task to survey all the old schemes of falsehood which have been accumulating since our Epistle, and are designated as "heresies" or more correctly "sects of perdition." For therein lies the difference of "schism" from "sect": the former a party within, the latter, more aggravated as being a different party without, as

1 Cor. xi. 18, 19 makes plain, though habitually forgotten in systematic divinity.

Even before the Kingdom of the heavens came or the church was founded on the Lord dead, risen, and ascended, He warned (in Matt. xiii.) of the darnel which the enemy would sow among the wheat. Clearly it is neither pagans nor Jews but nominal Christians, who were not to be cut off, and would pursue their destructive evil till the Son of man come in personal judgment. So in Luke xii. He also described the faithless though professing servant who would put off His return, and accordingly be marked by worldliness and oppressive self-exaltation, and must have his portion with the unbelievers, punished all the more severely because he made not ready nor did His will though he knew it. What an appeal to conscience!

Again in Acts xx. the apostle Paul in his charge to the overseers or elders of the church in Ephesus told them that *he* knew of there coming in among them after his departure grievous wolves not sparing the flock, and from among their own selves men rising up speaking perverted things to draw the disciples after them. Earlier to the Thessalonian saints he pointed out the mystery of lawlessness at work, not among Jews or Gentiles desperately wicked as they were, but among Christian professors of the latter day which was to develop into the apostasy and the man of sin, the lawless one, to be consumed (not by preaching however sound, but) by the judicial breath of the Lord Jesus. Later to the Philippians he mourned over "many" as enemies

of Christ's cross whose end is perdition. So in 1 Tim. iv. he says that the Spirit speaks expressly of some in latter times falling away from the faith, heeding deceiving spirits in hypocrisy of legend-mongers without conscience yet ascetics; and in 2 Tim. iii. he speaks of the opposite school of self-will or self-indulgence and proud lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, with a form of piety but denying its power. From these the word is, "Turn away," with a twofold announcement, that all those wishing to live piously shall be persecuted, and that wicked men and impostors shall wax worse and worse. See also 2 Tim. iv. 1-4.

The Epistle of James (v. 7-9) calls to patience and establishment of heart, "because the presence of the Lord is drawn nigh." "Behold, the judge standeth before the doors." So Peter in his First Epistle declares it "the time for judgment to begin from the house of God." And here we begin with his full testimony as to false teachers who corrupt the springs of all truth and righteousness. Jude goes over the same ground, only denouncing its apostate character which was a deeper view. 1 John fully characterises as the "last hour" the appalling prevalence of antichrists gone out, the more freely to work their nefarious way. And we may regard the Revelation as the great Christian prophecy of the approaching judgments, first providential, then personal when Christendom becomes but a sad object for divine punishment. All point to the awful issue: not reunion save in an evil way so far as it

may be ; but the Lord's appearing in relentless dealing when the cup of iniquity is full.

There is no difficulty in the apostle's predicating of these false teachers that the Sovereign Master bought them. It is "purchase," which is universal, not "redemption" which is limited to those who have in Christ the forgiveness of the offences through His blood. In the parable too we read that He bought not only the treasure but the field. Purchase acquired all as His slaves or chattels ; but redemption sets free from Satan's power as well as divine judgment. Hence they are nowhere said to be "redeemed," but they were bought though they disowned the purchase in rebellion against His rights.

What can bring a deeper stigma on "the way of the truth" than the dissolutenesses, whatever their form, of these accredited teachers? It is in Jeremiah's writings where we find most fully the prophets prophesying falsely and the priests conniving at the evil so as to rule. "And my people love to have it so ; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" says the true prophet in his anguish. But throughout Jewish history we see the same principle from the beginning to the crisis in our Lord's day, which ended in the Romans taking away both their place and their nation. Still more terrible is God's vengeance on the abominations of the N. T. Babylon and the false teachers who for their covetousness and well-turned words have all along drawn the mass into departure from the truth, despite of His Spirit, and rebellion against God and

His Anointed. Jubilant at man's progress in his own way without Christ, how little they believe that God's eye is on their selfish merchandise, and that their perdition does not slumber according to the judgment pronounced on such evil even before the deluge! How utterly unfounded to expect in Christendom, any more than in Israel, a real reunion and recovery! For the mass it is worse and worse, whatever superficial appearances say to the contrary. Scripture is clear and conclusive.

In the three opening verses the apostle pointed out in plain and pointed terms the very class of false teachers which is now poisoning the fountains of Christendom. It is itself a prophecy fulfilled to every believer of spiritual intelligence. As in Israel the false prophets, so now the false teachers are a fact more manifest in our day than ever before. The very scattering, which ought not to be among true-hearted saints, but which is inevitable under personal or party pressure, makes the peculiar evil more apparently the work of the spirit of error. They may differ each from the rest doctrinally in other respects; but they all agree to let in scepticism as to scripture, which necessarily destroys divine authority for every article of faith, and therefore directly tends to dissolve the credit of its rule in anything. Now where is there a single denomination free from this malaria? And the worst is that it is no longer eccentric individuals winked at to avoid trouble and split, but now leading seniors and energetic juniors in the ministry are those more zealous for that deadly error, though

nominally some may not deny Christ and the truth of His work.

In former days, as the rule when such unbelievers found themselves opposed through their speculations to the Articles of faith they had subscribed, or to their public profession on becoming religious guides, they withdrew from a position they could no longer hold with common integrity. But in our day we see how those who are false in doctrine are bold enough to set conscience at defiance, and cleave to their position and emoluments when they abandon the truth which they had solemnly pledged themselves to preach and teach. It is not therefore the Lord and the truth only which they betray; but they sacrifice plain honesty of principle for a place and a living which they value. This depravity too is severely exposed in the apostle's words, "through covetousness with well-turned words they will make merchandise of you." Nor is it his rebuke only since he adds the retribution which must befall those who thus mock God: "for whom judgment of old is not idle, and their destruction slumbereth not." The maledictions under the seal of the Fisherman may return on the guilty ill-wisher, but God will surely give effect to the words of the bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ His Son in the solemn Epistle before us.

The apostle proceeds to give examples of divine judgment executed on angels as well as men.

"For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to lowest hell and gave

them up to chains [or, pits*] of gloom reserved for judgment, and spared not an ancient world but preserved Noah an eighth (*i.e.* with seven others), a preacher of righteousness, having brought a flood upon a world of ungodly ones" (vers. 4, 5).

We must not confound this fall of angels with the original defection of the devil and his angels, which had a distinct character and a different treatment on God's part. What can be plainer than that the earlier defection was before man was created? For the devil their leader became man's tempter, as his own fault was being lifted up with self-importance and pride against God, and his aim was to lure our first parents into like independence and rebellion. In the case before us the direction of sin was toward man in a way contrary to the nature of angels or of mankind; and so abhorrent to God that He executed an exemplary dealing of His displeasure at the time of the deluge. This too continues through all the ages of man on the earth till final judgment come for wicked men and angels when the eternal state is to open. The devil and his angels have quite another destiny; for they are allowed to tempt man, as their chief tempted even the Son of God when here incarnate, rising more and more during the season of divine long-suffering till the ruin of Christendom, as well as of the Jews, shall revive the Roman empire in the Beast, and the False Prophet of Judea, the Antichrist, to sit not only as

* It is a question between *στροῖς* or *σειροῖς* (N A B C) and *σειραῖς* (K L P and the cursives). Here *τηρουμένους* has better support than *τετηρουμένους*.

Messiah but as God in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. Even at the end of Christ's thousand years' reign, Satan will be loosed once more to deceive man for a little space. All so far is in contrast with the sinning angels here.

But the comparison with Jude 6, 7, renders another fact sufficiently clear; that the particular time and the special enormity of their sin point to what is described in Gen. vi. 1-4, which played a prominent part in the accumulated evil for which the deluge was sent to destroy the world which then was. One knows how repugnant to most minds is the natural sense of this episode, what violent efforts have been made by learned men to evade it, provoked by absurd rabbinical legends gloating in what is vile and strange, and availing themselves of our Saviour's words in Matt. xxii. 30 on the very different truth of the resurrection state to deny its possibility. Besides, the word does not necessarily mean "wives" but "women," though ordinarily so employed. However this be, we may all admire the holy wisdom of God in telling us briefly and even obscurely a tale on which man has so much to say, and so great a desire to fill up the details, if he could.

Next the apostle speaks of Noah with his family of seven preserved when God spared not the ancient world. For this is important in his account of God's government. If His hand brought a flood on a world of the ungodly, He took care to guard the safety of Noah's house for the sake of its faithful head. And he draws attention to the interesting

fact that Noah was not only a righteous man but "a preacher of righteousness." The hundred and twenty years of which Jehovah spoke was the space of the preparation of the ark and of Noah's preaching. It has nothing to do with the duration of human life, as some have fancied, but of divine patience before "the flood came and took all away." To the same time refers the mention of Noah and his preaching also in 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20 where we are told of their spirits, disobedient as they were to the word of his testimony, and therefore in prison awaiting a judgment still more terrible than aught of a temporal nature, however vast and exceptional.

And so it is now. The day of the Lord, of which the Lord Himself warned, and calls His servants to warn, is at hand; and it will come when men say Peace and safety, while their hearts are filled with fear and foreboding of what is about to be on the inhabited earth. Assuredly the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power taking vengeance on a guilty world disobedient to the gospel will even more terrify men in its sudden destruction.

The apostle adduces another divine judgment, not so vast as the deluge, but even more solemnly significant, though on a small scale.

"And reducing to ashes [the] cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he condemned [them] with overthrow, having set an example to those that should live ungodlily, and rescued righteous Lot, distressed by the behaviour of those abandoned in licentiousness; for the righteous [man] dwell-

ing among them, in seeing and hearing was tormenting a righteous soul day after day with lawless works" (vers. 6-8).

The awful story is told with holy plainness of speech in Gen. xix. The sinning and doom of angels consigned to the deepest pit of gloom in chains of darkness for a judgment still more terrible; and the ensuing and unsparing destruction of an old world except Noah and his family, are followed by a catastrophe of fire and brimstone on the cities of the plain. There the bold monstrous depravity of mankind sunk to its lowest depths and cried aloud for heaven's open and indignant vengeance. These were early days comparatively speaking. The boasted civilization of man had borne much fruit to glory in, not only on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, but on the Nile. And here on the borders of Canaan, destined for the seed of Abraham, and round the sea into which debouched the waters of the Jordan, were men sunk into unblushing vileness not to be named, save in the days long after by the classic authors of Greece and Rome, who liked moral filth without shame. Most righteously did Jehovah execute His judgment on these cities, setting an example to those that should live an ungodly life, not providentially through the hand of man, but Himself raining upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven.

Do any now bearing the name of Christians question this dealing of Jehovah? They may plead the unbelief of an erratic speculator like Origen to excuse their own scepticism, to which

as they allow, the free thinking of Hobbes and Spinoza and the like gave a great impulse; and they are not afraid to cheer one another with the godless cry that they are the winning side. But how will it be when, in the approaching consummation of the age, the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with angels of His power in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? Will it be any consolation to the teachers of those responsible to preach the truth that they were successful in undermining God's authority in His word under colour of historical investigation which has no real facts but fancy, and of criticism which is not to get rid of human error but to enthrone it and to dissolve, in will at least, all that is divine? Will they encourage one another in their work of mischief when such impious infidelity pays the penalty of everlasting destruction from the Lord's presence and from the glory of His might? O that where conscience is seared by the power of evil, there might be an ear to hear, and repentance be given to the acknowledgment of the truth, so that out of the snare of the devil, taken as they were by him, they might wake up for God's will! They may flatter themselves that they are as moral as the old cities were corrupt. But after all to reject God's word, and claim title to sit in judgment on it, is to have a character of pride and malignity more destructive than the abominable and unnatural debasement of Sodom. If God, not man, is the measure of sin

they who are caught red-handed in their war against His inspiration will learn then, if they mock now, what it is to have helped on the apostasy and the man of sin.

But the apostle here as before attests divine mercy as well as judgment. For as before He preserved Noah preacher of righteousness with seven others who shared the ark with him, so now He saved "righteous Lot, distressed by the behaviour of those abandoned in licentiousness." Peter's appointed view is righteousness and unrighteousness ; as Jude's was apostasy from a place given by divine will. Both were true of old, and shall be true again in those who hate and deny prophecy, yet will prove its truth in the ruin of those they mislead. And shall they escape, who served Satan's aim and despised God's word, because they die before that day to which all the prophets point, though they had "settled" it to have been a mistake? Lot was not like Abraham in the secret of the Lord apart from the scene. But he was no scoffer, any more than a sceptic ; "for the righteous man, dwelling among them in seeing and hearing was tormenting a righteous soul day after day with lawless works." Whoever heard of such seriousness in a dilettante higher critic? Lot's was not the more blessed part of Abraham, yet was he truly grieved for the Lord's sake. And so it will be with a righteous remnant, when the Jews are in their last trial and the mass accept idols once more, and the antichrist too, as the Psalms and the Prophecies amply prove.

Thereon the apostle goes out to show the divine government in a more general way both as to good and evil.

" [The] Lord (or, Jehovah) knoweth to deliver the godly out of trial, and to keep unjust [men] for judgment-day to be punished; and especially those that walk after flesh in lust of uncleanness, and despise lordship. Daring, selfwilled, they tremble not speaking railingly of dignities (or, glories), when angels, being greater in might and power, bring not against them before [the] Lord (or, Jehovah) a railing charge" (vers. 9-11).

Though it is still the evil day and the enemy is not yet hurled from his place in the heavens (Eph. vi.), the eye of the Lord is not closed to the trial of the godly any more than to the ways of unrighteous men. There is a constantly active care of His own to deliver out of temptation, as He reserves unjust men for another day when judgment must requite them. But this is allotted to the Lord Jesus, whom the world despised and rejected. He it is who was determinately appointed of God Judge of living and dead. The Father judgeth none but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He the Son is therefore the test. He that honours not the Son honours not the Father that sent Him. And as it is the self-emptying and humiliation of the Son in becoming man and dying on the cross which gave occasion to unbelief and contempt, instead of love and subjection, it will be as Son of man that the Lord will judge mankind. Those

who believe on the Son of God receive in Him life eternal; those who despise and disobey Him as if only man must be judged by the glorified Son of man; and His judgment on the great white throne (Rev. xx. 12) will be as everlasting as His life He gives the believer. There will be no escaping judgment for unjust men, even if a day of judgment too punish them in this life at His appearing.

The gospel has saved those who believe for heaven; but it has not purged the earth of iniquity. This will be in the age to come when the Lord reigns over all the earth. It is not what God is doing now, nor will it be till He appears in glory. The darnel was to grow with the wheat in the world of profession. His servants were too ready to uproot; but His word is, Suffer both to grow together unto the harvest or the age's completion. Then shall He send His angels; for it will be their work, not ours even then. We have to witness grace. Then a king shall reign in righteousness; and as the result of retribution executed on the wicked, not only shall the righteous nation enter in, which keeps faithfulness, but "when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

But "specially those that walk after flesh in lust of uncleanness, and despise lordship" shall incur the divine indignation. To this the grace which God is now showing in the gospel will contribute, because unbelief works to indulge all the more in evil. For if favour be shewn to the

wicked, he does not learn righteousness, but trifles with sin, and hopes to walk as he likes with impunity; or as it is written in Eccles. viii. 11, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is full in them to do evil." Nor is it unclean lust only that is peculiarly offensive to God, and nourished by the abused grace of the gospel, but despising lordship. For God in His providence has set up the check of magisterial authority against evil; and what undermines this more than the selfwill of man in these last days which pleads liberty against law to indulge in licence and rebellion? It was bad in Judaism; it is worse in Christendom, as this Epistle anticipates, and the corresponding Epistle of Jude. How this defiant haughtiness abounds now! And it will increase to more ungodliness, as the end of the age approaches.

In vers. 10, 11 the wicked spirit is still more pointedly designated. "Daring, self-willed, they tremble not speaking railingly of dignities (or, glories, literally); when angels, being greater in might and power, bring not against them before [the] Lord (or, Jehovah) a railing charge." The tongue as is shewn in the Epistle of James is pre-eminently the index of the inner man's feelings, aim and character. He cannot always do what he would; but his lips express what he is in audacity and selfwill. The fact that some are set in a place above others in authority is enough to rouse hatred and revolutionary desires, to lower and destroy.

Men tremble not to speak railingly of dignities. A debased Christianity helps this where the truth does not reign to produce self-judgment, yet is sufficiently known to make little of man's pretensions and worldly glories. With such presumption of the baptised the apostle contrasts the humility and awe of angels, superior as they are in might and power, who have such a sense of reverence before God as to restrain their speech before Him, whatever be the evils to call out their abhorrence.

Even such a sketch did not suffice adequately to convey what the false teachers would turn out in Christendom. The Holy Spirit proceeds yet more vividly in His anticipative description of their words and deeds.

"But these, as irrational animals born by nature for capture and destruction, speaking evil in what things they are ignorant, shall also perish in their corruption, receiving as they shall wages of unrighteousness, accounting [their] ephemeral luxury pleasure; spots and blemishes, luxuriating in their love feasts [or, deceits], feasting with you; having eyes full of an adulteress and without cessation from sin; setting baits for unstable souls; having a heart practised in covetousness, children of curse; abandoning as they did a straight way, they went astray, following out in the way of Balaam [son] of Beor, who loved wages of unrighteousness, but had reproof of his own iniquity; a dumb beast of burden speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet" (vers. 12-16).

It was already shewn generally from ver. 10 how these nominal Christians proceed after flesh in lust of pollution, instead of walking according to Spirit, as freed from the law of sin and of death. Then their boldness was contrasted with angels greater in strength and power who are as reverent before the Lord as those were scornful. Now they are compared to such irrational animals as by nature are born to be captured and destroyed. How overwhelming that the apostle has thus to describe false teachers and those that follow their dissolutenesses! They were once enlightened, had tasted the heavenly gift, and became partakers of Holy Spirit, and tasted God's good word and power of a coming age (not evil as the present is), and now yielded to malevolence, speaking evilly in what things they were ignorant. What was before such but also to "perish in their corruption?"

We may profitably remark that Heb. vi. in reviewing the many and great privileges of such spurious professors does not speak any more than Peter of being born anew or of God, any more than of being sealed of the Spirit. They had accurate knowledge of the Christian revelation and special gift in its characteristic power. Mind and feeling can go far in appreciating the wonderful works of God, and the moral beauty and grace of Christ. But in all the scriptures which designate natural men, the utmost care is taken to leave out the communication of life eternal and a divine nature, or "repentance unto life." This supposes a real self-judgment before God, an overwhelming sense of

sin in His sight, of total moral ruin, so as absolutely to need sovereign grace; but it is never found save in those begotten of God. Yet short of it, what is there that the intellect cannot appropriate, enjoy, and proclaim? Ere long the test comes, which life in Christ with the Spirit's power alone can stand; and Satan so touches and masters them that their departure from God becomes more apparent and complete. Shall they not receive wages of unrighteousness? Can any course of life be farther from Christ than esteeming ephemeral luxury pleasure? He never once sought to please Himself but in every thing to do His Father's will; and did He not call His own to hear His voice and follow Him? Did He not suffer for us, leaving us a model so that we should follow in His steps?

"Spots and blemishes" were these men, "luxuriating in their love-feasts (or, deceits),* feasting with you." To bring self-indulgence into a love-feast was a shame to Christ, and the forerunner of worse corruption. "Having eyes full of an adulteress and without cessation from sin." It was bad enough at a heathen celebration: what was it before the Holy and True? "Setting baits for unstable souls" in honour of Him who suffered to the uttermost to win the foulest from their sins to God! Who could wonder that they "have a heart practised in covetousness" in order to carry on the basest self-indulgence, where all are bound, denying impiety and worldly lusts, to live soberly,

*There is no small diversity and correction in the readings here. Compare Jude 12.

and justly and piously in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ! But these who act as if the cross of Christ opened the door for any abomination, are they not "children of curse?" It was sinning that grace may abound.

"Having left a straight way" (and such surely is Christ), "they went astray, having followed out in the way of Balaam [son] of Beor, who received wages of unrighteousness." No more solemn or apposite warning could be drawn from the Book of God; none of one who more deceived himself and others; none that so combined the most glowing and grand anticipations for Israel from Jehovah with the subtlest efforts to ensnare into evil which should compromise and endanger them. Yet had he crafty care for his own interest while pretending to be quite above it. Whatever his words, he loved wages of unrighteousness, but had reproof to his own iniquity, and in a form eminently adapted to appeal to his conscience and to be a continual warning in the east, less sceptical than the west. "A dumb beast of burden speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet." He who boasted of having his eyes open saw not what the ass was given to see, and knew not why she turned aside (from the sword drawn in the angel's hand), and why she thrust herself unto the wall that Balaam might not have his head smitten, but at most his foot crushed; and why she fell down where there was no other way for her or her master to escape

destruction. How much more guilty are false teachers since the Son of God came and gave us understanding to know Him that is true!

The indignant invective of the apostle is not even yet exhausted. So various are the forms of hypocritical unrighteousness, he would have the faithful fully informed and on their guard.

"These are springs without water, * and mists* driven by storm, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved.* For uttering overswellings of vanity, they allure in lusts of the flesh, by dissolutenesses, those that are just escaping† from them that walk in error, promising them liberty while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a man is worsted, by him is he also held in bondage. For if after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but again entangled and worsted thereby, the last for them is become worse than the first" (vers. 17-20).

It is no longer contrast with angels or comparison with Balaam, but the gravest picture of spiritual worthlessness with the seal of everlasting darkness affixed before judgment consigns to it. It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to be begotten of God but to have the Spirit of His Son given to be in him a spring of water springing up into life eternal. Yea the Lord adds elsewhere, He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath

*For "clouds," the best authorities give "and mists," and omit "for ever."

† "Those just (or, a little) escaping," not "those clean (or, really) escaped," as in the Text Rec. In ver. 20 it is the aorist participle, not the present as in ver. 18.

said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; and that this great gift should not pass away like Jewish favours, but abide for ever. And surely the Christian teacher has yet more, not only the δωρεὰ to enjoy but his special χάρισμα to make it known, and appreciated, and applied. But these teachers of Christendom, certainly not of Christ, "are springs without water" (they never had any), and "mists driven by storm," instead of luminaries directed by the Holy Spirit; they express nature empty and fallen, and under gusts of feeling if not the enemy's power. And the end is not death only but divine wrath for ever, in character with the darkness they loved because their deeds were evil.

For what are the utterances of those that figure for mischief on the ecclesiastical stage? "Overswellings of vanity" by which to "allure in desires and lusts of flesh by dissolutenesses those just escaping from them that walk in error." Take three plain examples of false teaching which directly tend to lower the standard of holiness and make provision for flesh's lusts. 1. Sin is *not* "the transgression of the law" (as in the A.V. of 1 John iii. 4), but "lawlessness" which rejects all subjection to God, and applies to Gentiles who knew not the law as well as to the Jew who did, and to the wicked that heard but obeyed not the gospel. How much evil in Christendom is not touched by the Decalogue! 2. What licence for evil ways is not covered by "so that ye cannot do the things ~~that~~ ye would" in Gal. v. 17? Its real meaning is

the wholly different force, "that ye should not do the things that ye would" or desire. The error becomes the religion, or at least practice, of despair which is as far from Christian holiness as can be. 3. There is too the dogmatic error in the misreading of Rom. vii. 6, where the too confiding public were taught that the law was dead, instead of the believers' death to it, so that they should serve in newness of spirit; and not oldness of letter which alas! has ever been the bane of mere profession. It was sad that good men were blinded to what their spiritual instinct must have revolted from; but who can tell the enormous influence of such a threefold cord for misrepresenting God's word, especially in the hands of unscrupulous, false teachers who gloat in misrenderings which thus consecrate their wicked life and labours?

Love, lowliness, purity are essentials of the new nature, and hence so characterise the Christian that, when failure in any of these respects occurs, the weak are stumbled, and the strong are grieved for the Lord's sake. But when haughty vapourings as in ver. 18 takes the place of truth as it is in Jesus, one need not wonder that underneath they allure in flesh's lusts by wantonnesses those just escaping with the skin of their teeth from them that walk in error. For the young are peculiarly open to danger from these seducing ways in those they trust for precept and example. The promise of liberty has a fair sound to their ears. But the apostle points his finger to the fatal spot, which is not now nor ever that of God's children: they are

veritable bondmen of corruption. No swellings can hide or excuse the evil, or disguise effectually to the simplest saint the enemy at work. "For by whom one is worsted, by him also is he held in bondage."

The very babe in Christ only just escaping is sensitive to vileness and turns away, where old ones are dulled and deadened by theories which apologise for error or evil. Nor is any plea more insidious or successful than unity, precious where Christ is its centre ; but where it is not really His, it is the gilded bait of the soul-destroyer. "For if, having escaped the pollutions of the world through true knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but again thereby entangled, they are worsted, the last for them is become worse than the first" (ver. 20). How graphic and energetic and solemn is the apostle's picture of the soul's ruin ! And this after God's work in the cross of Christ, this gift of the Spirit sent forth from heaven, and His full revelation to man. Yet the cross had already shewn man's enmity and guilt and ruin, with Satan's power over him ; but, thank God, it has also shewn man in Christ perfect for God, for sinners to save, for saints to keep, guide and bless, that Satan be wholly defeated.

But nowhere is the divine value of the cross more ignored than where it is made an external idol, the rival of the crescent that rules the night, or of the sun that rules the day. In all these sin is not seen to be already dealt with to faith for God's glory ; but man profits by unbelief to make a tariff

for it in a way suited to circumstances and his own will for Satan's pleasure.

The apostle confirms the awful end of the course he had just portrayed by the two concluding verses, one explanatory, and the other in the true proverb applied with its telling figures, too often exemplified.

"For it were better for them not to have known well the way of righteousness than knowing well to have turned back* from the holy commandment delivered to them" (ver. 21).

The righteous tone of the warning is sustained with apostolic gravity to the close. Knowledge even of the most accurate sort, however desirable, is not the indispensable thing, but faith working by love and yielding our members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness. It is never affirmed or hinted that these false teachers were begotten of God; but they had professed His name who secures every thing that is good to the partaker of a divine nature, to which they had ever been strangers. They had once abandoned the pollutions of the world through the moral effect of what they had received. For the light of Christianity has had not a little influence even on Jews and heathen and infidels; and this the false teachers had profited by as much or more. But when the crisis came personally, and they deliberately succumbed to known evil, their downfall was profound if not rapid.

Therefore it is that we know now that "it were better for them not to have knowr well the way

* ὑποστρέψαι B O P &c. ἐπιστρέψαι K L &c.

of righteousness than knowing well to have turned back from the holy commandment delivered to them." What can be clearer or more certain? The way of righteousness is Christ made known in the gospel; but the truth and the life accompany the way when it is taken by a living faith, and fruit of righteousness follows only through Jesus Christ to God's glory and praise. Here was nothing but the ground of fallen nature bringing forth thorns and briers, and therefore the end is all the worse for a beginning of outward culture and cleansing, and the end is to be burned as we read in Heb. vi. 8. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this also shall he reap. For he that sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit shall reap from the Spirit life eternal. In this the false teachers had no more part or lot than Simon Magus in the early days. Their ruin was all the more aggravated by the morning cloud of seeming promise or the early dew of good words perhaps blessed to others, without effect in themselves. The attempt of some to attribute to them a passing from death into life is disproved by scripture which never goes so far, but stops short of salvation by grace. The holy commandment delivered to them was not even mixed with faith in their souls; and from this they at length turned back, that they might do their own will and gratify their evil lusts.

We may see in Heb. x. 26-30 more analogy with our chapter than in Heb. vi. 4-8. For in the latter case it was rather a return to Jewish

ordinances after having professed the grace of the gospel. In the former it is a return to sins after being confessors of Christ's death, which means for us death to sin. This case is what we read of in the warning of Peter before us, only that he dwells on the aggravated guilt of false teachers, as the Epistle to the Hebrews does on the apostasy of professing Christians in yielding to sinful lusts. How fully and precisely scripture provides for every danger, and against all evil !

"[But]* there hath happened to them the [saying] of the true proverb, A dog returned to his own vomit, and A sow washed into rolling in mire" (ver. 22).

The yielding to sin, described in ver. 21, is entirely confirmed by the application to their case by the point of the true proverb that follows : " a dog returned to his own vomit, and a sow washed into rolling in mire." Never had these evil workers been sheep of the Good Shepherd's pasture. They had never been transformed by the renewal of mind which is of God's effectual grace. There was therefore no such anomaly in the Christian sphere as the degradation of a sheep to a dog, nor such a metamorphosis as into swine. When born anew, there is a new life and nature imparted; but the old abides to be disallowed, because we died with Christ to sin. But a dog does not become a sheep, nor do sheep become swine, save in the false science of theology.

* *It* is not in N A B &c., but in Nc O K L P etc. Lessor flaws we may leave.

“ That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ” (John iii. 6). And this it is which the believer receives through faith in Christ, even His life communicated now to the soul in the Spirit, as by-and-by to the body also at His coming again. There is not the most distant thought that the false teachers were ever thus born anew. On the contrary they are described as having no more than what the natural mind is capable of knowing. They might have accurate knowledge in the intellect, but no divine work whereby they were begotten of God. Hence at last came a turning back to a worse state than before they professed Christianity.

What can exceed the loathing our apostle feels and expresses, as he denounces not only the errors but the immoral practices of these false teachers? The apostle of the circumcision describes in solemn terms the ruin of which Paul at Miletus warned the elders of the church in Ephesus. “ *I know that there will come in among you after my departure grievous wolves not sparing the flock ; and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them* ” (Acts xx. 29, 30). “ *Grievous wolves* ” are surely enemies, whether or not they get the position of guides ; they were enemies who, instead of loving and tending the flock of God, ravenously and at all cost preyed on the sheep. And the alienated elders, who forgot the Lord with the grace and truth which came through Him, fell sadly from their office when they by means of perverted things

drew away the disciples after them. Thus what man built in the Lord's name, man's will should mislead and destroy ; and such is Christendom, an utter departure from the heavenly witness of Christ to which the church and every Christian is called. That which Christ has built will alone stand, for it is kept through the grace that is in Him, which is unfailing. But all that bear His name are responsible ; and guides must give account, not merely as all saints, but of that entrusted to them in particular.

Still these self-seeking chiefs, and even the grievous wolves though violently injurious, are not depicted with the contempt which the apostle attaches to those of whom he warns in this chapter. What figure more expressive of abominable impurity can be found to express "A dog returning to his own vomit, and A washed sow into rolling in mire?" The dog so returning we hear of in Prov. xxvi. 11, where the application is to the fool returning to his folly. Here it is still more emphatically said of him who once knew clearly the glad tidings of Christ and the truth of God in a general way. The better the knowledge, the worse if corruption ensues. What could match it but "A washed sow" again gone back to roll in mud?

Thus the awful issue of unrenewed man here set out in the unerring word of God keeps the security of grace wholly untouched. May the true believer not slip or fall? Surely he may, if unwatchful. But "he shall be made to stand ; for the Lord is able to make him stand (Rom.

xiv. 4). Without Him he owns himself lost ; but now "we more than conquer through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37). A man may preach ever so acceptably ; but if he live evilly as one not born anew, he perishes a reprobate. And why any Christian should question this is the less excusable, since scripture is perfectly plain in its call to self-denial, and in its denunciation of unholiness particularly in such as profess the Lord's name, with full warning of the awful end.

CHAPTER III.

FROM the humbling and awful indictment of false teachers in chap. ii. beginning to play their corrupting part in Christendom, as the false prophets had wrought the ruin of Israel in the past. the apostle turns to speak of this Second Epistle, and its aim in the grace of God. But even so, as we shall soon see, he has to warn of another daring snare to be, and a wholly different class of adversaries.

"This already a second epistle, beloved, I write to you, in both which I stir up your pure mind by putting in remembrance, that ye be mindful of the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the Lord and Saviour [by] your apostles *" (vers. 1, 2).

The apostle of the circumcision here presents scripture, both O. and N.T., as the grand safeguard, just as the apostle to the nations in his second Epistle to Timothy. Neither has the least thought of apostolic succession; which, if really given of the Lord, might well be regarded as no small stay for beleaguered saints exposed to the

*The uncials give *ὑμῶν*, the cursives *ἡμῶν* as in the ordinary text. It does not seem that any of the ancient versions support the former. No doubt the peculiarity of the phrase accounts for this. But we may be assured that, as it is overwhelmingly attested, so we do well to receive it, and learn the special ground for the unusual expression. It was a reminder of their near and dear relation to Christians.

worst of perils from misled leaders, and these at work within. But the truth is that the mystery of lawlessness was actively at work from early days, as 2 Thess. ii. informs us. It was restrained by the power of the Spirit, and especially by apostolic energy. But, as the apostle Paul let the Ephesian overseers know (Acts xx. 29, 30), his own decease would be the signal for fresh and successful efforts of the enemy. "I know that after my departure there will come in grievous wolves not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them". What then was the resource? "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all that are sanctified." Not a hint of a successor, but the assurance to faith of God and the word of His grace.

Just so here our apostle, in view of the danger, and horrors of the false teachers carrying on their nefarious work, casts the Christians from among the dispersed Jews on the words that were spoken before by the holy prophets, and on the commandment of the Lord and Saviour by their apostles. Both the prophets and the apostles were inspired to write as they did; for only by the faith of divine communications are those who believe brought into living relationship with God. Thus His word separates the soul to God, and by the revelation of Christ is the source of their joy and the formative power of obedience. In

this faith the elders from Abel downwards obtained witness, whatever the dislike of the world, which was not worthy of them and awaits sure judgment from God. Still the O.T. at best was predictive, and could not make known as the N.T. does the infinite glory and grace of the Saviour, nor the God-glorifying efficacy of His work for our souls, before the salvation of our bodies at His coming again. Known eternal life and accomplished redemption give the believers now to walk in the light, as could not be given before Christ came the first time, and renders him as a worshipper once purged to have no more conscience of sins, yea to have the Holy Ghost sealing him, and the earnest of coming glory with Christ as a joint-heir.

These privileges of the believer are the outcome of His actual advent and of the atoning work done and accepted by God, so that His love has been and is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. The First Epistle of Peter makes much known, the Epistles of Paul much more, which could neither be known nor enjoyed as they are since redemption. Thus the commandment of the Lord and Saviour by "your apostles," while it fulfils the spiritual promises of the O.T., goes far beyond it in the revelation of blessings in and through and with Christ in the heavenly places. Hence Paul refers to the mystery or secret which was kept silent in times everlasting, but now manifested according to the eternal God's commandment for obedience of faith to all the nations. For, after the cross (which entailed the setting

aside of the Jew meanwhile), God set up the rejected Christ above as the Supreme Chief over all things heavenly and earthly, and makes us who now believe (Jew or Greek), His body and bride, to share all glory with Him at His coming. This glory of the Head and the body over all things is far higher, wider and deeper, than anything in O.T. prophecy; it is the secret now revealed, however little it may be apprehended.

How horrified both the apostles would have been to witness the deadly undermining of the Bible, which, begun by free-thinking men more than a hundred years ago has become a naturalised epidemic, not only in Germany, France and Holland, but now in the English-speaking regions of the earth; growing self-confident, impudent and arrogant beyond measure, not knowing that God has forewarned of this turning away their ears from the truth and readiness of mind for fables. Take their treatment of the Pentateuch in particular, and of such prophets as Isaiah and Daniel. The infinite fact of a divine Person become flesh as truly as He is God is (with very few exceptions, to whom God may give deliverance) as nothing in their eyes, though of infinite value to those who believe and love as they know His love, God's love, to them.

Christ and His apostles declare that Moses wrote these earlier books. He and they treat the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, not only as genuine and authentic, but as of divine authority. Most are not ashamed to be so intoxicated with the poisonous wine of neo-criticism as to deny the certainty of

Christ's knowledge, and to regard Him and the inspired writings as under the ignorant prejudice of their age, just like themselves at the present time, impiously claiming for themselves superiority of intelligence ranging over the whole Bible.

Their success, with the youth chiefly of a mocking and scoffing generation, emboldens them to shut their eyes to the iniquity of sitting in judgment, not on copyists who introduced some errata, but on His word which shall judge them. They believe not that the Judge stands before the doors ; nor that the secret of lawlessness is in all this working more fatally than in the priestly party who glorify themselves and their leaders with their self-aggrandising legends. For those give God's written word the lie, and accept as a settled fact that, instead of Moses writing *e.g.* Genesis, it was really written by a large number of unknown men, fragments interwoven by a compiler, separated by hundreds of years, with perhaps traditional words of Moses, a priestly document and another quite different and opposed, and only published many centuries after Moses and his successor Joshua. Now even if we do not notice the monstrous perversion of the discovery of the neglected book of the law in Josiah's day, as if it were a concoction then first palmed on the king and the people, how could such a hodge-podge as all this be the word of God ? How blot out the fullest historical proof that Moses wrote as God spoke to him ? How get rid of the inspired men from his own day till the O.T. Canon closed ?

Were these holy men all impostors? Were they, the inspired, more ignorant of divine things, than these infidel reformers?

The faith of saints in all ages fully accepts the O.T. So the Lord taught His disciples, and His hearers generally, as God's testimony, written by those who claim it and by adequate evidence communicated it. Nor does the expression on which stands the modern fable of the Elohist and Jehovist and the many redactors afford the most slender proof. It is simply the reverie of one who was too ignorant and unbelieving to see the depth of truth in the words for "God (Elohim)" sovereign and historical, and "Jehovah" for His reference to relationship. It is a distinction as real as important, which is lost to such as build on the absurd fancy that it springs from different documents or legends. But infidelity took it up to discredit and destroy God's authority, as it must if received, as well as deny those whom we have sound evidence to believe really wrote the various books as they stand, with few and brief editorial notes at a later day added by similar divine authority.

But here, as in 2 Tim. iii., we read how the last words of the two apostles call on the saints to cherish what God has given them, things old and new. Be the corruptions as they may, and however veiled by those who are deceived and deceive by them, we have the inspired word to stir up the "pure mind." How different from the unbelief that denies real inspiration, and fancies the most incredible tissue of authorship to set aside God's word

searching the reins and hearts ! What more blessed than to have such in remembrance ? What could we call to mind for profit and comfort compared with the prophets and the apostles as our teachers ? It is not those of old only, but "your apostles." For as one of these wrote, "*We* are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth us not. From this we know the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Solemn word for conscience ! "*They* (that judge the word of God, the sceptics) are of the world ; for this reason they speak[as] of the world, and *the world heareth them.*" O how true is the apostolic word ! Even that of old is not enough now without "your apostles." If the O.T. be slighted, the N.T. will ere long share the same lot. How awful to become an apostate ! Yet the danger is most imminent in our day.

A special reason for heeding the prophets and the apostles follows, which gives urgency to the warning as to those who despise the word of God. For do we not recognise that to-day is a day of prevalent and growing mockery in Christendom among philosophers and those influenced by their speculations ?

"Knowing this first, that in the last of the days mockers shall come with mockery walking according to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming (or presence) ? for from the [day] that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue thus (or, as they were) from beginning of creation" (vers. 3, 4).

The apostle first introduced the formula "Knowing this first" when insisting on the divine source

and character, with the certainty and value, of prophecy, even while intimating the still more intimate and elevated nature of the heavenly light and hope of Christianity. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is (or rather is made to be) of its own interpretation." It is not an isolated thing, but part of a vast plan for God's glory in the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its true and full interpretation cannot be apart from His future kingdom in displayed glory. As the Father's counsels look onward to nothing short of this, so the Holy Spirit has moved in the inspiration of the word to this end. Man of himself is quite beneath such ability. Like the gracious power of good which alone could set aside all the evils under which man groaned, and especially the awful weight of Satanic possession, as a testimony before the age to come will enjoy it fully; so prophecy of scripture anticipatively fills the heart and mind of the believer with the mighty beneficence of that day, and His grace and His glory through it come to pass with everlasting Hallelujahs to God. It was therefore in neither case the working or effect of man's will. Those who wrought the wondrous deeds, or who wrote the no less wondrous words, did so by the power and love of God Who alone could qualify them in honour of His Son, the Lamb of God.

So here the repetition of "Knowing this first" marks the importance of the truth. It might have seemed that the proclamation of the gospel to all the creation must have disarmed the hostile spirit,

even of those who did not believe through pride, pleasure, and lusts of all kinds, to the saving of their souls. But the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. And our Lord Himself had prepared us for unbelief and self-seeking and defiance of God and His word, as in Israel, so as bad or worse in Christendom. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, till the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all. And in like manner as took place in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and sulphur from heaven, and destroyed all: after this manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed." The subject is wound up in His closing figure: "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together" (Luke xvii.). Divine judgment will find its object.

The apostle Paul was given to reveal that lawlessness should come out openly, as even from the early days of the gospel it was at work secretly, till (the great Hinderer being removed,) it should culminate in the man of sin, the express opposite of the Man of righteousness, the Saviour from perdition instead of its son; "whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that

they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth to them a working of error, that they should believe the falsehood, that all might be judged who believed not the truth but found pleasure in unrighteousness " (2 Thess. ii.).

No less plain is 2 Tim. ii., iii., and iv., on the growth of haughty unbelief and unrestrained disregard of God in word and deed in the last days, while having a form of piety before even this is finally cast off. The Epistle of James lays bare, as the beginning of evil, the unjudged creedism which life in Christ was not, and works quite dead and worthless, and instead of love, worldliness, selfishness, and injustice prevailing. 1 Pet. iv. affirmed the end of all things drawn nigh, and the season for the judgment beginning from or at the house of God, a principle to which He adheres; for as His privileges are there, so also is the special responsibility of those who claim them, though every one shall bear his own burden in God's moral government. But it is here in the second Epistle and in that of Jude and in the Revelation of John that the marked form of evil professors at the close is fully defined. It is a return to that materialism which abounded in the heathen that knew not God. Here it comes out in the naked infidelity of scoffers who sit in the seat of the scornful.

Scorning was an evil sign in pagan Greece and Rome. Yet none can wonder that mockers should rise up like Lucian of Samosata when paganism was exposed in its falsehood, emptiness and

démoralisation under the revealed light of God. Again, when the Bible got read at the time of the Reformation, we are not surprised that natural men treated Catholic legends and traditions, and the decrees of the Popes with contempt, any more than that the unhallowed ribaldry broke out before, during, and since the French Revolution, against truth as well as error and fable in divine things. But here we are apprised of a dense dark cloud, far more widely spread, which would shut out the light of heaven, not merely on the gross licentious ways of evil men who taught for gain as in chap. ii., but on others of philosophic mind, who might be generally correct in moral ways, but were beguiled into such an abandonment of truth, as we have already in Agnosticism, Positivism, and the like. They stand on phenomena, on things seen, on matter. God is in none of their thoughts as a living reality, His word (if His word) of no account. Things continue as ever. This is the fixed law. All else is idea. God is, for such, an unknown God.

These do not openly hate the name of the Lord Jesus, but like other incredulous men have no words too lofty to express their admiration of His life and ministry and death, quite apart from God's testimony to their own guilt and dire need to find redemption through His blood. But their dream of human progress is so judged and cut short by His return to judge the quick, that they all unite with open mouth to refuse and decry His return to judge the habitable earth. Hence their description here, as "proceeding according to their lusts, and

saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue thus from beginning of creation."

This therefore is a distinct and solemn part of Christian testimony : not only the judgment of the wicked dead at the end of the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, but that which will fall suddenly on men " as a thief by night " at the end of the age, while they cry, Peace and safety. The yet more awful judgment of the dead is comparatively distant ; and men with little effort but extreme peril can put off all thought till a more convenient season. But for flesh and blood, it is intolerable to hear also of a judgment unsparing and universal to arrest the every-day interests of mankind, when sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon her that is with child. And He comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Where then will be the rock, the dust, to hide man from Jehovah? For "man's lofty looks shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols shall utterly pass away. . . . In that day men shall cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made [each] for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats ; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the fissures of the cliffs, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of His majesty, when He shall arise to terrify the earth " (Isaiah ii.).

The corruption of the best is the worst corruption. It was an abomination in Israel. It is the apostasy in Christendom. The counsel of the ungodly in a moment comes to nought. The way of sinners is seen to be everlasting ruin. And what will it be to the seat of the mockers when their mocking is confronted with the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power? For He will appear in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God, and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. As they shall pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the Lord's presence, and from the glory of His might, so He shall have come to be glorified in His saints and to be wondered at in all that believed in that day (2 Thess. ii.).

Not only for these the heavenly saints will it be glory with Christ, but times of refreshing, for those who repent and are converted, both in Israel and in the nations on earth, will surely come from the Lord's presence who sends the Anointed Jesus, Who was fore-ordained for His people but now in heaven; but there are times of restoring all things of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began. So the apostle preached in Acts iii. It is clear therefore that this word leaves no room for expecting the Holy Spirit as now working to bring in those times. The Spirit had just come for the gospel and the church; and He was in no way grieved and hindered and denied as He soon began to be. But ever increasing woes have been since the apostle

But even then the apostle explicitly looks to God's sending the Lord Jesus again to bring in the day of earth's blessedness, and the nations rejoicing with Israel, no longer deaf and dumb, but the loudest in that united and continuous chorus of divine praise. Yet the sword, as we have seen, must inevitably clear the earth before Jehovah, Jah the Saviour, "shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and His name one."

Then too shall all the universe be put into divine harmony, according to Eph. i. 10-12. For it will then be the administration of the fulness of the fit-times: to sum, or head up, all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth: in Him in whom too we were given inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will, that we should be unto praise of His glory.

We have seen that the Holy Spirit lets us know one special trait of philosophic unbelief at the end of the days of nominal Christianity. Mockers with mocking, proceeding according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep all things continue thus from creation's beginning."

It is not true. "For this escapeth their notice willingly, that by the word of God heavens were of old, and an earth having its subsistence out of water and through water; by which [waters] the then world being overflowed with water per-

ished" (vers. 5, 6). It is barefaced materialism which the light of Christ ought to have dispelled. Rather did the proclamation of grace encourage these unbelieving speculators to deny that judgment is imminent for living man upon the earth. The Jews were much less incredulous as to it than the nations, and themselves secured as being the seed of Abraham. Blind to their own sins, their prejudices conspired to read clearly what the Prophets wrote on the downfall of the world in general. Yet the Lord had already reversed all thought of immunity for the ungodly, whether Jew or Gentile. He had declared the universality of the judgment which He Himself would inflict on the quick. For it is quite distinct from the judgment which awaits all the unbelieving dead whom He will raise for the purpose at the end of His world-kingdom. But the imminence of the judgment on the quick, Christendom has ever been too ready to put off, if not disbelieve, whatever the common creeds may say: what we wish not we readily forget.

The Lord had done more. In His great prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives He had compared this very judgment of the quick to the days of the deluge.

"Watch therefore; for ye know not on what day your Lord doth come." It may be urged that He has the judgment of the Jews particularly before Him in these words, which manifestly apply not to the Roman siege of Jerusalem any more than to the judgment of the wicked in Rev. xix. But in Luke xvii. 29, and following verses, He refers to

the days of Lot also, and thus gives it a bearing on the Gentiles too. Again in Luke xxi. 25-35 He directly refers to the Gentiles also. For which reason He speaks not only of "the fig-tree" but of "all the trees," and declares that "as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."

The stability of the earth therefore is a vain defence, even according to their own acquaintance with the known geologic facts from the time that the earth was first brought into being. There is abundant evidence to prove that it has passed through many phases of destruction, followed by renewal in the wise ways of God before man existed, and, in general, progressive in character. But when the earth was made in due time the suited sphere for Adam and his race, moral considerations entered. Not only did the earth become corrupt and filled with violence, but a new violation of all order was perpetrated as in Gen. vi. 1, 2, most abhorrent to God and deeper than any natural depravation, which was the immediate occasion of the deluge. Did these men, wise in their own eyes, never hear of the deluge? Hardly a country on earth but has traditions, more or less true, of that solemn dealing with the whole habitable earth, while God preserved in an ark Noah and his family, as well as of the lower creatures which otherwise had perished in the waters. They are therefore without excuse, for what else than the fact could give rise to a tradition so universal among the races of mankind, North, South, East and West? On

their own ground it is irrational to pay no heed to an historical tradition which, though different in shape, was alike in substance over the world, that all things did not remain thus from creation's beginning. Yet those who find pleasure in slighting God's word are generally apt to respect relics of the past which have prevailed everywhere.

How then can we account for this slight of so general a report among all the races of men? It is wilful ignorance. "For this willingly escapeth their notice that heavens were of old and an earth having its subsistence out of water and through water by the word of God; by means of which [waters] the then world being overflowed with water perished." Here we have inspired scripture to set every doubt at rest for those that fear God. The stupendous fact is briefly attested to, the universal destruction of guilty man by the deluge, and this stripped of any local vanity, or of other human accessories; the moral fact is left in all its solemnity. In 1 Pet. iii. much is made of the exceptional salvation effected by the ark which Noah was prophetically instructed to make; and this is also referred to in 2 Pet. ii: 5. Here too the catastrophe is cited to overthrow the alleged stability of nature.

But the passage before us is by some applied only to the earth's primeval constitution, by others to the deluge. It is plain enough that the apostle looks successively at each. The All-wise God had so constituted it in case of need; and as the apostasy of the race required the drastic remedy,

He applied it to destroy the old world. Could unbelief be more suicidal than to presume on its impossibility?

Notice the stress laid on the word of God here. The natural system must bend to His will. The fixed laws which even His enemies set up to block Him out of sight and hearing have over and over again bowed to His word, not only in a small sphere but on the largest scale. It may repent Him of His work, when it rebels against Him and He interferes to reprove, punish and destroy. But His word He exalts above all His name. It is the expression of His mind, purpose and love, as well as His majesty in judgment.

With the deluge in the past there is analogy as well as contrast in the future. God is not mocked either way; but abuse of greater privilege will infallibly destroy the proud unbelief of the ungodly in the surest way.

"But the now heavens and the earth by the same word have been stored with fire, being kept for a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (ver. 7).

The gospel is a question of faith, not only in the Son, but in the word of God, beyond whatever was in patriarchal days, or during the law, as well as in coming ages.

The displayed kingdom which the Lord Jesus will establish to His glory for a period longer than man ever attained when he lived longest, or even Christianity in practice, can only be in power where each is sanctified by the Father's word,

which is His word fully and finally revealed. Yet tradition, the great enemy of the word, never wrought in Israel so insidiously and widely and systematically as in Christendom to darken, undermine and pervert God's word ; and that in face of the Lord's own denunciation in the Gospels of Matt. (xv.) and Mark (vii.), or by the words of Isaiah in a more burning indignation as became him.

But now there is a new school of deeper pride which disdains ancient tradition, deifies itself, and idolises the working of man's mind in history and science, so foreign to the will of God and so dear to the world, even to the length of making it the judge of His written word. A worse or more dangerous form of infidelity there is not nor ever was ; it directly leads into the "apostasy" which the apostle of the Gentiles declares must be before the day of the Lord comes in judgment of living mankind. Its success among professors of Christianity intoxicates its votaries so that they are encouraged by its popularity to essay even more daring scepticism.

Here we see that the destruction of the early population of the earth was effected by the vast store of water God provided above and below to overwhelm man and beast save those preserved in the ark with Noah by His command. To this exceeding overflow the language of Gen. vii. 11 points: "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up," "and the windows (or, the flood gates) of heaven opened," as on the other hand that of Gen. viii. 2, when the assuagement set in.

Dealing with the outrageous depravity of that age was just when ignorance was as great. But as since the law, Christ's coming, and the gospel to every creature, have made the responsibility of man immensely greater, so is his sin in rejection of the truth, and professing science, or ideas, that ignore sin as well as grace, and flatter pride in the progress of the first man whilst forgetting his guilt against the Second. How much sorer a doom awaits man, especially the Jew, and most of all Christendom, when treading under foot 'the Son of God, and treating the blood of the covenant as vain and unclean, and thus insulting the Spirit of grace! Such guilt beyond measure, through rejecting the only and absolutely righteous One and His propitiation, and the full revelation of grace and truth in Him who was true God and perfect man in one person, will have to face God's extreme punishment by fire. And this is made known in the words of the scripture before us, looking back on man visited of old by a deluge of water. "But the now heavens and the earth by the same word have been stored with fire, being kept for a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

God has not left Himself without witness on a small scale of what He intends for the punishment of the ungodly who are willingly ignorant of His warning, and of their awful wickedness against His Son and the wondrous proclamation throughout all the world of life eternal and the forgiveness of their sins, through His death on the cross.

The very book of Genesis (xix.) records, not very long after the deluge, the destruction of the cities of the plain because of their enormous impurity, contrary to fallen nature itself. "Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; and overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground" (vers. 24, 25).

Again, in Lev. x. when Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were so heedless of the favour shewn by the coming of fire out from before Jehovah to consume the burnt offering, and slighted it in the service of their own inauguration to the service of the sanctuary by putting common fire for burning the incense, "there went out fire from Jehovah and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah" (ver. 2). Jehovah will be sanctified in those who come nigh Him, and before all the people will He be glorified, as Moses told Aaron; "and Aaron held his peace." It was not only the ungodly outside who must be shewn that He is the witness and the Judge of evil, but those who approach Him cannot trifle with His sanctity save to their cost.

In Numb. xi. 1, when the people complained instead of acknowledging His justice, He was displeased and the fire of Jehovah burnt among them in the uttermost parts of the camp; and the people cried to Moses who prayed not in vain, and the fire was quenched. But they renewed their murmuring; and Jehovah, though He gave the flesh they lusted after, smote the people with a very

great plague. It is chap. xvi. which sets forth this solemn dealing with the gainsaying of Korah, which the epistle of Jude lets us know as the last and worst of the sinful developments reproduced in Christendom. "Woe to them! because they proceeded in the way of Cain, and were devoted to the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah." For here it was ministry usurping the priesthood, and hence rebellion against the efficacious priesthood, as well as denying the Christian title of nearness to God. And what befell them? "And it came to pass as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained to Korah and all their goods. They and all that was theirs went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them, for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up. And there came out a fire from Jehovah, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense." This is by no means all that the O. T. offers on the subject, but it is ample for the proof that from the beginning a still more tremendous destruction by fire in a day both at its opening and at its close is plainly revealed as the way in which the wrath of God will be against the ungodly before the great white throne, and the resurrection for judgment described in Rev. xx.

2—15. Isaiah ix. 5 and lxvi. 15, 16, are as clear proofs as 2 Thess. i. 8, that the day of the Lord will open with fury and destruction on the wicked, discriminatingly and not as a providential judgment.

The phrase "the new heavens and the new earth" is borrowed from Isaiah lxv. 17, lxvi. 22. But there, it is the principle as applied to Jerusalem and the land in the future kingdom, rather than its full character which follows. This is clear from the prophet's explanation which indicates its realisation in the chosen land and people, "But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in what I create; for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, and I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit [them], and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree [are] the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they [are] the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will

answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust [shall be] the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah."

It is plain that the prophet sees in the vast change when Messiah reigns in power, the introduction and sure pledge of the new heavens and earth, rather than the absolute fulfilment. Rev. xxi. 1-8 makes this evident and certain; for here is no more an earthly Jerusalem nor a people in flesh such as Isaiah describes; no infant of days to die, no more curse to be executed. Neither will building take place, nor planting; nor again labour however blessed, nor bringing forth for joy any more than trouble. In the eternal scene all will be praise and worship at God's counsels fulfilled to the utmost, and for the defiance of God its righteous punishment for ever. It is in the future kingdom over the earth that the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and there the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and there that dust shall be the serpent's meat as the solitary mark of degradation. But in the full and eternal sense of the new heavens and new earth these creatures are found no more: only the holy city, new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride for her husband, as before the kingdom in power, so after it to all eternity, and outside it redeemed men with it shall tabernacle when God shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God.

These are the two extreme points of view, the

prophet of Israel though giving the glorious prospect, dwelling only on its initiatory application to Jerusalem and the land and the people. Equally seasonable is the beloved disciple's vision, at the end even of the wondrous age and world to come, of the end in its full sense when even a dispensation of glory with the Son of God and Son of man reigning over the universe closes the proof that such a reign fails, as did His coming in the grace of all His humiliation among men to God's glory, as man left to do his will showed. But He really and everywhere triumphed over the enemy and the race which distrusted God and was misled to everlasting ruin in despising Christ. And the teaching of Peter holds a wide way as became the chief apostle of the circumcision writing to Christians who had been Jews. For he embraces the beginning and the ending of the day of Jehovah as the transition link between Isaiah and John. That such a view is according to the spirit of scripture may be made plain by "new creation" as applied by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. v. 17: "so if any one [be] in Christ, [there is] a new creation." Yet it is but the risen life in the soul. Only when we are changed into conformity to the body of Christ's glory will it be fulfilled in its entirety.

[Left unfinished by the Author's death].

