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SYNOPSIS

OF

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

By J. N. DARBY.

VOL. I.

GENESIS—II CHRONICLES.

THIRD EDITION—REVISED.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
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BIBLIOTHECA
REGIA
MONACENSIS

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PREFACE.

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

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

In the original publication the review of that part of Leviticus which treats of the sacrifices which prefigured that of Christ, had been

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

A few words only are needed to introduce the reader to the present publication. He is not to expect a commentary, nor, on the other hand, to suppose that he has a book which he can read without referring continually to the word itself in the part treated of. The object of the book is to help a Christian, desirous of reading the word of God with profit, in seizing the scope and connection of that which it contains. Though a commentary may doubtless aid the reader in many passages in which God has given to the commentator to understand in the main the intention of the Spirit of God, or to furnish

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philological principles and information, which facilitate to another the discovery of that intention; yet if it pretend to give the contents of scripture, or if he who uses it seeks these in its remarks, such commentary can only mislead and impoverish the soul. A commentary, even if always right, can at most give what the commentator has himself learned from the passage. The fullest and wisest must be very far indeed from the living fulness of the divine word. The Synopsis now presented has no pretension of the kind. Deeply convinced of the divine inspiration of the scriptures, given to us of God, and confirmed in this conviction by daily and growing discoveries of their fulness, depth, and perfectness, ever more sensible, through grace, of the admirable perfection of the parts, and the wonderful connection of the whole, the writer only hopes to help the reader in the study of them.

The scriptures have a living source, and living

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

To give all this as a whole and perfectly would require the Giver Himself. Even in learning it, we know in part, and we prophesy in part. The more—beginning from the utmost leaves and branches of this revelation of the mind of God, by which we have been reached

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when far from Him—we have traced it up towards its centre, and thence looked down again towards its extent and diversity, the more we learn its infiniteness and our own feebleness of apprehension. We learn, blessed be God, this, that the love which is its source is found in unmingled perfectness and fullest display in those manifestations of it which have reached us even in our ruined state. The same perfect God of love is in it all. But the unfoldings of divine wisdom in the counsels in which God has displayed Himself remain ever to us a subject of research in which every new discovery, by increasing our spiritual intelligence, makes the infiniteness of the whole, and the way in which it surpasses all our thoughts, only more and more clear to us. But there are great leading principles and truths, the pointing out of which in the various books which compose the scriptures, may assist in the intelligence of the various parts of scripture. It is attempted to do this

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here. What the reader is to expect, consequently in this Synopsis, is nothing more than an attempt to help him in studying scripture for himself. All that would turn him aside from this would be mischievous to him; what helps him in it may be useful. He cannot even profit much by the following pages otherwise than in using them as an accompaniment to the study of the text itself.

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

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He cannot close this short introduction to the book without expressing the effect which the discovery of the perfectness and divinely ordered connection of the scriptures produces in his mind as respects what is called Rationalism. Nothing is proved by the system so denominated but the total absence of all divine intelligence, a poverty associated with intellectual pretension, an absence of moral judgment, a pettiness of observation on what is external, with a blindness to divine and infinite fulness in the substance, which would be contemptible through its false pretensions, if it were not a subject of pity, because of those in whom these pretensions are found. None but God can deliver from the pride of human pretension. But the haughtiness which excludes God, because it is incompetent to discover Him, and then talks of His work, and meddles with His weapons, according to the measure of its own strength, can prove nothing but its own contemptible folly. Ignorance is gene-

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rally confident, because it is ignorant; and such is the mind of man in dealing with the things of God. The writer must be forgiven for speaking plainly in these days on this point. The pretensions of infidel reason infect even Christians.

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

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SYNOPSIS

OF

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

GENESIS.

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

But before this purpose is fully revealed, man is brought upon the scene as a responsible being, and his history as such given to us in the various phases through which he has passed, up to the cross, where his enmity

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against God was manifested, and the foundation laid for the full revelation of that purpose and the accomplishment of God's good pleasure in man, and laid by that in which the whole divine character in love and righteousness was revealed and glorified, and God perfectly glorified in every respect in bringing man into glory. The creation has served as a sphere to this manifestation of God; but as a manifestation it would have been in itself altogether imperfect, though in a measure it declared His glory.

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

These superstitions were in truth nothing more than that Satan had possessed himself of the idea of God in the heart, in order to nourish, under this name, its lusts,

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and degrade it in consecrating them by the name of a god who was in truth a demon; and philosophy was but the useless efforts of the mind of man to rise to the idea of God—a height which he was incapable of attaining, and which in consequence he abandoned, making it a subject of pride to do without it. Even the law of God, while declaring the responsibility of man to God, and thus asserting His authority, only revealed Him in the exercise of judgment, requiring from man what he ought to be, without revealing what God was, save in justice; and in no way in relationship with the scene of misery and ignorance which sin had brought upon the human race. It did not shew what God was in the midst of that misery, nor could do so; for its office was to require from man consistency with a certain line of conduct, of which the Legislator constituted Himself judge, at the end of the career of him who was subjected to it. The Son of God is God Himself in the midst of all this scene, the faithful Witness of all that He is in His relationship with it. In a word, it is the Son of God who reveals God Himself, and who becomes thus necessarily the centre of all His counsels, and of all the manifestation of His glory, as well as the object of all His ways.

We shall find then three great subjects in the Bible —the creation (now under the effect of the fall);*

* I confine myself more especially to the lower creation where man was placed. There are fallen angels, and the created heavens are defiled through sin. But they were a distinct creation, and present to celebrate with joy the creation as we view it as a scene with which man has to do. Still as responsible and creatures,

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the law, which gave to man a rule—to man in the midst of this creation to see if he could live there according to God, and be there blessed; and the Son of God.

The first two, namely, the creation and the law, are bound up with the responsibility of the creature. We shall find all that is connected with these two either guilty or corrupted. The Son, on the contrary, the manifestation of the grace and love of the Father, the express image of the subsistence of God in whom the Father was seen, we shall see suffering in love in the midst of this fallen creation and the contradictions of a rebellious people, or accomplishing all the counsels of God in uniting all things in blessing by His power and under His authority, those even who with hatred have rejected Him being forced to own Him Lord to the glory of God the Father; and at last, when He shall have subjected all things, giving up to God the Father the kingdom of His glory as Son of man, that God may be all in all.

Besides all this, there are in the counsels of God those with whom the God whom we know in Jesus surrounds Himself, who are to be brought into the likeness of Him with whom they are associated as sons, He the first-born among many brethren who are to enjoy eternally with God His favour and blessing. There is an earthly people in whom God manifests the principles of His government here below and His unfailing faith-

where not preserved of God they were liable to fall, and in fact did. But they were a distinct creation. Hence we have them not in the creation recounted in Genesis.

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fulness; it is to this last, consequently, that the law is given. Finally, in the purpose of God before the world was (but hidden until the fit moment when, its redemption being accomplished, the Holy Spirit could, by dwelling in it, reveal to it all the efficacy of its redemption and the whole extent of its blessing), there was a church, chosen in Christ, His bride, which was to share His glory with Him and the blessedness which He was to inherit as Son of God and faithful witness of His glory.

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

Hence we shall find, not only the creation, the law, and the Son of God, but the dealings by which God has prepared the way for, and led men to expect, His manifestation; the development of all the principles on which He entered into relationship with men; the consequences of the violation of the law; and lastly, in its

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

This separates the Bible naturally into two parts:—that which speaks of the first two subjects, the creation and man in his relationship with God without law, and His people under law; and that which speaks of the Son come upon the earth, and all that relates to the church and its glory—that is, in general, the Old and New Testament. We shall see, however, that, in the Old, promise and prophecy referred always to the Son, eternal object of the counsels of God: as, in the New, there were prophecies of the future dealings of God with the earth, and so far connected with the Old; and, further, the rejection of the Son gave occasion to the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth—a fact which modified the whole state of the people of God, and

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introduced special subjects which depended on this presence. For there is this peculiar in the historical part of the New, that the Son was presented first to the world, and to the people under the law, to put them anew to the test. The bearing of His coming at first was not the accomplishment of the counsels of God, but to present to man, still placed under the old order of things, the faithful testimony of what God was, if the heart of man had any capacity to receive it, or to discern Him who returned in grace into the midst of a fallen creation, and did so in the very form and nature of him in whom the fall had taken place; and to the Jews, if they had been willing to receive Him, the Lord of glory, the object of all the prophecies and of all the promises; and, in fine (the world not having known Him, and His own not having received Him), to accomplish the sacrifice, which could lay the foundation of a new world before God, and place the redeemed in joy before the face of His Father, heirs of all that was established in Him the second Adam to make the church His body and His bride.

From all that I have said, it results also that the Old Testament contains two very distinct parts—often united, it is true, in the same book, and even in a single passage, still distinct in their nature—the history of man as he was, and God's way with him, or the historical part, whether before the law or under the law; and the revelation of the thoughts and intentions of God as to the future, which are always connected with Christ. This revelation sometimes takes the character of a positive prophecy, sometimes the form of a typical

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event which prefigures what God would afterwards accomplish. I may cite, as an example of this last way of expressing the thoughts of God, the sacrifice of Isaac. Evidently there is an historical instruction of the utmost importance in the touching example of Abraham's obedience; but everyone easily recognizes in it the type of a sacrifice, for which God prepared for Himself a Lamb, of which Isaac, the beloved of his father, was but a feeble figure; and where resurrection, not in figure but in power, is the source of life and hope to every believer.

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

Genesis has a peculiar one; and, as the beginning of the Holy Book, presents to us all the great elementary principles which find their development in the history of the relationships of God with man, which is recorded in the following books. The germ of each of these principles will be found here, unless we except the law. There was however a law given to Adam in his innocence; and Hagar, we know, prefigures at least Sinai. There is scarce anything afterwards accomplished of which the expression is not found in this book in one form or another. There is found also in it, though the sad history of man's fall be there, a freshness in the relationship of men with God, which is scarce met with afterwards in men accustomed to abuse it and to live in a society full of itself. But whether it be the creation, man and his fall, sin, the power of Satan, the

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promises, the call of God, His judgment of the world, redemption, the covenants, the separation of the people of God, their condition of strangers on the earth, the resurrection, the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan, the blessing of the nations, the seed of promise, the exaltation of a rejected Lord to the throne of the world, all are found here in fact or in figure—in figure, now that we have the key, even the church itself.

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

But here some brief general remarks deserve a place. This revelation from God is not a history by Him of all that He has done, but what has been given to man for his profit, the truth as to what he has to say to. Its object is to communicate to man all that regards his own relationship with God. In connection with the second Adam he *will* know as he is known; and already, by means of the work of Christ, he has that unction of the Holy One by which he knows all things. But historically the revelation is partial. It communicates what is for the conscience and spiritual affections of man. What is here said is true of the whole Bible. Here it is evident in this, that nothing is said of the creation but what places man in the position which God had made for him

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in the creation itself, or presents to him this sphere of his existence as being the work of God. Thus no mention is made of any heavenly beings. Nothing is said of their creation. We find them as soon as they are in relationship with men; although afterwards, as a truth, it is fully recognized of course that they are so created.

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

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

The first four days God brings light and order out of darkness and confusion: light the first day; the

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expanse as a scene of heavenly power over the earth the second day; then He divided what was formed and orderly, on the one hand, from the moving powerful but shapeless mass of waters, on the other, and then ornamented the ordered habitual scene with beauty and fruitfulness on the third. The symbols of directing power were set visibly in their places on the fourth.

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

But this was not all. He was not to spring out of matter by the mere will of God, as the beasts, by that power which calls things that are not as though they were, and they are. *God formed* man out of the dust, and when formed breathed from Himself into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus man became a living soul in immediate connection with God Himself. As the apostle quotes elsewhere, we also are His offspring. It is not said

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"Let the earth bring forth;" but "Let us make." And He made man in His likeness, created him indeed to multiply as the other living creatures, but gave him dominion over them, and made him the centre and head of God's creation on the earth. The seeds of the fruitful earth were given to him, the green herb and its increase to the beasts. Death and violence were not yet.*

We shall see, in chapter ii., another immensely important principle brought out as to man, when the question of his relationship to God is brought forward. Here his creation is a distinct one from all else; he is presented simply, apart from every other thought, as God's workmanship as a creature, the head and centre of the rest, the ruler over them all. But this we may remark, while he represents God and is like Him we have

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

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nothing of righteousness and holiness here. This came in by redemption and the partaking of the divine nature. There was of course the absence of evil, but ignorance of it, not what God is in respect of it. It is much more here the place man holds than his nature, though the absence of evil, and the spring of condescending affections as the centre of being, must have been found there. These last are more the likeness, his place more the image.

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

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

Only a word or two is called for as to the garden. It was a place of delights. Eden means pleasure. It has wholly disappeared, and it was meant that it should, only we find, by two at least of the rivers, that it was on this earth substantially as we have it. Jehovah Elohim

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

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had formed the man, Jehovah Elohim had planted the garden. The river of God to water the earth had its rise there. The fresh springs of God are found in the place of his delight. Man was set there to dress and keep it. Man and the earth are both now in ruin.

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

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

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applies to the details of the development of this life in the midst of evil and the place of divine perfectness in which we are set by His work, and reconciles our present infirmities with our divinely given place before God. In the garden the knowledge of good and evil did not yet exist: obedience only in refraining from an act, which was no sin if it had not been forbidden, constituted the test. It was not a prohibition of sin, and a claim of good as in Sinai when good and evil were known.

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

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

It is important to consider this chapter as laying down, in a special manner, all the principles of the relationship of man, whether with God, with his wife, or with the inferior creation. Here were all things in their own order as creatures of God in connection with the earth; but man's labour not the means of their growth and

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fruitfulness. Nor did rain from heaven minister fruitfulness from above. The mist that watered it rose from the earth, drawn up by power and blessing, but not coming down. Yet man was, as to his place, in a peculiar one in reference to God. Man did not dwell in heaven; God did not dwell on earth. But God had formed a place of peculiar blessing and delight for man's habitation, and there He visited him. Out of this garden, where he was placed by the hand of God as sovereign of the world, flowed rivers which watered and characterized the world without. Upon Adam reposed the duty of obedience. The image of God upon earth, in the absence of evil from his nature, and as the centre of a vast system around him and in connection with him, his own proper blessing was in his immediate connection and intercourse with God.

As soon as God had redeemed a people, He dwelt among them. (Ex. xxix. 46.) Here He created, blessed, and visited. Adam, created the conscious centre of all around him, had his blessing and security in dependence on and intercourse with God. This, as we shall see, he forfeited, and became the craving centre of his own wishes and ambition, which he could never satisfy.

Earthly nature then in its perfection, with man, in relationship with God by creation and the breath of life that was in him, for its centre; enjoyment; a source of abiding life, and a means of putting responsibility to the test; the sources of universal refreshment to the world without, and, if continuing in his created condition, blessed intercourse with God on this ground—such was the position of the first and innocent Adam. That he

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might not be alone here, but have a companion, fellowship, and the enjoyment of affection, God formed—not another man, for then the one were not a centre—but out of the one man himself his wife, that the union might be the most absolute and intimate possible, and Adam head and centre of all. He receives her, moreover, from the hand of God Himself. Such was nature around man: what God always owns, and man never sins against with impunity, though sin has spoiled it all; the picture of what Christ, the church, and the universe shall be at the end in power in the obedient man. As yet all was innocence, unconscious of evil.

In chapter iii. we find—what, alas! has always happened, and happened immediately when God had set anything up in the hands of responsible man—disobedience and failure. The subtlety of the hidden enemy of our souls is now at work. The first effect is the distrust of God which he inspires; then lusts and disobedience; utter dishonour done to God, whether as regards His truth or His love; the power of natural affections over man; the consciousness of being naked and powerless; effort to hide it from oneself; terror of God—seeking to hide from Him; self-justification, which seeks to cast upon another, and even upon God, that of which we have been guilty. After that, we have, not the blessing or restoration of man, or promises made to him, but the judgment pronounced upon the serpent, and, in that, the promise made to the second Adam; the victorious man, but who in grace has His birthplace where the weakness and the fall were. It is the Seed of the woman who bruises the serpent's head.

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

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

What follows is the present result as to the government of God; the temporal sentence pronounced on

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Adam and his wife, until death, under the power of which he was fallen, seized him. There was a sign however of deeper mercies. God clothes them with a garment which covers their nakedness, a garment which had its origin in death (the death of another), which had come in, but which hid the effects of the sin that had introduced it. Man was no longer naked neither in his own eyes or in the eyes of those who saw him: God Himself had clothed him. Adam recognizes that life still subsists, and that Eve is the mother of all living—a testimony, it seems to me, as it has to others (obscure, it is true, but real), of his faith. But he is justly driven out of the garden, an outcast from paradise and God, and hindered from partaking of the tree of life, that he may not perpetuate here below a life of disaster and of misery. The way of the tree of life was henceforth inaccessible to man,* according to nature, as the creature of God. There is no return to the paradise of man in innocence. Adam, already in sin and far from God, is the parent of a race in the same condition as himself.†

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

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

† Whatever Eve's own condition, this was the expression of the fulfilment of promise in nature, which could not be. Sin was there and death, and the judgment of the hope of promise connected with nature come in. "I have gotten a man from Jehovah" was faith in promise, but expectation of the accomplishment of promise in nature. And Cain had to go out from the presence of Jehovah.

IV.

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

In these two chapters we have sin in all its forms, as a picture set before us in Adam's and Cain's conduct—sin in its proper original character against God, and then more particularly against Christ (in figure) in the conduct of Cain, with its present consequences set forth as regards the earth. We may remark, in both Adam's and Cain's case, how the government of God on the earth is set in prominency as to the effects of sin. Separation from God of a being capable of, and naturally formed for, intercourse with Him, is there, but left rather for the moral weighing of the soul. The publicly revealed judgment is that of consequences on earth. It is clearly said no doubt, "He drove out the man" with whom He was to have held intercourse (chap. iii.);

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and "from thy face," says Cain, "am I driven out." (Chap. iv.) But what is developed is the earthly condition. Adam is shut out from a peaceful and unlaborious paradise to labour and till the ground. Cain is cursed from the earth in this very position, and a fugitive and a vagabond; but he will be as happy there as he can, and frustrate God's judgment as far as he can, and settle himself in comfort in the earth as *his*, where God had made him a vagabond;* and that is the world. Here it is first pictured in its true character.

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

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

In the second chapter then we have man in the order of created blessing, the state in which he is; in the third,

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

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

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

In chapter v. we have the family of God upon the earth, subject to death, but depositary of the counsels and of the testimony of God. Here we may remark,

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Enoch, who has his portion in heaven, and who bears witness to the world of the coming of Jesus in judgment but is himself taken up there before it; and Noah, on the other hand, warned for himself, preaching righteousness and judgment, and passing through the judgments to begin a new world—figures of the church and the Jews in connection with Christ's coming.

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

In the midst of the ruin and judgment God points out the way of salvation through the judgment. The remnant taught of God profit by it. The flood is brought

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upon the world of the ungodly. Up to this, though the seed of the woman had been promised, sacrifice brought in, and testimony given, there were no special dealings of God with man. It was man walking before God in wickedness, no calling out, no law, no judgment. The world, man, was judged (save Noah and his family) and its deeds were hidden under an overwhelming flood. The judgment of God is accomplished; but He remembers His mercy.

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

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

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

In these chapters then we have the old earth closed and the new begun on new principles. This lasts till the judgment by fire. Man's failure in it is set forth, and God's judgment thereon, in Adam and Cain. Now the special judgment and the special blessing in connection with Israel begins to shew itself, for we are yet on the earth here. The historical course of Noah's family is brought out in connection with these two points, the blessing and the curse in Shem and Ham. This is God's survey of the new world, where its whole history is stated in a few words. How mighty in everything is the word! He who knows all can state all briefly and surely. We begin afresh with chapter x. with the generation or history of Noah's sons.

We have thus the establishment of the new earth and its whole general prophetic history, as this earth, in the first account of Noah, and God's communications with

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him, Shem being owned as the root of God's family in it, allied to the name of Jehovah, with special judgment on Canaan, whose place, we know, Israel took.

Chapters x., xi. give us the history of the world as peopled and established after the deluge, and the ways of men in this new world; the great platform of all the development of the human race as peopling this world after the flood and the principles and judgments on which it is founded. Chapter x. gives the facts, chapter xi. how it came about in judgment, and then the family Jehovah owned, to trace the descent in it to the vessel of promise: God's orderings in general. The posterity of Noah is given by families and nations (a new thing in the earth), out of which, from the race of Ham, arises the first power which rules by its own force and founds an empire; for that which is according to flesh comes first. We have then the universal association of men to exalt themselves against God, and make to themselves a name independently of Him,* an effort stamped on God's part with the name of Babel (confusion), and which ends in judgment and in the dispersion of the race, thenceforth jealous of and hostile to one another.† Lastly, we

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

† Pentecost was a beautiful testimony: God rose there above the confusion and judgment, and found, even in its effects, the means of getting near the heart of man: so that grace overruled

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have the genealogy of the race by which God was pleased to name Himself; for God is Jehovah,* the God of Shem.

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

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

In the detail Japheth is given first. The isles of the

judgment, even when it was not exercised in the power which regenerates the world.

* All is simply Elohim, God, till we get to this verse.

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

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

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

The way was this. Man sought to make a centre for himself. Adam, living in the earth, would have been so, and its link with God. But will has none but itself. Noah, whose influence would have been just, has no place in the whole history (after his worship), save that he lost the place of authority by falling into sin, in the loss of self-restraint.* Will characterized all now; but in a multitude of wills, all impotent as centres, what can be done? A common centre and interest

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

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is sought independent and exclusive of God. They were to fill the earth; but scattered in peaceful quietness to be of no importance they would not. They must get a name for themselves to be a centre. And God scatters into nations by judgment what would not fill the earth by families in peace. Tongues and nations must be added to families to designate men on the earth. The judged place becomes the seat of the energetic will of one—of the apostate power. The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel. Tongues were a restraint, and an iron band round men.

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

We have seen the wickedness and violence of man, his rebellion against God, and Satan's craft to bring him into this state: but here an immense step is made, an astonishing condition of evil appears on the scene. Satan thrusts himself, to man's mind, into the place of power,

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and seizes the idea of God in man's mind, placing himself between God and him, so that men worship demons as God. When it began, scripture does not say; but the passage cited shews that it had contaminated even Shem's family, in the part of it which scripture itself counts up as God's genealogy in the earth at the time we have arrived at. Individuals might be pious; but in every sense the link of the world with God was gone. They had given themselves up, even in the family which as a race was in relationship with God, to the worship and power of Satan. What a tale all tells of man! What a tale of the patience of God!

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

But it is well to remark—what the history of the Bible furnishes us with elsewhere—namely, that idolatry had at this time gained a footing in the family of Shem himself. "Your fathers," says Joshua (xxiv. 2), "dwelt in old time beyond the flood, Terah the father of Abraham and father of Nahor: and they served other gods." Now these gods were demons. (1 Cor. x. 20; it is a cita-

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tion of Deut. xxxii. 17.) That is (now that God had interfered in judgment and in power), these demons had possessed themselves of this position in the spirit of man, and taken the place in his mind of the sources of the authority displayed and of blessing still bestowed. They presented themselves to him as authors of those judgments, of all which drew forth the worship, the gratitude, and the terror of the natural heart of corrupted man, expressed in his worship according to the principles on which he was, on which he alone could be, in relationship with those superior beings to whom he attributed the power to answer his desires or to avert the things which he feared. It was not merely man corrupted and in rebellion against God, it was his religion itself which corrupted him; and he made of his corruption a religion. The demons had taken the place of God in his mind, and having the ascendency over his conscience, if man did not forget it, hardened or misled it. He was religiously bad; and there is no degradation like that. What a state! What folly! How long, O Lord?

But if the human race plunge thus into darkness, taking demons for their god, and, incapable of self-sustainment, substitute for their own rebellion against God, servitude to what is more elevated in rebellion, placing themselves in miserable dependence upon it, God raises and lifts us up above all this evil, and by His *calling* introduces us into His own thoughts—thoughts far more precious than the restoration of what was fallen. He separates a people to hopes which suit the majesty and the love of Him who calls them, and places them in a position of proximity to Himself, which the blessing of

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the world under His government would never have given them. He is their God. He communicates with them in a way which is in accordance with this intimacy; and we hear speak, for the first time, of faith (chap. xv. 6), based on these communications and these direct testimonies of God, though it may have really operated from the beginning.

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

Hence we find them at once called upon to separate themselves entirely from all that connected them with their position in nature on the earth, and to belong to God on the ground of promise and confidence in His word. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, to a land which

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I will shew thee." This was a solemn event. It was in principle the judgment of the world, though in the way of grace to those called out of it.

That we may fully understand this, we must remember that the world had been constituted by the judgment of God passed upon the enterprise of building the tower. Countries and nations had been formed, as it is to this day. That was the world. Satan had full hold of it, and the very world which God had providentially formed Abram had to leave. God would have a family, a people for Himself, not of it, though out of it. Another fact adds to Abram's importance. There had been saints individually, known and unknown, but no head of a race since Adam. Adam fallen was the head of a fallen race. Abram was called to be the root of the tree of promise, of God's people natural or spiritual. He was the father of the circumcision, and of all them that believe.

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

We have then here Abram *called by the manifestation of the glory of God* (compare Acts vii.) for the journey of faith. The *promises* are given to him, whether of a numerous posterity, or of the blessing of all the families of the earth *in him.** He sets out, he arrives. There

* This last promise is repeated only in chapter xxii., during Abraham's history, and then to the seed alone; the promise of his posterity and of the land to him *and* to his seed is often repeated—

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are not many experiences, though there will be deeper knowledge of God, in a path which is purely of faith: power is there, and man walks with God. In the history of Jacob we have many. Arrived in Canaan, Abraham enters into possession of nothing, for his life must still be of faith. And here we see, by comparing this passage with Hebrews xi., the effect of being left as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, not yet in possession of what is promised. Abraham goes in the obedience of faith to the promised land, and there has not so much as to set foot upon; but in virtue of this—as God, though He could prove, could not leave faith without an answer—he has before him the city which hath foundations, and the yet better country. The energy of faith through grace put him in a position which, as it was not possession, necessarily set him in connection with higher and better things; for he was under the personal calling of God for blessing: so, practically, we are come into the church and heavenly things below. But there is the path of faith—not possession—and the heavenly scene opens before us. Abraham in Ur could not see the heavenly portion; a stranger in the land of promise, it was his natural object under grace. Such is our own case. Only Abraham rises above his calling; we enter by the Spirit into what we are called to.

But then there is a second revelation of the Lord to him in the land, in the place into which he had been called. The first was to call him out of the place he was in, and

It is to this promise given to Abram in chapter xii. and confirmed to the seed in chapter xxv., that the apostle refers in Galatians. The earthly seed, on the contrary, was to be numerous.

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

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

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the church, this relationship cannot be maintained when we seek that help.

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

After this (chap. xiii.) we have, in the conduct of Abram and Lot, the disinterestedness and self-renunciation of true faith on the one hand, and, on the other, him, who, though a believer, had, as regards the walk of faith, only followed that of another, and was now put to the test by circumstances which arise: and this, remark, is when they have together left their unbelieving connection with the world as an outward refuge. Lot had done so with Abram, but his inward heart and will clung to the ease of it. Abram had returned in spirit genuinely, perhaps with a deeper experience, to his pilgrim portion in Canaan. Yet the advantages he possessed in it led to the difficulty, for treasure here is not heaven, even if the possessor of it be heavenly-minded: an important lesson. Still Abram behaves beautifully. Lot chooses the world, fair in appearance, not as Egypt, the world as such, but as self-ease, and what seemed, was not outwardly separated from, Canaan; but which was soon after the scene and object of what did not appear—the sure judgments of God. The self-renunciation of Abram is the occasion for him of a much clearer knowledge of the extent, and a still firmer assurance of the certainty, of the promise. It is when he gives up all to Lot as he might choose it, that the Lord says to Abram to look north, south, east, west, from where

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he was, adding he would give it to him and to his seed for ever. In a word, we have the believer acting in the spirit of the heavenly calling—the faithful believer, and the worldly-minded believer.

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

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

In this picture, then, we have the final triumph of the Lord and the family of faith over the power of the world, realized in spirit by the church (and finally in

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glory) for a heavenly hope and association with Christ, and literally by the Jews on the earth, for whom Christ will be Melchizedek-priest in full accomplished position; Priest on His throne, Mediator in this character, blessing them, and blessing God for them; God Himself then taking, fully and indeed, the character of possessor of heaven and earth.

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

When God had thus revealed Himself, according to His establishment of blessing in power on the earth, through the priestly king Melchizedek, naturally the actual blessing of the chosen people finds its place; and we come down to the actual earthly scene, and in chapter xv. have the detailed instruction of the Lord to Abram regarding the earthly seed and the land given to him, the whole confirmed by a covenant where God, as light to guide and furnace to try, deigns to bind Himself to the accomplishment of the whole. Death makes it sure. Jehovah confirms thus the covenant in going in

* Compare, for the Jews, Psalm xci. This closes the general history of these great elements of God's ways: heavenly things are out of sight, save we look behind the scene where Abram's faith went. Still the path of faith, the snare of the world, the moral victory of unselfish faith, which has God and His promises for its portion, and its actual final victory and God's possession of heaven and earth, are fully brought out, and the whole scene completed.

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grace through that which bound Him; Abram, heir of the promises, undergoes the terror and shadow of it. It is not here precisely expiation, but what belonged to the confirmation of the promises by the only thing which could establish them in favour of man a sinner. It is evident that this unfolding of God's ways and the establishment of the covenant embraces (though the covenant be made in favour of the earthly people) new and important principles. God Himself was Abram's defence and portion. That is the highest portion of all, so far as anything given to man can go.*

But Abram feels yet his connection with the earth as an abiding place in connection with the flesh, and it was indeed God's purpose so to bless him. That is in its nature Jewish, and we have consequently the Jewish portion unfolded. I have no heir, says Abram; nothing to continue, by a family tie, the possession of my inheritance on earth, according to promise; for on earth, where men die, there must be succession. And so it was to be. But still, as to the earth, it was to be by dependence on Jehovah, by promise, and by faith. Although connected here with the earth, it was not according to nature: on this footing all was foreclosed against Abram —he had no seed. Hence, the seed of faith and promise comes forth—not indeed the one seed—but the Jews as children of promise. The principle is set forth and faith counted for righteousness while Abram believed God. Thus, for this world, Israel was the seed of promise, the

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

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heir. Then comes covenant as to the land, according to promise made in the call of Abram. The Lord binds Himself to Abram according to death, as we have seen (for indeed it is assured in the death of Christ, without which they could have nothing). This is, as to present fulfilment, connected with the suffering of the people in Egypt, and their subsequent deliverance, when the oppressors of the people and the usurpers of the inheritance would both be judged.

The character of the act by which the covenant was made, we have already noticed. The reader may compare Jeremiah xxxiv. 18, 19, as to the force of this act. It is not here, moreover, a promise by which Abram is called out by faith, but the assuring the inheritance to his *seed* by covenant, and here without condition. It is the promise to Israel, the seed of promise, the heir in connection with the earth and flesh. Remark, moreover, that the prolonged sorrow and oppression of God's people—the delay of the promised heir—is in connection with the patience of God towards those that are to be judged. (Compare 2 Peter iii. 6.) We may remark that the oppressors of Israel are judged for the sake of Israel, the usurpers of his inheritance for him.

Here the laying out of God's plans and purposes closes, even as to the earthly people, and man's ways, and God's ways for their fulfilment, begin to be unfolded with chapter xv., with the paths of those, or hindrances from those, with whom His people may be connected in any way. These are developed up to chapter xxiii. when Abraham ceases to be the representative of the

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stem of promise. Sarah dies, the vessel of the seed of promise, and the risen heir comes into notice as the one whom God sets forth. They that are born after the flesh precede those who are born according to promise.

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

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

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36); and in connection with the unbelief of nature, that is, Egypt.

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

Chapters xv., xvi. are so far connected, that chapter xvi. is the fleshly attempt on Sarah's part to have the seed which was assured by the word of the Lord to Abram in the beginning of chapter xv. Here all is failure; but the purposes of God will be accomplished according to promise, and not of the flesh and man's will.

In chapter xvii. we have a fresh revelation of the Lord to Abram, and, I think, are upon higher and holier ground. It is not here calling, or worship, or a revelation by the word of how God would accomplish His promises, and what His people should go through—not what God was for Abram, but what He was Himself. It is not, I am *thy* shield and *thine* exceeding great reward; but I *am* God Almighty. This is not all He was, but it is what He was—His own name; and Abram is called upon to walk correspondently to this name. Hence, also, he does not worship or request anything from God, however high the privilege, but Elohim *talks with him.* The various parts of His purposes as to Abram are unfolded—what he is to be before Him in whom he believed. In general God's

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covenant was with him. It is not a legal binding, but a free engagement of God in grace, according to His own mind, that Abraham should be the father of many nations. It is in three parts. God would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him; the land wherein he was a stranger is to be to him and to his seed after him; and nations and kings should come out of him. All these promises are without condition; but principles are set forth binding on Abraham, and expressive of the character of those who enjoy the privileges of God — circumcision and free sovereign promise. Circumcision in contrast with law (see John vii. 22), but expressive of the death of the flesh (comp. Rom. iv. 10—13),* and next the promise of the seed, is given; but this when Abraham, as to the body, was now dead; and as the character of circumcision was peremptory—for flesh cannot have to say to God in light—so as to the promise; it was to the son of promise. Though God might outwardly bless the seed according to flesh, the covenant was exclusively with the heir of promise. Death of flesh (for we are away from God), and simple sovereign grace, are peremptory. The *barren* woman must be the mother of thousands. Abraham rejoices in the promise, and acts obediently in the order of God.

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

XVII.

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Chapter xviii. is again a new unfolding of God's ways in connection with the seed of promise who is here the main object in view, and the present immediate object of hope. This part, as regards the title of the promised heir, goes on to the end of chapter xxi. But here, I apprehend, he* is seen as heir of *the world* and judge; while Abraham's personal relationship with God is in grace, by promise, where he is not seen; and so far has the ground of faith, and, in figure, a christian position. Hence, God Himself being known—not merely His gifts, Abraham rises higher than in chapter xv., and, instead of asking gifts for himself, intercedes for others.

After chapter xxii. the proper figures of the church come in, because the seed is raised: we get, however, great individual principles here. Abraham is accustomed to the divine presence, and it is quickly felt by him; and although he says nothing referring to the divine glory till the Lord is pleased to discover Himself, yet from the first he acts with an instinctive deference which was as fully accepted by Him who came. In this respect it is a lovely scene of holy consciousness and deferential waiting on the good pleasure of God. The immediate promise of the arrival of the seed is given. Abraham enjoys the most intimate communion with Jehovah, who reveals His counsels to him as to His friend. Intercession is the fruit of this revelation. (Comp. Is. vi.) Judgment falls on the world; and whilst Abraham, on the top of the mountain, communes with God of the

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

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judgment which was to fall upon the world below, where he was not, Lot, who had taken his place there, is saved so as by fire. Righteousness which walks with the world puts itself in the position of judge, and is at the same time useless and intolerable. Abraham escapes all judgment, and sees it from on high. Lot is saved from the judgment which falls upon the world in which he found himself. The place where Abraham enjoyed God is for him a place of sterility and fear: he is forced to take refuge there in the end, because he is afraid to be anywhere else.

In general, Abraham has the character here of communion with God, which faith, without sight, gives—not by an indwelling Holy Ghost, no doubt, according to the privilege of the church (that was reserved for the time of fuller blessing, when the church's Head should be glorified), but in the general character of the blessing. The promised seed is announced as to come, but not yet brought into the world, that is, in the way of manifested glory. Meanwhile, Abraham knows and believes it. God then treats him, as we have seen, as a friend, and tells him, not what concerns himself, but the world. With a friend I speak of what I have on my heart, not merely of my business with him; and then, as he has received these communications from God, so he intercedes with God—a stranger in the place of promise on high in communion with him. It brings out, withal, the patience and perfectness of judgment with God.

Lot, in the following chapter, because of his connection with the heavenly man, depositary of God's counsels

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

Thus faith had its place, and the world had been judged. So will it be in the days of the Son of man; but here the coming of the heir is not yet brought in.

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

But these two chapters must be somewhat more developed. Like Abram's going down to Egypt, we have

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unbelief working in respect of the faith into which he had been called by grace, shewn, as it ever is, in reference to walking in the intimacy of the relationship in which God had set him, of which woman is the expression. Here Sarah is the mother of the heir of the world, the wife of Abraham, according to promise, and, for Abraham, according to the church's hope, as we have seen (though Israel were the vessel according to flesh). This position he denies. Sarah is again his sister. This was worse than before, for she is to faith mother of the heir of the world. Abimelech was wrong, and acted to please himself, but acted unconscious of it. Abraham before God was in the falser position of the two. God warns Abimelech, and preserves Sarah by His own power, whom Abraham's want of faith had connected with the world; and Abimelech returns her with the cutting reproof to the church, that she at least ought to have known her own relationship to Christ. Still, in the main, Abraham was in the place of faith and blessing; and, as God's prophet, to whom none should do harm, intercedes for the faulty Abimelech, for here all is grace. But now the heir is born, the heir of promise.

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

And here, further, Abraham fears no longer before the prince of this world, but reproves him. He has the world,

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as well as the heavenly communion, now that the heir is come; and the world owns that God is with him in all things. Hence the well of the oath, where the bond-woman's seed had found the water of deliverance, is the witness of Abraham's title in the world and Abimelech's owning God to be with him. There, according to the oath and his title thus owned by the world, he plants a grove, takes possession of the earth, and worships, calling on the name of the everlasting God—of Him who had once promised to Israel, and never abandoned His purpose, and had now accomplished on the earth what His mouth had spoken: not, indeed, so blessed a portion as the heavenly intercourse and possession of faith, but a proof of the unchangeable faithfulness of the God who had given the promises. There Abraham, in figure, now abides, where the power of the world had been.

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

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waiting the moment when she shall see Him who is heir of all things that belong to His Father) across the desert to her heavenly bridegroom. The walk of the Spirit, moreover, in man, is depicted in the most instructive manner in the details of this history, in the conduct of Eliezer: his simple subjection to what was for him the word of God even when all seemed well (ver. 21—23); heart-reference in thankfulness to God the first feeling (ver. 26); purpose of heart in service (ver. 33), and the like.

We have next the election of God, which now sets apart the earthly people, Jacob. It is remarkable how little we have of Isaac, nothing but remaining in heavenly places, a wife being sought for him on earth. We are on earth; yet the heavenly thing intimated, promise and principles in Abraham, and the earthly people of promise in Jacob are fully developed principles we have all through. Jacob values the promises of God; but if Lot was attracted by the well-watered plain, the unbelief of Jacob was manifested in the use of carnal means to obtain possession of the promises, instead of waiting upon God. Thus his years were "few and evil;" and he was continually the object of similar deceit too. But if in Isaac we have a risen Christ, bridegroom of the church which the Holy Ghost is descended to seek here below for Him who is on high, in Jacob we have Israel, driven out of the land of promise, kept of God to enjoy it afterwards. I believe, however, that in his marriages we have the Lord, who, while loving Israel (Rachel), has yet first received the Gentiles or the church, and then the Jews.

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

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

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

And now the heir's bride must be sought. Remark, first, that she receives tokens of grace; then, as an espoused one, gifts. She shews her willing mind through grace, and is led of Eliezer in loneliness across the desert, leaving her father's house, to possess all with Isaac, to whom his father has given everything. We have here fully the church in a figure: Isaac, who is the risen man—between the man of promise, Abraham, and Jacob, when Israel comes into the scene—must not on any account go back to the country of nature, out of which his wife was to be called. He is exclusively the heavenly man. Rebekah must go to him. With him before her, her journey was blessed; he once out of her mind, she was a stranger who had left all to be homeless and portionless for nothing. Such is the church. But to return was to give up Isaac.

Next mark, in the working of the Holy Ghost presented in Eliezer, entire confidence in God. He asks, and is answered; but it must be entirely according to the word (here Abraham's), "Is she of the kindred?" Next, when the blessing is known, thanksgiving comes before joy; and next entire and exclusive consecration to the service he had to perform. He will not eat till he has told his errand, and then no hesitation: he has one work and nothing else. Would it were so with all

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who are Christ's! Eliezer conducts her to Isaac, who is gone out and comes to meet her; and there, to the son's comfort, she replaces Sarah, the vessel of promise, in the yet better place of the risen heir's wife.

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

Chapter xxv. 19 begins, in a measure, a new scene. From the barren woman—for all must be grace and divine power—spring two, in whom election, not only in the grace of calling, but in sovereignty and in contrast with works, is brought out. In Jacob there was nothing naturally attractive; but Esau despised the gift of God; his judgment had its origin from himself. He was profane; though God, in His secret counsels, had ordained the blessing in Jacob. Esau saw nothing beyond the earthly advantage of the gift, and nothing of the Giver or relationship with Him. In this we have merely the presentation of the two sons in their character. God's dealings with them will come later, for Isaac's *history* now only begins. He is here the designated heir of the world, but was to have, as such, the proper portion of Israel in the earth. Chapter xxiv. gave, in figure, the secret history of the church in connection with the risen heir.

Here (chap. xxvi.) Isaac replaces Abraham as heir upon the earth. It is a new revelation, when Isaac is himself in a strange land, like the one made to Abraham

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at the first; only that Isaac was already in connection with the calling of God, but not in enjoyment of the promise. There was a famine in the land, and Isaac could not dwell in it, and he goes to those who had part of the land in possession, but had no title—the future enemies and oppressors of his people. But God appears to him there, and tells him not to return into the world, but to dwell in *the land* which *He should tell him of.* He is maintained in the heavenly place. It was a fresh calling under different circumstances (the Lord appearing to him anew), not to journey to a land, but to dwell where He should shew him, and not to seek natural resources (Egypt). But the land is also shewn and the promises renewed, both as to Israel, and the nations, and the land. He was to sojourn in the land where he was, that is, where the Philistines were. Thus the whole land, Philistines and all, was given to him, and he dwelt in Gerar.

This is the position of Isaac, as the first half of chapter xii. is the position of Abraham. From verse 7 to the end we have his personal walk as to faith, as Abraham in the latter part of chapter xii.; and the settlement of what should be his portion in his posterity according to the faith that he had. He fails, like Abraham and yet more, as to energy. He denies his wife, as Abraham had done, and he leaves in the hand of the enemy the wells which Abraham had dug: he had failed in faith in God before Abimelech, and, though God had said to him "Dwell in this land," he has to recede before the will of Abimelech, then driven from well to well, and has room only where the Philistine has room. In Beer-

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sheba he meets with God, where he has pitched his tent, where Abraham had set his bounds with Abimelech when Isaac was born. But Abraham had not received direction as to dwelling in the land, and had reproved Abimelech, whose servants had taken the well, and Abimelech had given it up. Abraham had dug all these wells as he needed, as a stranger, and they were not taken away: the only one contended for was Beersheba, and that Abimelech gave up. However Beersheba was, in divine providence, the limit of the land according to the faith of Israel. The Philistines did remain till David came, the representative of Christ. The otherwise heirs of the land possessed it not fully. There the Lord appeared and blessed Isaac—there Israel reposed and worshipped. This chapter is Isaac's history; it answers to Abraham's. (Chap. xii., xx.)

Esau's ways were as careless as his thoughts as to the birthright were profane.

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

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

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believer. Esau had deliberately given up the right, when he had the choice: God was not in his thoughts: he cannot receive the blessing when the consequences are there. Man must act by faith alone, when the consequences are not seen, in order to be blessed.

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

But another promise was added, a precious and important one, that, outcast and a wanderer as he was, God would keep him in all places whither he went, and bring him back to the land, and fulfil all without fail,

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not leaving him till he had accomplished all. God was above; Jacob, the object of promise and blessing, of the earth; but earth was all under the providential control of heaven; and the angels had Jacob for their care, ascended and descended, accomplishing the will of God.* Awoke up, Jacob binds himself to Jehovah as his God —for Jehovah stood at the top of the ladder; and thus he became, prophetically, the God of a restored Israel, with whom, though far from heaven, was the house of God on earth in connection with heaven. It was a legal though just vow, and all prophetic. He is now a stranger, and in many things represents Christ afflicted in the affliction of His people.

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

Jacob's personal history is the sad tale of deceit and wrong done to him; but God, as He had promised, preserving him throughout. What a difference from Eliezer and Abraham, where the power and character of the Holy Ghost is seen! Here providence preserves, but it is Jacob's history. At the return of Jacob the hosts of

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

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God came to meet him. He receives a new and wondrous proof of God's mighty and gracious care, which should have recalled Bethel to him. But this does not remove his terror. He must anew use the means of unbelief, and sends children and wives and all on before; but his strength was not there. God, in order not to leave him in the hands of Esau, deals with him Himself. *He* wrestles with him, sustaining at the same time his faith in the wrestling; and, after making him feel his weakness, and that for all his life, gives him, in weakness, the place and part of victor. He is a prince with God, and prevails with God and with men.

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

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rising up to the Blesser. This, indeed, he was not properly able to do yet. God was dealing with him, and he was, in a measure, thinking on God; but proper communion was not there: so is it in like case with us.

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

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

The apostate world establishes itself in power while the

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heirs of promise are still poor pilgrims upon the earth. This last is a distinct point of revelation.

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

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

XXXV.—XLI.

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

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

Only remark that here the repentance is immediately in connection with the rejection of Joseph; this is brought on the conscience of Joseph's brethren. So in the end will it be with Israel. It is not here in reference to the law—that we shall have after Sinai—but in typical connection with the Messiah. Their consciences are fully convinced, and they go back to all the circumstances of His rejection. It is only gradually that Joseph reveals himself, and with many exercises of heart, which his dealings work in his brethren. In the end Judah is brought into prominence in connec-

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tion with Benjamin. It is when Judah takes the sorrow of Israel to heart, in connection with Benjamin, and the loss of Joseph, and puts himself into it, that Joseph, in his glory, is revealed to them as their brother: it is a lovely scene. The perfect grace of Joseph at the end is a wonderful picture of Christ's revelation of Himself. (Chap. xlv. 4—8, *et seqq.*)

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

The coming down to Egypt was according to God: so we have here Israel viewed as abiding God's time, even when oppressed, not as cast out and wandering as the effect of disobedience. Both are true. God, remark, appears to him as the God of Isaac his father, not of Abraham: his blessing comes under the risen Christ. What hangs on promise Israel has lost by the rejection of Christ; but God can appear for him in pure grace, in connection with a risen Saviour: and so it is in figure here. Therefore is Israel blessed in spite of all, though long oppressed and a stranger. When he is in connection with Joseph, the scene changes; that is, in his connection, in the world, with a glorified Christ revealed to him there, he has the best of the land, which is brought into universal order and subjection as belonging

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to Pharaoh, whom Joseph represented, and whose authority he exercised over it. Beersheba, the border of Israel—from henceforward he was a stranger—is the place of this revelation of God.

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

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

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

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Remark the beauty of the grace in Joseph. (Chap. xlv. 7, 8, and 1, 17, 19, 20.)

It seems to me that there is this difference between the prophecies of Jacob and Moses as to the tribes. Here the prophecy refers to the responsibility of the first parent-source of the tribe, as Reuben, Simeon, Levi; and to the counsels of God, which put forward Judah (the stock from which the Lord sprang as regards the royalty) and Joseph (type of Christ as Nazarene, separated from his brethren, and afterwards exalted). The rest, if we except Benjamin who ravages with power, gives the general characters of the position and conduct of the tribes of Israel; Dan, of his wickedness, and even of his character of traitor. Moses gives rather the history of the people as entering into the country on leaving the wilderness; and we find the priesthood and people to be the two points brought into prominence, although power and a special blessing be given to Judah.

But I add a few details as to this prophetic blessing. We may remark, in the tribes, responsibility and the future of Israel as firstborn according to nature. Reuben represents Israel in this character; Simeon and Levi, who come after and will maintain their right by nature's force, are no better. Then we have the *purpose* of God in the king and the whole of the royal tribe till Christ come, to whom the gathering of the peoples shall be. Joseph comes with Benjamin at the end, the representative of Christ personally glorified, as Benjamin of Christ in judgment on earth. Joseph is a personal representative of Christ, separated from his brethren, glorious and blessed as the heir of all the resources of

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God. Dan, before this, though owned as a judging tribe and so Israel in him, yet marks out that apostasy and power of Satan in Israel which led the remnant to look beyond the portion of the people, unfaithful in every way to Him who was the salvation: "We have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah."

I rather think that in the other tribes we have a distinct contrast of what Israel is as oppressed, before Christ, who has taken the full Joseph character in glory, and has answered the faith of the remnant expressed in verse 18, and after; and that thus, in these characters of the tribes, we have the whole history of Israel. Judah and Joseph have been already marked out and distinguished in the history—Judah as surety for and connected with Benjamin, and Joseph in all his history. Thus, after Judah, in Zebulun and Issachar we have Israel mixed with the world, busied in its waters to seek profit, and a slave to it for rest and quiet; but this ends in Dan and apostasy, so that the remnant, in the spirit of prophecy, wait for the salvation which is to come with the true Joseph. All is prosperity when this is looked to. Once overcome, he overcomes at the last: his bread is fat and yields royal dainties in his own land, not seeking them by mixture with, and subjection to, the world. And Naphtali is in the liberty of God, and full of goodly words. In Joseph and Benjamin we have the crowning of all blessing in the double character of Christ, the heavenly Heir of all, and power and strength upon the earth that subdues all.

So that the whole series would be thus:—Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, the moral character and failure of

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responsible Israel. It will be found, as ever, corruption and violence: such is man. Next, the *purpose* of God in Judah: he remains till Shiloh come, to whom the gathering of the peoples belongs. But He was rejected when He came to Judah, and there was no gathering: "beauty" and "bands" were broken.

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

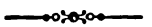
On the whole I think we have a complete history of Israel in this way. First his failure: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, corruption and violence, as already remarked. Then Judah, God's purpose in His people, in connection with the royal stock and Shiloh. This is plain enough. To Him the gathering of the peoples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

* Joseph is so characterized in Deuteronomy also.

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the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, shall be also there, when prosperity full in Israel shall overpass its bounds and victorious power shall belong to them.

Personally the fear of God was in Joseph from beginning to end: a mighty principle, and the true base of power. Whatever his glory, he does not forget Canaan or the earthly promise—he sends his bones there: nor has Christ. So Joseph, when Israel is gone, forgives his brethren their wrong, and nourishes them with his riches. So is it with Christ: He is above the wrong and the just fears of them that rejected Him; He will bless Israel from His own stores of heavenly glory. The Lord hasten it in its day!



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EXODUS.

In the Book of Exodus we have, as the general and characteristic subject, the deliverance and redemption of the people of God, and their establishment as a people before Him—whether under the law, or under the government of God in longsuffering, of a God who, having so brought them to Himself, provided for His unfaithful people; not indeed entrance into His own presence, but a way of approaching Him, at least at a distance, although they had failed. But the veil was unrent: God did not come out to them, nor could they go in to God. God's relationship with the people had at first been in grace; but this did not continue, and the people never entered thereinto with intelligence, nor understood this grace like persons who stood in need of it as sinners. Let us examine the course of these divine instructions.

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

But, although providence responds to faith, and acts

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in order to accomplish God's purposes, and control the walk of His children, it is not the guide of faith, although it is made so sometimes by believers who are wanting in clearness of light. Moses's faith is seen in his giving up, when grown to age, all the advantages of the position in which God had set him by His providence. Providence may, and often does, give that which forms, in many respects, the servants of God for their work, as vessels; but could not be their power in the work. These two things must not be confounded. It gives that, the giving up of which is a testimony of the reality of faith and of the power of God which operates in the soul. It is given that it may be given up. This is part of the preparation. This faith acted through affections which attached him to God, and consequently to the people of God in their distress, and manifested itself, not in the helps or reliefs which his position could well have enabled him to give to them, but in inducing him to identify himself with that people because it was God's people. Faith attaches itself to God, *and appreciates, and would have part in the bond that exists between God and His people;* and thus it thinks not of patronizing from above, as if the world had authority over the people of God, or was able to be a blessing to them. It feels (because it *is faith*) that God loves His people; that His people are precious to Him; His own on the earth; and faith sets itself thus, through very affection, in the position where His people find themselves. This is what Christ did. Faith does but follow Him in His career of love, however great the distance at which it walks.

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

Moses, then, identifies himself with the people of God. A certain natural activity, and the unconscious habits of a strength which was not purely from on high, accompanied him, perhaps; however, it is this first devotedness which is pointed out by the Holy Ghost* as the good and acceptable fruit of faith. But it ought to have been more entirely subject to God, and to have had its starting point in Him alone, and in obedience to His expressed will. We have, in this case, an example of the way in which the Lord often acts. The earnest energy of faithfulness is manifested, but the instrument is put aside for a moment, in order that the service may depend

* Hebrews xi. 24—26.

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directly and entirely upon God. There was something analogous even in Jesus, save that there was not in Him either false reckoning, or error, or external providences, in consequence, to deliver Him from them. In Him the perfection of the energy of life within acted always in the knowledge of *who* His Father was, and at the same time submitted to His will in the circumstances in which He had morally placed Him. But the Lord appeared as Son with the doctors in the temple, and then was subject to Joseph and Mary till the time and way appointed of God, only alike perfect in both. Moses, fearful even amid faithfulness, and dreading the power which lent him, unconsciously perhaps, a certain habit of energy (for one is afraid of that from which one draws one's strength), and repulsed by the unbelief of those towards whom his love and his faithfulness carried him, for "they understood him not," fled to the desert, a type, as to the fact itself, of the Lord Jesus, rejected by the people whom He loved.

There is a difference between this type and that of Joseph. Joseph takes the position (as put to death) of Jesus raised to the right hand of the supreme throne over the Gentiles, in the end receiving his brethren from whom he had been separated. His children are to him a testimony of his blessing at that time. He calls them Manasseh ("because God," says he, "has made me forget all my labours, and all the house of my father"), and Ephraim ("because God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction"). Moses presents to us Christ separated from His brethren; and although Zipporah might be considered as a type of the church (as well as

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Joseph's wife), as the bride of the rejected Deliverer, during his separation from Israel, yet, as to what regards his heart, his feelings (which are expressed in the names that he gives to his children) are governed by the thought of being separated from the people of Israel: his fraternal affections are there—his thoughts are there—his rest and his country are there. He is a stranger everywhere else. Moses is the type of Jesus as the deliverer of Israel. He calls his son Gershom, that is to say, a "stranger there;" "for," says he, "I have sojourned in a strange land." Jethro presents to us the Gentiles among whom Christ and His glory were driven when He was rejected by the Jews.

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

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

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

Considered as a practical history, this sending away of Moses into the wilderness, and his long sojourn there, is full of instruction. God shews Himself to us as destroying the hope of the flesh, and humbling its strength. He makes a shepherd, under the protection of a stranger,

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of the adopted son of the house of the king; and this during forty years, before he can undertake God's work, in order that the work might be a work of obedience, and that the strength may be that of God; and Moses' hope and the affection of his heart were left in abeyance all this time. No human issue was apparent.

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

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

* Compare Matthew v. and John xvii. His millennial name is Most High. See the interesting connection of three of these names in Psalm xci. That of Father is not found in the psalms: the Son has revealed it.

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

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

In Abraham first God had called any out, first to him given any promises. He first had been publicly called apart from the world, so that God called Himself his God. He never calls Himself God of Abel or of Noah, though in a general sense He is the

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God, of course, of every saint. Faith itself is first here pointed out as the way of righteousness. In Eden God, in judging the serpent, had announced the final victory of the promised Seed; in Abel He had shewn what acceptable sacrifice from a sinner was—not the fruits of his labour under judgment, but the blood God's grace had given to him, which answered his need; and this established a righteousness to man, which was measured by his gift; in Enoch, clear and absolute victory over death, and removal from earth, God taking him; in Noah, deliverance through judgments, when the world was judged. Then a new world began, and a ceasing, through the sweet savour of sacrifice, to curse the earth, and a covenant for its preservation from any future destruction by water. But in Abraham we have, after the judgment of Babel, one called out from the world—now worshipping other gods—brought into separate and immediate connection with God, and promises given to him—a person called to be the object and depositary of God's promises. This gave him a very peculiar place. God was his God. He had a separate place from all the world with Him as heir of the promise. He is the root of all the heirs of it. Christ Himself comes as seed of Abraham, who is the father also of the faithful as to the earth. Israel is the promised nation under this title. As regards election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. In this name, consequently, as His eternal memorial God would now deliver them. At the same time, God foretells that Pharaoh will not let the people go; but takes clearly the ground of His authority and of His right over His people, and of authoritative

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demand upon Pharaoh that he should recognize them. Upon his refusal to do so, he would be judged by the power of God.

Moses still raises difficulties, and God gives him again signs, remarkable signs. They seem to me in their character—types of sin and of its healing; of power which, having become Satanic, is taken back, and becomes the rod of God; and then presents that which refreshes, coming from God, as having become judgment and death. Yet Moses refuses still, and the wrath of God is kindled against him; yet He acts in mercy, in a way, however, humbling to Moses, with whom he now joins Aaron his brother, whom He had already prepared for that, and who had come out of Egypt to meet him; for the folly of his children, while it is to their shame and to their loss, accomplishes the purposes of God.

Whatever may be the power of Him that delivers, it is necessary that circumcision should be found in him who is interested in, and who is used as an instrument of, the deliverance, for the Saviour-God is a God of holiness; it is in holiness, and *in judging sin*, that He delivers: and acting in holiness, He does not suffer sin in those who are co-workers for Him, with whom He is in contact; for He comes out of His place in judgment. For us the question is of being dead to sin, the true circumcision; our Moses is a bloody husband to her who has to do with him. God cannot use the flesh in the fight against Satan. He cannot suffer it Himself, for He is in His place in judgment. Satan also would have power over it, and of right; God therefore puts it to

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death Himself, and He wills that this should be accomplished in us also. This is true of those who compose the assembly; but they can reckon themselves dead. It will be true in one way more evidently, in judgment at the last day, when the Lord pleads with all flesh, and identifies Himself with those who have not taken part spiritually in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the Christian's place.

At the news of the goodness of God, the people adore Him; but the struggle against the power of evil is another matter. Satan will not let the people go, and God permits this resistance, for the exercise of faith, and for the discipline of His people, and for the brilliant display of His power where Satan had reigned.

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

At last God executes His judgment, taking the first-born as representatives of all the people. We have thereon two parts in the deliverance of the people; in one, God appears as Judge—in the other, He manifests Himself as Deliverer. Up to this last, the people are still in Egypt. In the first, the expiatory blood of re-

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demption bars to Him the way of Judge, and it secures the people infallibly; but God does not enter within—its value is to secure them from judgment.*

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

But the blood, which kept the people from God's judgment, meant something far deeper and far more serious than even the Red Sea, though judgment was executed there too. What happened at the Red Sea was, it is true, the manifestation of the illustrious power of God, who destroyed with the breath of His mouth the enemy who stood in rebellion against Him —final and destructive judgment in its character, no

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

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doubt, and which affected the deliverance of His people by His power.

But the blood signified the moral judgment of God, and the full and entire satisfaction of all that was in His being. God, such as He was, in His justice, His holiness, and His truth, could not touch those who were sheltered by that blood. Was there sin? His love towards His people had found the means of satisfying the requirements of His justice; and at the sight of that blood, which answered everything that was perfect in His being, He passed over it consistently with His justice and even His truth. Nevertheless God, even in passing over, is seen as Judge; hence, so long as the soul is on this ground, its peace is uncertain though the ground of it be sure—its way in Egypt—being all the while truly converted; because God has still the character of Judge to it, and the power of the enemy is still there.

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

As a moral type, the Red Sea is evidently the death and resurrection of Jesus, so far as the real effecting of the works goes, in its own efficacy as deliverance by redemption, and of His people as seen *in Him;* God acting in it, to bring them, through death, out of sin and this present world, giving absolute deliverance from them by* death, into which Christ had

* Jordan adds our resurrection with Christ, and being in heavenly

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gone, and consequently beyond the possibility of being reached by the enemy. We are made partakers of it already through faith. Sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood, we are delivered, by His power which acts for us, from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The blood keeping us from the judgment of God was the beginning. The power which has made us alive, in Christ who has gone down into death for us, has made us free from the whole power of Satan who followed us, and from all his attacks and accusations. We have done with Egypt and the world. The world, who will follow that way,* is swallowed up in it.

places. Romans iii. 20 to v. 11 gives Christ's death for sins and our justification in His resurrection; thence to the end of chapter viii., death to sin. Sin in the flesh is not forgiven, but condemned (Rom. viii. 3); but we as having died are not in the flesh at all, we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ. This takes no farther than the wilderness, though passing through it as alive to God through Christ. In Romans we are not risen with Christ. That involves our being identified with Him where He is and so union. In Colossians we are risen with Him, but not in heavenly places. In Ephesians ii. we are risen *with* Him and sitting in heavenly places in Him, and then begin conflict with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, and testimony, according to what is heavenly, so far this is Jordan. Only Ephesians begins with our being dead in sins, so that it is a new creation, it is not death to sin. The blood-shedding however, in one respect, has a more glorious character. God is glorified in it, though by crossing Jordan we are experimentally placed higher. That too is the fruit of the blood-shedding, in which there is not only the bearing of sins to meet our responsibility, but a glorifying of God, so as to bring us withal into God's glory with Him, which is beyond all questions of responsibility.

* This is a solemn warning; for the world, who call themselves

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Considered as the historical type of God's ways towards Israel, the Red Sea terminates the sequel of events; as a moral type, it is the beginning of the christian path, properly so called, that is to say, of the soul set free by redemption.*

Hereupon we enter the desert. They sing (chap. xv.) the song of triumph. God *has led them* by His power to His holy habitation. But they are on this journey, not in Canaan. He *will lead* them into the place which He has made, which His hands have established. Their enemies shall be unable to oppose themselves to this. So with us. There is a third thing which is found in this beautiful song—the desire to build a tabernacle for Jehovah. But what they sing is the deliverance effected by the power of God, and the hope of entering into the sanctuary which the hands of Jehovah have made.

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

* In itself, it is Christ's death and resurrection. But that is not only meeting the holiness of God's nature, which is the blood shedding, but entering into the whole power of evil that was against us and making it null. Hence, though it be not our realizing death and resurrection so as to be in heavenly places, we are owned as having died in Him, and He our life, so that we have left the old state altogether.

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The deliverance, then, of the people is accompanied by a full and entire joy, which, having the consciousness of this complete deliverance by the power of God, grasps the whole extent of His intentions towards them, and knows how to apply this same power to the difficulties of the way. They sing the deliverance of God, note, before a step has been taken in the desert. The soul, in connection with Egypt, is still uncertain and in fear. The desert may be never so bitter and trying; but we are free and with God there (brought to His holy habitation), through the redemption and deliverance of God. But the redeemed one is looked at still as on the way to glory, not yet in possession of the promised dwelling place of God. We are come to God's habitation, but the prepared place is future. Edom and Moab will be still as a stone, but the people have yet to pass over. This difference is important to notice. However, the redeemed Christian is looked at in both ways, as in Christ, where all is settled, and in the wilderness where faith is put to the test.

Remark here too some other important elements of the position of the people. First it is a people. This then had never been: just men by grace, believers, called ones, there had been; now, though according to the flesh, these are a people of God on the earth. This was based on redemption wrought by God. Further, God dwells amongst His people on earth when redemption is accomplished. He had not with innocent Adam. He had not with called Abraham. He does with redeemed Israel. But thirdly, this dwelling of God, His presence, brings in holiness. Holiness becomes His house for ever. We do not find holiness mentioned in Genesis,

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if it be not sanctifying the sabbath day. The moment redemption is accomplished, He is glorious in holiness, and there is a holy habitation. All these are important principles.

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

Here we have the principle of the people's responsibility and their obedience put, as a condition of their well-being, under God's government. Still, however, it is always grace. The Sabbath—rest of the people—is established in connection with Christ, the true bread of life, who gives it. Then comes the Spirit—living waters which come out of the rock; but with the presence of the Holy Ghost comes conflict, and not rest. Yet Christ places Himself spiritually at the head of His people,

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

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typified here by Joshua, of whom mention is now made for the first time. True rest is by Christ, the bread come down from heaven, and this comes first, before conflict, though man could not really enjoy it by that bread alone, nor without death and redemption coming in. Unless we eat the flesh and drink the blood, there is no life to taste and enjoy the bread. But in all these types the position of the people is characterized by the unrent veil. The rock indeed is smitten—it must be to have the living water; but this is historical, as to the event, not access within. It is all the earthly part of God's ways, even in grace.

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

Up to this all was grace. The murmurs of the people had only served to shew the riches of the grace of God, who displayed His sovereignty in giving them all they

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could desire; which appears so much the more striking, because afterwards the same desires, under the law, brought very bitter chastisements. At length, after this reign of grace, follows the order of divine government, what will be realised in the millennium (chap. xviii.), where the king in Jeshurun judges in righteousness, establishes order and government, the Gentiles eat and offer sacrifices with Israel, and acknowledge that the God of the Jews is exalted above all gods. All this was the acting of God's grace and power.

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

But having thus terminated the course of grace, the scene changes entirely. They do not keep the feast on the mountain, whither God, as He had promised, had led them—had "brought them, bearing them, as on eagles' wings, to himself." He proposes a condition to them: If they obeyed His voice, they shall be His people. The people—instead of knowing themselves, and saying, "We dare not, though bound to obey, place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it"—undertake to do all that the Lord had spoken. The people, however, are not permitted to approach God, who hid Himself in the dark-

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ness. In fact they undertook obedience far from God, in a state in which they could not approach Him in that majesty to which obedience was due. Nevertheless God gave all possible solemnity to the communication of His law, and sees it good that the people should fear before Him; but what can fear do towards giving *power* at a distance from Him? The feeling may, perhaps, be proper; but it is not proper to undertake to obey in such a state. Terror, and the condition of obedience when the people are far from God—such is the character of the law, a rule sent out to man, taken in its largest character, when man cannot approach God, but a barrier is set up, and the question of righteousness as the way of life raised and claimed on man's part when man is a sinner.

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

We have (as we may observe by the way) a beautiful type (chap. xxi.) of the devotedness of Christ to the church and to His Father and His love to us. Having served already faithfully His full service as man, during His lifetime, He would remain a servant even in death for the sake of the Father, the church, and His people. He made Himself a servant for ever.

XVIII.—XXIII.

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(Comp. Luke xii., even for glory, and John's Gospel, chap. xiii.)

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

But Moses is called near to God, to see the patterns of things more excellent, of heavenly things—of things which make provision indeed for the faults and the failures of God's people, but reveal to them the perfection and varied glories of Him whom they approach as His people. Only they still carry the stamp of the dispensation to which they belong, as is true of everything which is not founded on and characterized by association with a glorified Christ. That however in which the figures do not answer to the antitypes, as we know them, is not in the things themselves, but in the liberty of access, and the way that has been opened, and we admitted to them. The form of realization was dependent on the actual state of things. Priesthood there was, but many priests because they were mortal. The veil for us is rent, so that the holy and most holy place are for us in spirit therein together. Still the general figure remains, and it does not appear that there will be a rent veil in the millennium though all the blessing depends on Christ's death. Our place is peculiar.

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

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The glories in every way of Christ the Mediator are presented in the tabernacle; not precisely, as yet, the unity of His people, considered as His body, but in every manner in which the ways and the perfections of God are manifested through Him, whether in the full extent of the creation, in His people, or in His person. The scene of the manifestation of the glory of God, His house, His domain, in which He displays His being (in so far as it can be seen); the ways of His grace and His glory; and His relationship through Christ with us—poor and feeble creatures, but who draw nigh unto Him—are unfolded to us in it, but still with a veil over His presence, and with God, not the Father.*

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

It would lead me too far to enter into the details of the construction of the tabernacle and its utensils, but I will make some general remarks. There is a certain appearance of disorder in the description, in that it is interrupted by the description of the vesture, and of the order of consecration, of Aaron. But this arises from what I have just said. There are things which are the manifestation of God, others which refer to the presentation of man to God; these things are linked together, for there

* We see the glory unveiled in the face of Jesus Christ and approach boldly, because the glory in His face is the proof of redemption.

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are some manifestations of God which are the points and means of the approach of man, as the cross; but while it is the point at which man draws nigh, there is something there besides the act of drawing near, or even of serving God.

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

First then there are the things which are found in the holy of holies and the holy place: the ark of the covenant, the table of the shewbread, and the candlestick with seven branches. This is what God had established for the manifestation of Himself within the house where His glory dwelt, where those who enter into His presence could have communion with Him. In result none could enter into the most holy place, for the high priest only went in to place the blood on the mercy-seat, and not for communion then, and with a cloud of incense that he might not die.* (See Heb. ix.) But it was in itself the place of approach to God. Then we have the arrangement and structure of the tabernacle which inclosed all these things, and which was divided into two parts, and then the altar of burnt-offerings, and the court where it stood, to the end of verse 19, chapter xxvii.

* This was the result of the failure of the priesthood, in the person of Nadab and Abihu, which, as everything placed under man's responsibility (and all, save of course actual redemption, has been so) was immediate.

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We will consider these things first. It is there the first part ends.

In that which follows there is what regards the action of man therein—of the priests; and God orders certain things to be brought in for that. This it is which consequently introduces the priesthood which acted in it, and which alone could, in fact, so act.

The ark of the covenant was the throne where God manifested Himself, if any could go in in righteousness* and as the seat of His sovereignty over every living man —the God of the whole earth. It was also, however, the throne of relationship with His people. The law—the testimony of what He required of men—was to be placed there. Over it was the mercy-seat, which covered it in, which formed the throne, or rather the basis of the throne, as the cherubim (formed of the same piece), which were its supporters, did its sides. In *itself* it seems to me a marvellous connection of the human and divine righteousness in the Lord Jesus. The law was hid in it, and, in divine government of man on earth, this formed the perfect rule; and we know that the law was in Christ's heart. He was perfect in human obedience and love to His Father. He lived perfectly up to the responsibility of man according to God in His inner man. But He also glorified God—all that God is in love, divine

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

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righteousness, truth, majesty. All God is was glorified by the Son of man, and not only the Son of man goes righteously into the glory of God, but God is fully revealed as the place of access for us in that character: righteousness is proved by His going to His Father. The shittim and the tables of the law are there, but all is clothed with the gold—God's own righteousness is there too. It is with this communion is, only as yet the veil hid it within. The character as yet was a judicial throne. At that time man (save Moses owned in grace) could not go in, and God did not come out. Now He has come out in grace, clothing Himself in humiliation that He in perfect grace may be with us; and man is gone into the glory according to the title of an accomplished redemption.

The cherubim, throughout the Old Testament, wherever they act, are connected with the judicial power of God, or are the executors of the will of that power; and in the Apocalypse they are generally connected with providential judgments, and belong to the throne, but the seraphic character is connected with them there, so that the throne judges finally according to God's nature.

Here, then, God manifested Himself as the Supreme God in His moral being, armed with power to enforce respect to His laws, and to keep account of all that was done. This character of God in Himself also is why the blood—witness of all that had been done for those who were thus responsible, and satisfying all the moral nature of Him who sat there—was put upon the mercy-seat, but every year, a witness that the work which did that was yet undone. Nor was it exactly there that God was directly

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in connection with His people; but thence came forth the communications which were to be made to them: "And there will I meet with thee," said God to Moses, "And I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all the things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." Moses, who receives the thoughts of God for the people, was there to have his intercourse with Jehovah, and that without veil.

It was, then, the most intimate and most immediate manifestation of God, and that which came nearest to His very nature, which does not thus manifest itself. But it was a manifestation of Himself in judgment and in government;* it was not as yet in man, neither according to man, but within the veil. In Christ we find Him thus, and *then* it is in perfect grace and divine righteousness, proved by man's place.

Outside the veil was the table with its twelve loaves and the golden candlestick. Twelve is administrative perfection *in man*—seven, spiritual completeness, whether

* This is true; but, in its typical (or perhaps I should say spiritual) application, not in the letter, but in the spirit, there was another important element of truth in it. It was the place where God was approached, not where He dealt with man's responsibility as man. This was at the brazen altar, the place of sacrifice, the first thing met, where man had to come as a sinner, when consequently what man ought to be was in question, what he ought to be for God surely, still what man ought to be. In coming to the mercy-seat in the holiest of all, what God is was in question. Man has to be meet for God's own presence, then, in the holiest.

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in good or evil. The two are found outside the veil, inside which was the most immediate manifestation of God, the Supreme, but who hid Himself, as it were, yet, in darkness. Here was light and nourishment: God in power in union with humanity; and God giving the light of the Holy Ghost. Therefore it is that we have twelve apostles attached to the Lord in the flesh, and seven churches for Him who has the seven Spirits of God.

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

Next we have the tabernacle itself, which was one, though separated into two parts. There were (as the word teaches us) two meanings in the form of the tabernacle: the heavens, God's tabernacle; and the person of Christ, God's dwelling.* The heavenly places themselves, says the apostle, had to be purified with better sacrifices. (Heb. ix. 23.) So Christ has passed through the heavens, as Aaron up to the mercy-seat. (Heb. iv. 16.) Again, it is used in the same sense as a figure of the created universe (Heb. iii. 3, 4), where it is also used as a whole as a figure of the saints, as the house over which Christ is as Son. The veil was, we know on the same divine authority, the flesh of Christ, which concealed God in His holiness of judgment—in His perfectness as sovereign justice itself, but manifested Him in perfect grace to those who were in it.

* In a general way we may add Christians: "whose house are we."

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The tabernacle itself was formed of the same things as the veil; figurative, I doubt not, of the essential purity of Christ as a man, and of all the divine graces embroidered, as it were, thereon. To this was also added cherubim, the figure, as we have seen, of judicial power,* conferred, as we know, on Christ as man: "God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed:" and again, "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son . . . . and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."

It seems to me that the other coverings point to Him also: that of the goat-skins to His positive purity, or rather to that severity of separation from the evil that was around Him, which gave Him the character of prophet—severity, not in His ways towards poor sinners but in separation from sinners, the uncompromisingness, as to Himself, which kept Him apart and gave Him His moral authority, that moral cloth of hair which distinguished the prophet.

The ram-skins dyed red point to His perfect devotedness to God, His consecration to God (may God enable us to imitate Him!); and the badger-skin is that vigilant holiness, both of walk and in external relationship, which preserved Him, and perfectly so, from the evil that sur-

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

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rounded Him. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Besides what may be called His person, these things correspond to the new nature (in Christ, we can say *new* only by analogy, in contrast with the old, that nature which is the new one in us, the new man, and of Him as being born of the Holy Ghost at His birth in the flesh); but I speak of the thing itself in practice, or what is produced by the Spirit in us, and by the word.

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

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from this world—has left it; but He still remains the object of it, as the full satisfaction to the justice of God, as well as the witness of His love, of the love at least of Him who has glorified the justice of God in this act. He is the object still, I say, to the eyes of the world, if, through grace, one goes there and separates from this world, while God in justice (for where has this been glorified as in the cross of Jesus?) can receive according to His glory, and even be glorified there, by the most wretched of sinners. As regards the approaching sinner it was for his guilt and positive sins. In itself the sacrifice went much further, a sweet savour to God, glorifying Him.

It is here then that the altar of burnt-offerings is found, the brazen altar: God manifested in righteousness, meeting however the sinner in love by the sacrifice of Christ; not in His being (spiritual and sovereign object of the adoration of saints), but in His relation with sinners according to His righteousness—but where sinners present themselves to Him by that work in which, by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost, Christ has offered Himself without spot unto Him, has satisfied all the demands of His righteousness, and more, has glorified Him in all that He is, and has become that sweet-smelling savour* (of sacrifice) in which, in coming out of the

* It is interesting to know that the word *burn* is not at all the same in Hebrew for the sacrifice for sin and for the burnt-offering: in the case of the latter it is the same as for the burning of incense.

I add here a word upon the sacrifices. In the sacrifice for sin burned outside the camp, God came out of His place to

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world, we draw near to God, and to God in relation with these *sinners* in themselves, and owning it, who draw near to Him but find their sins gone through the cross no their way, and that they come in this savour of His sacrifice who made Himself a whole burnt-offering. It was not the sacrifice for sin burnt outside the camp: there *no one approached*. Christ was made sin by God, and all passed between God and Him; but here we draw near unto God.

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

punish, to take vengeance for sin. Christ has put Himself in our place, has borne our sins, and died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In the sacrifice for sin His blood was shed, our sins washed away. But this blood, infinitely precious, has been carried by the high priest inside the holiest, and put upon the mercy-seat; and thus the sure foundation of all our relationship with God has been laid; since, as to him that comes, sin exists no longer in the sight of God. But it is not only that God has fully reached sin in judgment in the shedding of the blood of Christ, but the work which Christ has accomplished has been perfectly agreeable to God. "I have glorified thee on the earth." "God is glorified in Him." And God owed it, in justice to Christ, to glorify Him with His own self. The very being of God, in righteousness and in love, had been fully glorified (publicly before the universe) and hence it was the part of this very righteousness to place Christ in a position that corresponded to the work. The love of the Father towards Him surely did not turn from this.

Thus it was not only that the holiness which took vengeance had already done so, in the death of Jesus, and had nothing more to

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outside the veil, which hid the testimony inside, and during the night; it was the light of the grace and of the power of God by the Spirit that manifested God spiritually. It was not Himself upon the throne, where His sovereign being was keeping the treasure of His righteousness: *that* Christ alone, in His person and in His nature, could be *Himself;* nor was it righteousness in His relationship with sinful man outside the holy place; but it was a light, through which He manifested Himself in the power of His grace, but which applied itself to His relationship with man viewed as holy or set apart for service to Him, all the while that it was the manifestation of God. Essentially it was the Holy Ghost. This we see in the Apocalypse; but it might rest upon Christ as man, and that without measure: or

do, but (for him who knows that in his Adam-nature there is no resource, and still less in the law) there is, by grace, through the faith of Jesus, the righteousness of God Himself—a justifying righteousness. *We* are accepted *in* the Beloved. God must raise Christ in consideration of that which He had done, and place Him at His right hand; and (since He is there, and has carried His blood there) we also—objects of that work—are in virtue of it to be accepted as He is. Thus then the sinner believing in God draws near to the brazen altar where the sacrifice is offered (the way being open to him by the blood), and (now we can add, the veil being rent) draws near unto God manifested in holiness, but according to the sweet-smelling savour of the sacrifice of Christ, an expression inapplicable to the sacrifice for sin burnt outside the camp (there He was made sin), according to all the sweet-smelling savour of the devotedness and obedience of Christ upon the cross, that is to say, unto death.

Notice that, besides this, the priests drew near as priests, and even into the holy place. But of this more hereafter.

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it might act as from Him, and by His grace in others, either as the Spirit of prophecy, or in some other way more abundant and complete, as was the case after His resurrection, when the Holy Ghost Himself came down. But whatever these manifestations in men may have been in action, the thing itself was there before God, to manifest Him in the energy of the Spirit Himself; but the priesthood was essential here, in order to maintain this relation between the energy of the Holy Ghost and the service of men in whom He manifested Himself, in order that the light might shine. (Chap. xxvii. 20, 21.) We find, therefore, immediately afterwards, the ordinance for the establishment of the priesthood.

The garments were composed of everything that is connected with the person of Christ in this character of priesthood; the breastplate, the ephod, the robe, the broidered coat, the curious girdle, and the mitre. The ephod was, *par excellence*, the priestly garment. Made of the same things as the veil, it signified also the essential purity and the graces of Christ. The girdle was the sign of service. Arrayed in these robes of glory and beauty, the high priest bore the names of the people of God in the fulness of their order before God; upon his shoulders, the weight of their government, and upon the breastplate on his heart—breastplate which was inseparable from the ephod, that is, from his priesthood and appearing before God. He also bare, according to the perfections of God's presence, their judgment before Him. He maintained them in judgment before God according to these things. They therefore looked for answers through the Urim and Thummim that were

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in the breastplate, for the wisdom of our conduct is to be according to this position before God. Upon the hem of the robe of the ephod there was the desirable fruit, and the testimony, of the Holy Ghost, which depended on the priesthood. I think that Christ, in entering heaven, made Himself heard through the Holy Ghost in His people—hem of His garment (comp. Psalm cxxxiii.); and He will make Himself heard through His gifts when He comes out also. Meanwhile He bears within also the iniquity of the holy things in holiness before the eternal God. (This holiness is upon His very forehead.) Not only they but their imperfect services are presented according to the divine holiness in Him.

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

The dress of the high priest demands a little further explanation. That which characterized him in service was the ephod, to which was inseparably attached the breastplate in which the Urim and Thummim were placed. With the ephod, therefore, the description begins. It was that in which, as thus clothed, he was to appear before God. It was made as the veil, with the addition of gold, for the veil was Christ's flesh which hid God within; but in the exercise of priesthood He appeared before God within the veil, that is, figuratively, in heaven itself; and there what met, and had the nature and integral essence, along with the heavenly grace and purity, divine righteousness had its place and its part as found in Him; as it is written, looking at Him in a

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somewhat different aspect but alike as to this, an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. The groundwork of the priesthood, then, was absolute personal purity—what we may call human righteousness in its highest sense as a nature flowing intelligently from God, and in the priesthood glorified,* every form of grace interwoven with it, and divine righteousness. It was service, and he was girded for it, but service before God. The loins were girt, but the garments otherwise down to the feet. This was especially the case with the robe all of blue.

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

Next, the breastplate was attached inseparably to the ephod, never to be detached. There also he carried the names of his people before the Lord, and could not, as thus dressed in the high priestly robes, be there without them. As it is expressed, he bore them *on his heart* before Jehovah continually. They shall be upon Aaron's

* Compare 1 John ii. 29, iii. 1—3, where remark how in one person the Spirit passes from Godhead to manhood, according to the relationship spoken of. This is very beautiful, and makes us know what the new nature in us is.

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heart when he goeth in before Jehovah. Thus are we borne ever before the Lord by Christ. He presents us, as that which He has on His heart, to God. He cannot be before Him without doing so; and whatever claim the desire and wish of Christ's heart has to draw out the favour of God operates in drawing out that favour on us. The light and favour of the sanctuary—God as dwelling there—cannot shine out on Him without shining on us, and that as an object presented by Him for it.

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

Introduced into the presence of God according to

* We must remember that all this is not children with a Father but man drawing near to God, only with Christ there for us. We are seen on earth (not in heavenly places), and He appearing in the presence of God for us, securing our place according to God (only for us the veil is rent, a very great difference); yet we are here on earth with a heavenly calling. Compare Hebrews.

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divine righteousness in the perfection of Christ, our spiritual light, and privileges, and walk, are according to this perfection. The presentation in divine righteousness gives us light, according to the perfection of Him into whose presence we are brought. Christ bearing our judgment takes away all imputative character from sin, and turns the light which would have condemned it and us, into a purifying enlightening character, according to that very perfection which looks on us. This breastplate was fastened to the onyx stones of the shoulder above, and to the ephod above the girdle below. It was the perpetual position of the people, inseparable from the exercise of the high priesthood as thus going before the Lord. What was divine and heavenly secured it—the chains of gold above, and the rings of gold with lace of blue to the ephod above the girdle beneath. Exercised in humanity, the priesthood, and the connection of the people with it, rests on an immutable, a divine, and heavenly basis. Such was the priestly presentation of the high priest. Beneath this official robe he had a personal one all of blue.

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

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

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

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

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

The application of this to Christ is evident. Only we must remember the remark of the apostle, that is, of the Spirit of God, that these were the shadow of good things to come, not the very image of the things. Our High Priest, though He ever liveth to make intercession for us, is set down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. In spirit all this is ours; He presents us, receives grace and direction for us through the Spirit, and bears the iniquity of our holy things. All our service is accepted, as our persons, in Him. In the literal fact, the high priest never used the garments of glory and

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beauty to go within the veil. He was to use them for going into the sanctuary;* but this was forbidden, save on the great day of atonement, and then he went in other garments, namely, the linen ones. So death and entrance thereon were needed for us in Christ's fulfilment of the type. And, as regards the Jews, He is gone in in this last way, all this time being His absence in the sanctuary; and they must wait, till He come forth, for the knowledge of the acceptance of the presentation of His work: we know it by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. In His glorious high priest's garments, it would have been the intercourse of an accepted people through the high priest. Hence we have it in spirit, though this be not the whole truth as regards our position.†

For their consecration they were all washed. Aaron and his sons together always represent the church, not as gathered in a body (a thing hidden in the Old Testament), but in varied positions sustained individually before God. There is only one sanctification for all—divine life. In His nature Christ is the spring and the

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

† We must always remember that we have only the shadow of good things to come. The great principles of the heavenly scenes are depicted, but not the change by the rending of the veil through which we enter ourselves boldly into the holiest, Christ being in glory at the right hand of God, and that through an eternal redemption.

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expression of it. We are made partakers of it, but it is one.* Aaron is anointed separately without sacrifice, without blood. But his sons are sprinkled with blood upon the ear, the thumb of the right hand, the great toe of the right foot; obedience, action, and walk, being measured and guarded, both through the price and according to the perfection of the blood of Christ. And then they were sprinkled with blood and with the oil of consecration, that is to say, set apart by the blood and by the unction of the Holy Ghost. The washing is the Spirit's work in the sanctifying power of the word; the anointing, His personal presence and energy in intelligence and power—God working in us.

And it is important to remark here that the seal of the Holy Ghost follows on the sprinkling with the blood, not on the washing with the water. That was needed. We must be regenerate, but it is not that cleansing which puts us by itself in a state God can seal: the blood of Christ does. We are thereby perfectly cleansed

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

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as white as snow, and the Spirit comes as the witness of God's estimate of the value of that blood-shedding. Hence, too, all was sprinkled with Aaron. The blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost have set us in association with Christ, where He is according to the acceptableness of that perfect sacrifice (it was the ram of consecration), and the presence, liberty, and power of the Holy Ghost.

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

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

Then, connected with this priesthood, comes the perpetual, sweet-smelling savour of the burnt-offering, in which the people present themselves before God—sweet-smelling savour which is found there, as it were in the midst of the people, according to the efficacy of which they stand in His presence round about. There

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God met the people. With the mediator He met above the ark without veil, and gave him commandment for the people according to His own perfection. Here He puts Himself on a level with the people, though speaking with the mediator. The dwelling of God in the midst of the people is sanctified by His glory. The tabernacle, the altar, the priests, are sanctified, and He dwells in the midst of the people surrounding Him. For this purpose had He brought them out of Egypt (ver. 46): a blessed picture of how, in a far higher and better way, God dwells in the midst of us. He never dwelt with man, we may moreover remark, till redemption was accomplished: nor with Adam innocent, not with Abraham, or others; but, so soon as redemption is accomplished, He says, "They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them." (Chap. xxix. 46.)

Having thus established the priesthood, and the relationship of the people with God who dwelt in the midst of them, the intercession of Christ in grace (all that was in Him ascending as a sweet savour to Jehovah), is presented (chap. xxx. 1—10); and His service in making the manifestation of God in the Spirit shines forth. (Ver. 7.) The people were identified with this service through redemption. (Ver. 11—16.) They could neither be there, nor serve;* but they were all represented as redeemed. We then have the laver be-

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

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tween the brazen altar and the tabernacle—purification* for communion with God, and for service to Him therein: first the whole body; then the hands and feet (for us only the feet, as our walk alone is concerned), every time they took part in it.

* It was the washing of water by the word, the purification of the worshipper, that is, of the heart, to constitute him one: in nature first; (but this was not the laver. The priests had their bodies washed first to be such, but it is not said this was in the laver. There they washed their hands and their feet when they had come into priestly service by the sacrifices being washed, comp. John xiii.;) and then in practice according to the purity of divine life by the Spirit, the word, and specially if he had failed. For communion requires not only acceptance but purification. Without this the presence of God acts on the conscience, not in giving communion, but in shewing the defilement. Christ, even as a man, was that by nature, and He kept Himself by the words of God's lips. With us, it is received from Him; and we must also use it to purify ourselves. The idea and measure of the purity are the same for Christ and for us: "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" —"to purify himself, even as he is pure." For the ordinary relationship of the people, looked at as worshippers, it was the red heifer (Numb. xix.), the ashes of which were put into running water; that is, the Holy Spirit applied by the word, to the heart and conscience, the sufferings of Christ for sin to purify man; sufferings which could have all their moral and purifying power, since *the remembrance* shewed forth that sin had been consumed in the sacrifice of Christ Himself for sin, as to imputation, by the fire of the judgment of God. The blood of the heifer had been sprinkled seven times before the door of the tabernacle—the place where we have just seen God met the people; but to worship and serve there must be the actual purification according to the standard of Christ: at least as far as realized, so that the conscience be not bad, and so for progress.

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

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

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

Whilst God was thus preparing the precious things connected with His relationship with His people,* the

* The tabernacle had a double character. It was the manifestation of the heavenly things, and a provision for a sinful people to be brought near again to God there. It is interesting to consider the tabernacle under another aspect; for, as a pattern of heavenly things, it is of the highest interest. First, it signifies the heavens themselves; for Christ is not entered into the tabernacle but into heaven itself. In a certain sense, even the universe is the house of God; but, moreover, the unity of the church as a heavenly building is presented by it: we are His house, the tabernacle of God in Spirit. It is the body of Christ. These two meanings are closely connected in the beginning of Hebrews iii.—Christ, God, has built all things, and we are His house. He fills all in all, but He dwells in the church; it is a concentric circle, although quite different in its nature. Compare the prayer in Ephesians i., which also connects these two things under the headship of Christ, and still more distinctly in Ephesians iii.; Ephesians i. being headship, not dwelling, though the relationship be the same. Compare Ephesians iv. 4—6, though there it is in the form of Spirit, Lord,

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people, only thinking of what they saw in the human instrument of their deliverance, completely abandon Jehovah: a sad and early, but sure fruit of having undertaken obedience to the law as a condition, in order to the enjoyment of the promises. Aaron falls with them.

Such being the state of the people, God tells Moses to go down; and now everything begins to be put on another footing. God, in His counsels of grace, has not only seen the people when they were in affliction, but in their ways. They were a stiffnecked people. He tells Moses to let Him alone, and that He would destroy them, and make of Moses a great nation. Moses takes the place of mediator, and, true to his love for the people as God's people, and to the glory of God in them, with a self-denial which cared only for this glory, sacrificing every thought of self, intercedes in that magnificent pleading which appeals to what that glory necessitates, and to the unconditional promises made to the fathers.* And Jehovah repented. The character

and God, that is, not simply dwelling in. What most fully answers is the prayer of Ephesians iii., where, note, "height," &c., is not of the love, but of the whole scene of God's glory, we being at the centre to look out into it all, because Christ, who is the centre, dwells in us. In another point of view, the person and the fulness of Christ Himself are there; for God was in Him, and thus the rending of the veil is applied by the apostle to the flesh of Christ, or, if you please, the veil itself; "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." It is evident that the dwelling-place of God is the central idea of these things, just as a man lives in his house, in his property, &c.

* This is a universal principle, where the full restoration of

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of Moses shines in all its beauty here, and is remarkable amongst those which the Holy Ghost has taken pleasure in delineating, according to the precious grace of God, who loves to describe the exploits of His people, and the fruit they have borne, though He Himself is the source of them.

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

Israel is in question. Solomon, Nehemiah, and Daniel only go back to Moses: an important remark as to the fulfilment of God's ways towards Israel.

XXXII.

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

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

What a contrast do we here remark, in passing, with the work of our precious Saviour! He, coming down from above—from His dwelling-place in the glory of the

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

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Father—to do His will; and, while keeping the law (instead of destroying the tables, the signs of this covenant, the requirements of which man was unable to meet), He Himself bears the penalty of its infringement; and, having accomplished the atonement before returning above, instead of going up with a cheerless "peradventure" in His mouth, which the holiness of God instantly nullified, He ascends with the sign of the accomplishment of the atonement, and of the confirmation of the new covenant, with His precious blood, the value of which was anything but doubtful to that God before whom He presented it. Alas! the church has but too faithfully reflected the conduct of Israel during the absence of the true Moses, and attributed to providence what she had fashioned with her own hands, because she would *see* something.

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

God had said that He would come up in a moment in

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the midst of them to destroy them; that Israel should put off their ornaments, that Jehovah might know what to do unto them. Holy grace of God! who, if He sees the insolence of sin before His eyes, must strike, but wills that the people should at least strip themselves of that, and that He may have time (to speak the language of men) to reflect as to what He should do with the sin of a people now humbled for having forsaken Him.

However, God does not forsake the people. Moses enters holily, and by the just judgment of conscience, into the mind of God by the Spirit; and, before the tabernacle of the congregation was pitched, he entirely leaves the camp, and makes a place for God outside the camp, afar off from the camp, which had put a false god in His place, and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox which eateth grass. He calls it the tabernacle of the congregation—the meeting-place between God and those who sought Him. This name is in itself important, because it is no longer simply God in the midst of a recognized assembly, which was one of the characters we have already observed connected with the tabernacle.* Moses being outside the camp, God now declares that He will *not* go up in the midst of them, lest He should destroy them by the way, as He had

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

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threatened. Moses begins his intercession, having taken an individual position, the only one now of faithfulness to God; but his connection with the people being so much the stronger by his being nearer to God, more separated unto Him. This is the effect of faithful separation when it is for God's glory, and one is brought near to God in it.

It must be remarked here, that God had taken the people at their word. They had said, acting according to their faith, or rather to their want of faith, "This *Moses* that brought us up out of Egypt." God says, "Thy people, which *thou* broughtest out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." Hence God says to Moses, "Thou," addressing Himself to the mediator. Moses says, "Thy people." (Chap. xxxii. 1, 7, 12—34.) Afterwards, however, the people having stripped themselves of their ornaments, and Moses being in the position of mediator, God says (chap. xxxiii. 1), "Thou and the people which thou hast brought up."* Everything now hangs upon the mediator.

Moses having taken his place outside the camp, God reveals Himself to him as He never had done before. The people see God standing at the door of the tabernacle

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

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

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which Moses had pitched; and they worship, every man at his tent door. Jehovah speaks unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend. We shall see that it is to these communications that God alludes when He speaks of the glory of Moses (Numb. xii. 8), and not to those on Mount Sinai. Moses, as mediator in the way of testimony, goes into the camp; but Joshua, the spiritual chief of the people (Christ in Spirit), does not depart out of the tabernacle. Moses now recognizes what God had told him, to bring up the people; he is there as the mediator on whom everything depends. But he dares not entertain the thought of going up alone, of going up without knowing who would be with him. God has fully acknowledged him in grace, and he desires to know who will go before him. He therefore asks, since he has found grace (for so God had told him), that he may know *His* way, the way of God; not only to have a way for him (Moses) to get to Canaan, but "*thy* way;" thus will he know *God* and in His path and conduct will find grace in His sight. God replies that *His presence* shall go, and He will give rest to Moses: the two things he perfectly needed as crossing the wilderness. Moses then brings in the people, and says, "Carry *us* not up hence," and that "*we* have found grace, I and thy people." This also is granted of Jehovah; and now he desires for himself to see the glory of Jehovah; but that face which is to go and lead Moses and the people, God cannot shew unto Moses. He will hide him while He passes by, and Moses shall see His back parts. We cannot meet God on His way as independent of Him. After He has passed by, one sees all the beauty of His

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

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

The relationship between Moses personally and God was fully established, so that he could present the people such as they were, because of his (Moses's own) position, and, consequently, make of the difficulty and sin of the people a reason for the presence of God, according to the character He had revealed. It is the proper effect of mediation; but it is exceedingly beautiful to see, grace having

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thus come in, the reason God had given for the destruction of the people, or at the very least for His absence, becoming the motive for His presence. It no doubt supposed forgiveness as well. This Moses asks for, and adds, in the consciousness of the blessing of the name and being of God, "Take us for thine inheritance." In answer to this prayer, God establishes a new covenant with the people. The basis of it is complete separation from the nations which God was going to drive out from before the people. It supposes the entrance of the people into Canaan in virtue of the mediation of Moses, and the presence of God with the people consequent upon his intercession. He is commanded to maintain their relationship with Him in the solemn feasts under the blessing and safeguard of God.

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

* Thus Christ was in reserve, though at the same time foreordained, even from eternity. He was only manifested as the true

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to enable the people, miserable as they were, to draw near unto Him. Moses abides there *with* Jehovah. There was enough in the contemplation of what God was, as He had revealed Himself, to occupy him. He had not now to be occupied with the instructions God was giving him on the details of the tabernacle, but with God according to the revelation He had made of Himself; he neither *ate nor drank;* he was in a state above nature, where the flesh could not intermeddle, in some sort apart from humanity.* The Lord writes His law anew on the tables which Moses had prepared. But the effect of this communion with God was manifest; the skin of his face shone when he came down. However, here it was a glory as it were external and legal, not like that of Jehovah Himself in the person of Jesus. Thus Israel could not behold it. We are in quite a different position: for us, there is no longer a veil; and we behold with open (that is unveiled) face the glory of the Lord.

propitiation when the law had been presented, and man had failed under it. Its only existence now is as giving great recognized principles of the righteousness required from man (in its highest elements we may add from the creature), but hidden and buried in Him who gives His character to the throne of God. But it was necessary to break or hide those tables (terrible to man) of the perfect but inflexible law of God. God will write them on the heart of once disobedient Israel in the latter day.

* Here, however, is seen the excellency of the Lord Jesus, who in all things must have the pre-eminence. Moses, naturally far off, is separated from his natural state, in order to draw near unto God. Christ was naturally near there, and more than near; He separates Himself from nature to meet the adversary on the behalf of man.

XXXIV.

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For the glory now is not applied to make good the law in the conscience, but is the proof of the putting away of sins and divine righteousness, for it is seen in Him who bore our sins and is that righteousness for us. We are rather in the position of Moses when he entered into the most holy place.

Besides the separation of Israel from the inhabitants of the land wherein they were to dwell, which is found in chapter xxxiv., there is in chapter xxxv. another part of the instructions of Moses which he gave when he came down. It is not now the certainty of entering, and the conduct suited to those who have found grace, abstaining from all that might tend to bring sin back when they were enjoying the privileges of grace; Moses speaks to them of the portion of the people under the influence of that communication which the mediator, as head of grace, had established. The sabbath* is appointed; and, moreover, His people, (grace thus manifested) are encouraged to shew their goodwill and their liberality in everything that concerned the service of God. Consequently we find the manifestation of the spirit of wisdom and of gift in service,

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

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God calling specially by name those He designed more particularly for the work. This was done liberally: they brought more than was sufficient; and every wise-hearted man worked, each the things for which he was gifted; and Moses blessed them.

Thus was the tabernacle set up, and everything put into its place, according to the commandment of God. Thereupon (which we might have remarked before), the whole is anointed with oil. Christ was thus consecrated, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; and, moreover, Christ having made peace by His blood, having all things to reconcile (being the One who first descended, and afterwards ascended, to fill all things with His presence, according to the power of redemption in righteousness and love divine), the unction of the Holy Ghost must carry the efficacy of this power in redemption everywhere. Therefore had the tabernacle been sprinkled with blood. It is the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost which is spoken of, not being born again. God takes possession of the tabernacle by His glory, and the cloud of His presence and of His protection becomes the guide of the people (now forgiven), happy, and so greatly blessed, in being under the government and guidance of God, and at the same time His habitation and His inheritance.

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LEVITICUS.

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

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

* This is the character in which God puts Himself thus into relationship. Consequently most of the directions given suppose those to whom they apply to stand already in the relation of a people recognized of Him as His people. But the people being really without, and the tabernacle presenting the position in which

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people, prescribing the conditions of their relationship with Him.

But whatever be the nearness and the privileges of the priestly position, the sacrifice of Christ is ever that

God was putting Himself in order to be approached, the instructions which are given in cases supposing the people or the individual to be thus placed, furnish those who are without with the means of drawing near to God, when they are in that position, though no previous relationship have existed. It is very important to observe this: it is the basis of the reasoning of the apostle, in Romans iii., for the admission of the Gentiles and even of any sinner whatever. It is true, nevertheless, that most of the directions apply to those who are already in proximity with the throne. Besides, all, in spite of themselves, have to do with it, although they do not approach it, and especially now that, as a testimony of grace, the blood is on the mercy-seat, and the revelation and testimony of glory without a veil, the result of grace and redemption, gone out. The conditions of relationship with the throne that God establishes, where He condescends to be approached by His creatures, are presented, which includes the details of those He sustains with His people.

The reader will remember, as regards our drawing nigh to God, the position of the Christian is entirely changed from that of the Jew. Then (Heb. ix.) the way into the holiest was not made manifest, and no one, not even the priests, could go into the presence of God within the veil; and the services were a *remembrance* of sins. Now, the work of Christ being accomplished, the veil is rent. It is not a people in a certain relationship with God yet always remaining without, drawing near to the altar, or, at best, some to the altar of incense. It is full grace going out to the world; and then, redemption being accomplished, and believers righteous before God, their having all perfect boldness to enter the holiest. Hence, our subject is not the character of approach, but the figures of the means by which we approach, in order to have communion with God.

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

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

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

The employment of types in the word of God is a feature in this blessed revelation not to be passed by. There is peculiar grace in it. That which is most highly elevated in our relationship with God almost surpasses, in the reality of it, our capacities and our ken. In itself, indeed, it is needful that it should surpass infinitely our capacities, because, if I may so speak, it is adapted to those of God, in respect of whom the reality takes place, and before whom it must be effectual, if profitable for us. All these profound and infinite objects of our

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faith, infinite in their value before God or in the demonstration of the principles on which He deals with us, become, by means of types, palpable and near to us. The detail of all the mercies and excellences which are found in the reality or antitype are, in the type, presented close to the eye, with the accuracy of Him who judges of them as they are presented to His, but in a manner suited to ours; which meets our capacity, but for the purpose of elevating us to the thoughts which occupy Him. Christ, according to the mind of God, in all His glory, is the picture presented. But we have all the lines and explanations of what is contained in it, in that which we hold in our hand—of Him who composed the great reality. Blessed be His name!

To apply this to the sacrifices in the beginning of Leviticus — the establishment of the tabernacle embraces two points quite distinct,—the display of the plans of God in grace,* and the place of access to Him, and the means of meeting the necessity and sin which gave occasion for its present exercise. All its structure was according to a pattern given in the mount—a pat-

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

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tern of heavenly things including the intercourse between heaven and earth, and shews forth the order which finds its accomplishment in the better tabernacle not made with hands. But the economy of the tabernacle was only actually set up after the sin of the golden calf, when the jealousy of God against sin had already broken forth, and His grace was ministered from the throne in the sanctuary by offerings which met transgression, and transgression which in result barred the entrance of the priests at all times into the sanctuary, but supplied in grace all that met the need of a sinful people.

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

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

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

This meeting of Jehovah with the people, or the mediator, was twofold: apostolic or sacrificial (that is, for the purpose of communicating His will), or of receiving the people in their worship, their failures, or their need, even as Christ Himself is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—expressions which allude to the circumstances of which we treat. Jehovah's presence in the tabernacle, for the communication of His will (with which we have to do only inasmuch as what occupies us is an example of it), is thus spoken of in Exodus xxv., xxix. In chapter xxv., after describing the structure of the ark and its appendages in the most holy place, it is said, "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony which I will give thee. And there I will meet with thee [Moses], and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment with the

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children of Israel." This was for the mediator with Jehovah alone in secret. In chapter xxix. we read, "A continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before Jehovah: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel."

On this ground Leviticus commences.

God speaks not from Sinai, but out of the tabernacle, where He is sought; where, according to the pattern of His glory, but according also to the need of those who seek His presence, He is in relationship with the people by mediation and sacrifice. In Sinai, in terrible glory, He demanded, and proposed terms of, obedience, and thereupon promised His favour. Here He is accessible to the sinner and to the saint, but by a provided mediation and priesthood. But then the centre and ground of our access to God thus is Christ's obedience and offering. This therefore is first presented to us when God speaks out of the tabernacle.

The order of these sacrifices is first to be remarked. The order of their application is uniformly opposed to the order of their institution. There are four great classes of offerings: 1, The burnt-offering; 2, The meat-offering; 3, The peace-offering; and 4, The sin-offering. I name them in the order of their institution, but, in their application, when offered together, the sin-offerings always come first, for there it is restoration to God;* and, in approaching God by sacrifice, man must

* As to acceptance, the Christian has no more conscience of sins; but the Israelite had never learnt this; and hence, as we

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approach by the efficacy of that which takes away his sins, in that they have been borne by another. But in presenting the Lord Jesus Himself as the great sacrifice, His being made sin is a consequence of His offering Himself in perfectness to God. He gives Himself up, coming to do His Father's will, and is made for us sin who knew no sin, and undergoes death.

Furthermore, our sins being put away, the source of communion is in the excellency of Christ Himself, and in His offering, who offers Himself to God without spot, glorifying God by death inasmuch as sin was there before Him and death by sin, and He gives Himself wholly up to God's glory in respect of this state,* and then our

have seen, his way of approaching served, as to the means, to portray the sinner's first coming to God.

* It is to be remarked that we read of no positive sin-offerings before the law. The clothing Adam may suppose it, and Genesis iv. 7 may be taken to speak of it, but they are not professedly offered. Burnt-offerings frequently. These suppose sin and death, and no coming to God but by sacrifice and death, and reconciliation through it. But the sacrifice is viewed in the perfect self-offering of Christ, so that God should be perfectly glorified in that which was infinitely precious in His sight, and all He was, righteousness, love, majesty, truth, purpose, all glorified in Christ's death so that He could freely act in His grace. Sin is supposed in it, and perfectness of self-sacrifice to God there where it was; but God glorified rather than individuals' sins borne. Hence worship according to the sweet savour of it is involved in it. A man far departed from God, as such I cannot come to God at all but on this ground, and it will remain valid for eternity and secure all things: the new heaven and earth are secured as the dwelling-place of righteousness by it. But my actual sins being put away is another thing. In

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presentation according to the preciousness of this on high, though the actual bearing of our sins be of absolute necessity to introduce us into this communion. Hence, as presenting Christ, and our approach to God when our sins are taken away, the burnt-offering, meat-offering, and peace-offering (in which latter our communion with God is presented to us), come first, and then the sin-offerings apart; needful, primarily needful to us, but not the expression of the personal perfectness of Christ, but of His sin-bearing, though perfectness were needed for that.

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

I have said that there are four great classes presented to us—burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, peace-offerings, and offerings for sin. These may be seen thus classed in chapter x. of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But then there is a very essential distinction which divides these

one, the whole relationship of man, indeed of all things with God, is in question; in the other, my personal sins. Hence all acceptable sacrifice was of the former kind: sacrifices for sins when the relationship of a people with God was established, where every act referred to His actual presence.

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four into two separate classes—the sin-offerings, and all the others. The sin-offerings, as such, were not characterized as offerings made by fire, of a sweet savour unto Jehovah (although the fat was in most of them burnt on the altar and in this respect the sweet savour was there, and so it is once said, chapter iv. 31; for indeed the perfection of Christ was there though bearing our sins), the others were. Sin was seen in the sin-offerings: they were charged with sin. He that touched those of them which fully bore this character was defiled: they had been made sin. Indeed there is but one word for sin and sin-offering in the original. They were burnt, but not on the altar; the fat, save in one case, was (chap. iv.), of which we may speak hereafter. The other offerings were offerings made by fire of a sweet savour unto Jehovah; they present Christ's perfect offering of Himself to God, not the imposition of sin on the substitute by the Holy One, the Judge.

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

The first sort of sacrifice, the most complete and characteristic of this class, was the burnt-offering. The offerer was to bring his offering,* in order to his accept-

* The burnt-offerings as such were brought voluntarily; still it seems clear that this is not the sense of the Hebrew word, 'lirzon

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ance with God, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and to kill it before Jehovah.

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

The veil, the apostle tells us, signified that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest while the old economy subsisted. Immediately outside the veil—its efficacy, however, entering within, and whence, indeed, on certain occasions, incense was taken in a censer and offered within—stood the golden altar of incense. In the same, or outer chamber of the tabernacle, called the holy, as distinguished from the most holy place, or holy of holies, stood, on either side, the shewbread and the candlestick—types, the former of Christ incarnate, the true bread in union with and head of the twelve tribes, on the one hand; and the latter, of the perfection* (still, I have no doubt, in connection with Israel in the latter

here, but for his acceptance, to be in divine favour. It remains, just the same, doctrinally true that Christ, through the eternal Spirit, *offered Himself* without spot to God.

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

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day) of the Spirit, as giving light, on the other. The church owns Christ thus, and the Holy Ghost dwells in it. But what characterizes it as such is the knowledge of a heavenly and glorified Christ, and the Holy Ghost, as in divine communications, present in unity in it. This, on the other hand, is Christ in His earthly relation, and the Holy Ghost in His various displays of power, when God's earthly system is established. (Compare Zech. iv.) Into the holy place the body of the priests, and not merely the high priest, entered continually, but they only. We know who, and who alone, can now thus enter, even those who are made kings and priests, the true saints of God: only, we can add, that the veil that hid the holiest and barred the entrance is rent from top to bottom, not to be renewed again between us and God. We have boldness to enter into the holiest. The veil has been rent in His flesh. He is not merely bread from heaven or incarnate, but put to death, denoted by flesh and blood. One with Christ, we enter and sit down in spirit where Christ is. Our ordinary privilege and title is in the holy place—type of the created heaven, as the most holy is of the heaven of heavens, as it is called. In a certain sense, as to spiritual approach and intercourse, the veil being rent, there is no separation between the two, though in the light which no man can approach unto, God dwells inaccessible. In the heavenly places we now are as priests, though only in spirit.

In approaching to this was the outside court, the court of the tabernacle of the congregation.* In entering this

* The door of the tabernacle of the congregation is not simply

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

Christ also thus approached, but it was in the perfect offering of Himself, not by the offering of another. Nothing can be more touching, or more worthy of

the veil of the holy place, but the court where they entered from without. The altar of burnt-offering was at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

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

† In the first edition, I had added here the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," referring to Titus iii. But though the Holy Ghost surely renews the heart continually, yet I doubt the justice of the application of this passage here. The renewing seems more absolute there, *ἀνακαινώσεως*. I might have simply left it out, perhaps, but that I would call the attention of the reader to the fact that "regeneration" is not the same word as being "born again." It is *παλιγγενεσία*, not *ἀναγέννησις*. It is only found again to denote the millennium in Matthew xix. It is in its import, the "washing of-water," or being "born of-water," not the reception of life by the Spirit. Water is a change of condition of what exists, not in itself receiving of life, which is being "born of the Spirit." That is the *ἀνακαίνωσις*.

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profound attention, than the manner in which Jesus thus voluntarily presents Himself, that God may be fully, completely, glorified in Him. Silent in His sufferings, we see that His silence was the result of a profound and perfect determination to give Himself up, in obedience, to this glory—a service, blessed be His name, perfectly accomplished, so that the Father rests in His love towards us.

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

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

Let us cite some of the passages which thus present Christ to us. First, in general, whether for life or for death, thus to glorify God; but exactly as taking the place of these sacrifices, the Spirit thus speaks

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

How perfect and full of grace is this way of the Lord! as constant and devoted to draw near when God should be thus glorified, and submit to the consequences of His devotedness—consequences imposed by the circumstances in which we are placed—as man was to depart from God for his pleasure. He humbles *Himself* to death that the majesty and the love of God, His truth and righteousness, may have their full accomplishment through the exercise of His self-devoting love. Thus man, in His person, and through His work, is reconciled to God, takes the true and due relationship to

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Him, God being perfectly glorified in Him as to, and (wondrous to say) in the place of, sin. For there it was God had to be glorified, and there all He is came out as nowhere else, and there perfectly in love, light, righteousness, truth, majesty, as He had been dishonoured; only that now it was infinite in value, God Himself, not merely human defacing of God's glory. I do not here say men, but man. And the blessed result was, not merely forgiveness, but introduction into the glory of God.

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

And now comes Jehovah and the priest's part. The offering was to be made the subject of the fire of the altar of God; it was cut in pieces and washed, given up, according to the purification of the sanctuary, to the trial of the judgment of God; for fire, as a symbol, signifies always the trial of the judgment of God. As

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

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to the washing with water, it made the sacrifice typically what Christ was essentially—pure. But it has this importance, that the sanctification of it and ours is on the same principle and on the same standard. We are sanctified unto obedience. He *came* to do the will of His Father, and so, perfect from the beginning, learns obedience by the things which He suffered; perfectly obedient always, but His obedience put ever more thoroughly to the test, so that His obedience was continually deeper and more complete: He learned obedience, what it was to obey. It was new to Him as a divine person—to us as rebels to God—and He learned it in all its extent.

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

We may pursue the use of this water of cleansing yet farther. It is the power of the Spirit also, exercised as by the word and will of God; so even the commencement of this life in us: "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." (James i. 18.) "By the which will we are sanctified." (Heb. x. 10.) But then this finds us dead in trespasses and sins. It must

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be, therefore, by the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence, on His death, He shed forth out of His side water and blood, cleansing as well as expiating power. Death then is the only cleanser of sin as well as its expiation. "He that is dead is freed* from sin," and water thus became the sign of death, for this alone cleansed. This truth of real sanctification was necessarily hidden under the law, save in figures: for the law applied itself to man, alive, and claimed his obedience. Christ's death revealed it. In us—that is, in our flesh—good does not dwell. Hence, in the symbolical use of water in baptism, we are told that as many of us as are baptized unto Christ are baptized unto His death. But it is evident that we cannot stop at death in itself. In us it would be the herald and witness of condemnation, but, having life in Christ, death in Him is death to the life of sin and guilt. It is the communication of the life of Christ which enables us thus to treat the old man as dead, and ourselves as having been dead in trespasses and sins. The body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness, *if Christ be in you.* So we are told as to the truth of our natural state, not what faith holds the old man to be if Christ be in us: "You, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." When we were dead in sin, He hath quickened us together with Him; and, as baptized unto His death, it is added, "that like

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

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as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." It is only in the power of a new life that we can hold ourselves to be dead to sin. And indeed it is only by known redemption we can say so. It is when we have apprehended the power of Christ's death and resurrection, and know that we are in Him through the Holy Ghost, that we can say, I am crucified with Him; I am not in the flesh. We know then that this cleansing, which was a mere moral effect to a Jew, is, by the communication of the life of Christ to us, that by which we are sanctified, according to the power of His death and resurrection, and sin as a law in our members is judged. The first Adam, as a living soul, corrupted himself; the last, as a quickening Spirit, imparts to us a new life.

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

Here then Christ, completely offered up to God for the full expression of His glory, undergoes the full trial of judgment. The fire tries what He is. He is salted with fire. The perfect holiness of God, in the power of His judgment, tries to the uttermost all that is in Him.

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The bloody sweat, and affecting supplication in the garden, the deep sorrow of the cross, in the touching consciousness of righteousness, "*Why* hast thou forsaken me?"—as to any lightening of the trial, an unheeded cry—all mark the full trial of the Son of God. Deep answered unto deep,—all Jehovah's waves and billows passed over Him. But as He had offered Himself perfectly to the thorough trial, this consuming fire and trying of His inmost thoughts did, could, produce nought but a sweet savour to God. It is remarkable that the word used for burning the burnt-offering is not the same as that of the sin-offering, but the same as that of burning incense.

In this offering, then, we have Christ's perfect offering of Himself up, and then tried in His inmost parts by fiery trial of God's judgment. The consuming of His life was a sacrifice of a sweet savour, all infinitely agreeable to God—not a thought, not a will, but was put to the test—His life consumed in it; but all, without apparent answer to sustain, given up to God; all was purely a sweet savour to Him. But there was more than this. The greater part of what has been said would apply to the meat-offering. But the burnt-offering was to make atonement, an expression not used in chap. ii. There the personal intrinsic perfectness of Christ was tested, and the manner of His incarnation, what He was as man down here, unfolded, but death was the first element of the burnt-offering, and death was by sin. There where man was (otherwise for him it could not be), where Satan's power as death was, where God's irreversible judgment was, Christ had to glorify God, and

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it was a glory not otherwise to be displayed: love, righteousness, majesty, in the place of sin and death. Christ, who knew no sin, made sin for us in perfect obedience and love to His Father, goes down to death; and God is glorified there, Satan's power of death destroyed, God glorified in man according to all He is, sin being come in, in obedience and love. He was in the place of sin, and God glorified as no creation, no sinlessness, could. All was a sweet savour in that place, and according to what God was as to it in righteousness and love.

When Noah offered his burnt-offering, it is said, "And Jehovah smelled a sweet savour, and Jehovah said in his heart, I will no more curse the ground for man's sake, for the imaginations of man's heart are only evil continually." It had repented Him that He had made man, and grieved Him at His heart; but now, on this sweet savour, Jehovah says in His heart, "I will no more curse." Such is the perfect and infinite acceptableness Christ's offering up of Himself to God. It is not in the sacrifice we are considering that He has the imposition of sins on Him (that was the sin-offering), but the perfectness, purity, and self-devotedness of the victim, but in being made sin, and that ascending in sweet savour to God. In this acceptability—in the sweet savour of this sacrifice—we are presented to God. All the delight which God finds in the odour of this sacrifice—blessed thought!—we are accepted in. Is God perfectly glorified in this, in all that He is? He is glorified then in receiving us. Does He delight in what Christ is, in this His most perfect act? He so delights in us. Does this rise up before Him a memorial for

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ever, in His presence, of delight? We, also, in the efficacy of it, are presented to Him. It is not merely that the sins have been effaced by the expiatory act; but the perfect acceptability of Him who accomplished it, the sweet savour of His sinless sacrifice, is our good odour of delight before God, and is ours; its acceptance, even Christ's, is ours. We are one with Him.

And we are to remark that though distinct from laying our sins upon Him, yet death implied sin, and the sacrifice of Christ, as burnt-offering, had the character which resulted from sin being in question before God, namely, death. It made the trial and suffering so much the more terrible. His obedience was tested before God in the place of sin, and He was obedient unto death, not in the sense of bearing sins and putting them away, though in the same act, but in the perfection of His offering of Himself to God, and obedience tested by God, tested by being dealt with as sin, and therein only and a perfect sweet savour. Hence it was atonement; and, in one sense, of a deeper kind than the bearing of sins, that is, as the test of obedience and glorifying God in it.

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

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fectness of this will even unto death, nothing could have been accepted; but that being so from the beginning (He came to do His Father's will), all the life was perfect and acceptable as man, a sweet savour under the trial of God—His nature as man. Abel was accepted by blood; Cain, who came in the way of nature, offering the fruit of his toil and labour, was rejected. All that we can offer of our natural hearts is "the sacrifice of fools," is founded on failure in the spring of any good, on the sin of hardness of heart, which does not recognize our condition, our sin and estrangement from our God. What could be a greater evidence of hardness of heart than, under the effects and consequences of sin, driven from Eden, to come and offer offerings, and these offerings the fruit of the judicial toil of the curse consequent on sin, as if nothing at all had happened? It was the perfection of blind hardness of heart.

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

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It is impossible to read John's,* or indeed any of the Gospels, where what He was, His person, specially shines forth, without meeting, at every moment, this blessed fragrance of loving obedience and self-renouncement. It is not a history—it is Himself, whom one cannot avoid seeing,—and also the wickedness of man, which violently forced its way through the coverture and holy hiding-place which love had wrought around Him, and forced into view Him who was clothed with humility—the divine person that passed in meekness through the world that rejected Him: but it was only to give all its force and blessedness to the self-abasement, which never faltered, even when forced to confess His divinity. It was "I am," but in the lowliness and loneliness, of the most perfect and self-abased obedience; no secret desire to hold His place in His humiliation; and by His humiliation:—His Father's glory was the *perfect* desire of His heart. It was, indeed, "I am" that was there, but in the perfectness of human obedience. This reveals itself everywhere. "It is written," was His reply to the enemy; "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "It is written"—His constant reply. "Suffer it thus far," says He to John the Baptist, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." "That give," says He to Peter, though *the children be free*, "*for me and for thee.*" This historically. In John, where, as we have said, His person shines more forth, it is more directly expressed by

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

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His mouth: "This commandment have I received of my Father, and I know that his commandment is life eternal." "As the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." "I have kept," says He, "my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not."

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

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to do *whatever* the Father would have done? The infiniteness of the work and capacity for it identify themselves with the perfectness of obedience, which had no will but to do that of another. Yet was He a simple, humble, lowly man.

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

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have vindicated Jesus in his zeal, knew not what manner of spirit he was of, and would have forbidden the glory of God, if man walked not with them. Such were Paul, and Peter, and John.

But in Jesus, even as man, there was none of this unevenness. There was nothing salient in His character, because all was in perfect subjection to God in His humanity, and had *its* place, and did exactly its service, and then disappeared. God was glorified in it, and all was in harmony. When meekness became Him, He was meek; when indignation, who could stand before His overwhelming and withering rebuke? Tender to the chief of sinners in the time of grace—unmoved by the heartless superiority of a cold Pharisee (curious to judge who He was)—when the time of judgment is come, no tears of those who wept for Him moved Him to other words than, "Weep for yourselves and your children," —words of deep compassion, but of deep subjection to the due judgment of God. The dry tree prepared itself to be burned. On the cross, tender to His mother, and trusting her, in human care, to one who, so to speak, had been His friend, and leant on His bosom; when His service was finished, no ear to recognize her word or claim when His service occupied Him for God; putting both blessedly in their place when He would shew that before His public mission He was still the Son of the Father, and though such, in human blessedness, subject to the mother that bare Him, and Joseph His father as under the law; a calmness which disconcerted His adversaries; and, in the moral power which dismayed them by times, a meekness which drew out the hearts of all

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not steeled by wilful opposition. What keenness of edge to separate between the evil and the good!

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

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

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strains when all shall echo, "Praise his name, his glory."

But this faultlessness of the human nature of our Lord attached itself to deeper and more important sources, which are presented to us in this type negatively and positively. If every faculty thus obeyed and were the instrument of the divine impulse in its place, it is evident that the will must be right—that the spirit and principle of obedience must be its spring; for it is the action of an independent will which is the principle of sin. Christ, as a divine Person, had the title of an independent will. "The Son quickens whom he will;" but He came to do His Father's will. His will was obedience, sinless therefore, and perfect. Leaven, in the word, is the symbol of corruption—"the leaven of malice and wickedness." In the cake, therefore, which was to be offered as a sweet savour to God, there was no leaven: where leaven was, it could not be offered as a sweet savour to God. This is thrown into relief by the converse: there were cakes made with leaven, and it was forbidden to offer them as sweet savour, an offering made by fire. This occurred in two cases, one of which, the most important and significative, and sufficing to establish the principle, is noticed in this chapter.

When the first-fruits were offered, two cakes were offered baked with leaven, but not for an offering for a sweet savour. Burnt-offerings and meat-offerings were also offered, and for a sweet savour; but the offering of the first-fruits—not. (See verse 12 of this chapter, and Lev. xxiii.) And what were these first-fruits? The

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church, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. For this feast and offering of the first-fruits was the acknowledged and known type of the day of Pentecost—in fact was the day of Pentecost. We are, says the Apostle James, a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. It will be seen (Lev. xxiii.) that, the day of Christ's resurrection, the first of the fruits was offered, ears of corn unbroken, unbruised. Clearly there was no leaven there. He rose, too, without seeing corruption. With this no sin-offering was offered, but with the leavened cakes (which represented the assembly sanctified by the Holy Ghost to God, but *still* living in corrupted human nature) a sin-offering was offered; for the sacrifice of Christ for us answered for and put away the leaven of our corrupted nature, overcome (but not ceasing to exist) by the operation of the Holy Ghost; which nature, in itself corrupt, could not, in the trial of God's judgment, be a sweet savour, an offering made by fire; but, by the means of Christ's sacrifice, which met and answered the evil, could be offered to God. Hence it is said, not merely that Christ has answered for our sins, but that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned *sin in the flesh*." God has condemned the sin in the flesh, but it was in Christ's making atonement, undergoing the judgment due to it, being made sin for us because of it, but dying in doing so, so that we reckon ourselves dead.

It is important for a troubled but tender and faithful conscience to remember that Christ has died, not merely for our sins, but for our sin; for surely this troubles a

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

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

This leads us to another great principle presented to us in this type: namely, the cake was to be mingled with oil. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and in ourselves, born simply of the flesh, we are naturally nothing but corrupted and fallen flesh—"of the will of the flesh." Though we are born of the Spirit of God, this does not uncreate the old nature. It may attenuate to any conceivable degree its active force, and control altogether

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its operations; but the nature remains unchanged. The *nature* of St. Paul was as disposed to be puffed up when he had been in the third heaven, as when he had the letter of the chief priest in his robe to destroy the name of Christ if he could. I do not say the disposition had the same power, but the disposition was as bad or worse, for it was in the presence of greater good.

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

The cake* was made mingled with oil, just as the

* This was in various forms, but all bringing out the two principles noticed. First, the great general truth: fine flour, oil, poured on it, and frankincense; baken in the oven, cakes mingled, or wafers anointed, with oil—of course unleavened; if in a pan, flour unleavened mingled with oil; if in the frying-pan, fine flour with oil. Thus in all forms in which Christ could be looked

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human nature of Christ had its being and character, its taste, from the Holy Ghost, of which oil is ever and the known symbol. But purity is not power, and it is in another form that the bestowment of spiritual power, acting by the human nature of Jesus, is expressed.

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

There is a certain analogy in our case. It is a

at as man, it was absence of sin; His human nature formed in the power and character of, and anointed also with, the Holy Ghost. For we may consider His human nature, as such in itself: oil is poured on it. I may see it tried to the uttermost: it is still purity, and the grace and expression of the Holy Ghost, in its inward nature, in it. I may see it displayed before men, and it is in Holy Ghost power. We may see both together in essential, in inward, reality of character, in public walk, in every part (as presented to God) of that nature which was perfect and formed by Holy Ghost power: absence of all evil, and the Holy Ghost's power is manifested in it. So, when broken into pieces, every part of it was anointed with oil, to shew that if Christ's life were, so to speak, taken to pieces, every detail and element of it was in the perfectness of and characterized by the Holy Ghost.

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different thing to be born of God, and sealed and anointed with the Holy Ghost. The day of Pentecost, Cornelius, the believers of Samaria on whom the apostles laid their hands—all prove this, as also many passages on the subject. "Because ye are sons," says the scripture, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." "This spake he," says John, "of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The Holy Ghost may have produced, by a new nature, holy desires, and the love of Jesus, without the consciousness of deliverance and power—the joy of His presence in the knowledge of the finished work of Christ. As to the Lord Jesus, we know that this second act, of anointing, was accomplished in connection with the perfectness of His person, as it could, because He was righteous in Himself, when, after His baptism by John (in which He who knew no sin placed Himself with His people, then the remnant of Israel, in the first movement of grace in their hearts, shewn in going to John, to be with them in all the path of that grace from beginning to end, its trials and its sorrows), He, sinless, was anointed by the Holy Ghost, descending in a bodily shape like a dove, and was led of the Spirit into the conflict for us, and returned conqueror in its power, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee. I say conqueror in its power; for if Jesus had repulsed Satan simply by divine power, as such, first there evidently could have

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been no conflict; and secondly, no example or encouragement for us. But the Lord repulsed him by a principle which is our duty every day—obedience, intelligent obedience; employing the word of God, and repulsing Satan with indignation the moment he openly shews himself such. If Christ entered into His course with the testimony and joy of a Son, He entered into a course of conflict and obedience (He might bind the strong man, but He had the strong man to bind); so we—joy, deliverance, love, abounding peace, the spirit of sonship, the Father known as accepting us.

Such is the entrance to the christian course, but the course we enter on is conflict and obedience: leave the latter, and we fail in the former. Satan's effort was to separate these in Jesus. If thou be the Son, use thy power—make stones into bread—act by thine own will. The answer of Jesus is, in sense, "I am in the place of obedience—of servitude; I have no command. It is written, Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. I rest in my state of dependence."

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

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bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

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

This puts us in the place of obedience, for by the power of the Spirit we are servants to Christ—diversities of ministrations, but the same *Lord*. Hence greater works were done by the apostles, but mingled in their personal walk with all sorts of imperfections. With whom did Jesus contend, even if He was in the right? before whom manifest the fear of man? when did He repent of an act which He had done, even if afterwards there was no reason for repentance? No!

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there was a greater exercise of power in apostolic service, as Jesus had promised; but in vessels whose weakness shewed all the praise to be of another, and whose obedience was carried on in conflict with another will in themselves. This was the great distinction. Jesus had never need of a thorn in the flesh, lest He should be exalted above measure. Blessed Master! Thou didst speak that Thou knewest, and testifiedst that Thou hadst seen; but to do so Thou hadst emptied, humbled, Thyself, made Thyself of no reputation, and taken the form of a servant, in order to *our* being exalted by it. The height, the consciousness of the height, from which He came down, the perfectness of the will in which He obeyed where He was, made no exaltation needed to Him. Yet He looked on the joy that was set before Him, and was not ashamed, for He was humbled even to this, to rejoice in having respect to the recompense of reward. And He has been highly exalted. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth." For there was yet besides, in the meat-offering, the frankincense—the savour of all Christ's graces.

How much of our graces is presented to the acceptance of man, and consequently the flesh often mistaken for grace, or mixed with it, being judged of according to the judgment of man! But in Jesus all His graces were presented to God. True, man could, or ought to, have discerned them as the odour of the frankincense, diffusing itself around, where all was burnt to God; but it was all burnt as a sweet savour to God.

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How few so present their charity to God, and bring God into their charity, exercising it for and towards Him, though in behalf of man, so that they persevere nothing the less in its exercise, though the more they love, the less they be loved! it is for God's sake. So far as this is the case, it is indeed a sweet odour to God; but this is difficult: we must be much before God. This was perfectly the case with Christ; the more faithful He was, the more despised and opposed. The more meek, the less esteemed; but all this altered nothing, because He did all to God alone: with the multitude, with His disciples, or before His unjust judges, nothing altered the perfectness of His ways, because in all the circumstances all was done to God. The incense of His service and His heart, of His affections, went ever and always up, and referred themselves to God; and surely abundant frankincense, and sweet its odour, in the life of Jesus. The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and blessing flowed forth, and not the curse, for us. This was added to the meat-offering, for in truth it was in effect produced in His life by the Spirit, but always this frankincense ascended; so of His intercession, for it was the expression of His gracious love. His prayers, as the holy expression of dependence, infinitely precious and attractive to God, were all sweet odour, as frankincense, before Him. "The house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

There was yet another thing forbidden, as well as leaven, in the sacrifice—namely, honey, that which was most sweet to the natural taste, as the affections of those we love after the flesh, happy associations, and

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the like. It is not that these were evil. "Hast thou," says the wise man, "found honey? eat so much as is convenient, lest thou be sick, and vomit it." When Jonathan took a little he had found in the wood, in the day of service and the energy of faith for Israel, his eyes were lightened. But it cannot enter into a sacrifice. He who could say, "Mother, behold thy son," and "Son, behold thy mother," even in the terrible moment of the cross, when all was finished, could also say, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" when He was in the simplest accomplishment of His service. He was a stranger to His own mother's sons, as Levi, in the blessing of Moses, the man of God —Levi, who was offered as an offering to God of the people (Numb. viii. 11), "who said unto his father and his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant."

Yet another thing remains to be observed. In the burnt-offering all was burnt to God, for Christ offered Himself wholly up to God; but the human nature of Christ is the food of the priests of God. Aaron and his sons were to eat what was not burned in the fire, of the meat-offering. Christ was the true bread, come down from heaven, to give life unto the world, that we, through faith, priests and kings, may eat thereof and not die. It was holy, for Aaron and his sons alone to eat; for who indeed ever fed on Christ but those who, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, live the life of faith, and feed on the food of faith? And is not Christ the food of our souls, as sanctified to God, yea, sanctifying

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us also ever to God? Do not our souls recognize in the meek and humble holy One—in Him who shines as the light of human perfectness and divine grace amongst sinful men—what feeds, nourishes, and sanctifies? Cannot our souls feel what it is to be offered to God, in tracing, by the sympathy of the spirit of Jesus in us, the life of Jesus toward God, and before men in the world? An example to us, He presents the impress of a man living to God, and draws us after Him, and that by the attraction of what He was—Himself the force which carries on in the way He trod, while our delight and joy are in it. Are not our affections occupied and assimilated in dwelling with delight on what Jesus was here below? We admire, are humbled, and become conformed to Him through grace. Head and source of this life in us, the display of its perfection in Him draws forth and developes its energies and lowliness in us. For who could be proud in fellowship with the humble Jesus? Humble, as one has said, He would teach us to take the lowest place, but that He is in it Himself, the privilege of His perfect grace. Blessed Master, may we at least be near to and hidden in thee!

How vast too the grace which has introduced us into this intimateness of communion, has made us priests in the power of quickening grace, to partake of that in which God our Father delights—that which is offered to Him as a sweet savour, an offering made by fire to Jehovah—that with which the table of God is supplied! This is sealed by covenant as a perpetual, an eternal, portion. Hence the salt of the covenant of our God

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was not wanting in the sacrifice, in any sacrifice; the stability, the durability, the preservative energy of that which was divine, not always perhaps to us sweet and agreeable, was there—the seal, on the part of God, that it was no passing savour, no momentary delight, but eternal. For all that is of man passes; all that is of God is eternal—the life, the charity, the nature, and the grace continues. This holy separating power, which keeps us apart from corruption, is of God, partaking of the stability of the divine nature, and binding unto Him not by what we are in will but by the security of divine grace. It is active, pure, sanctifying to us, but it is of grace, and the energy of the divine will, and the obligation of the divine promise binds us indeed to Him, but binds by His energy and fidelity, not ours—energy which is mingled with and founded on the sacrifice of Christ, in which the covenant of God is sealed and assured infallibly, or Christ is not honoured. It is the covenant of God. Leaven and honey, our sin and natural affections, cannot find a place in the sacrifice of God, but the energy of His grace (not sparing the evil, but securing the good) is there to seal our infallible enjoyment of its effects and fruits. Salt did not form the offering, but it was never to be wanting in any—could not be in what was of God; it was indeed in every offering.

We must remember in this offering, as in the former, that essential characteristic, common indeed to all, was its being offered to God. This could not be said of Adam: in his innocence he enjoyed much from God; he returned, or should have returned, thankfulness for

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it; but it was enjoyment and thankfulness. He was not himself an offering to God. But this was the essence of Christ's life—it was offered to God; and hence separated from all around it, essentially separated. He was holy, therefore, and not merely innocent: for innocence is the absence of—ignorance of—evil, not separation from it. God (who knows good and evil, but is infinitely above and separated from the evil, as it is opposite to Him) is holy. Christ was holy, and not merely innocent, being consecrated in all His will to God, and separate from the evil, and living in the energy of the Spirit of God. Also, as offered, the essence of the offering was the fine flour, oil, and frankincense, representing human nature, the Holy Ghost, and the perfume of grace. Negatively there was to be no leaven or honey: so, as to the manner, there was the mingling with oil and the anointing with oil; also, for every sacrifice, the salt of the covenant of God: here noticed, because in what concerned the grace of His human nature, what concerned man (a man offering Himself to God—not as dying, but as living, though tested even to death), it might have been supposed to be wanting, that it was as man's act just as good. But its being offered on the altar to God, burned as a sweet savour, and the three things first named, formed the substance and essence of the meat-offering.

The peace-offering now presents itself to our notice. It is the offering which typifies to us the communion of saints, according to the efficacy of the sacrifice, with

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God, with the priest who has offered it in our behalf, with one another, and with the whole body of the church. It comes after those which presented to us the Lord Jesus Himself in His devoting Himself to death, and His devotedness and grace in His life, but even unto death, and the testing of fire, that we may understand that all communion is based on the acceptability and sweet odour of this sacrifice, not only because the sacrifice was needed, but because therein God had all His delight.

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

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

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

Next, all the fat, specially of the inwards, was taken and burnt on the altar of burnt-offering to the Lord. Fat and blood were alike forbidden to be eaten. The blood was the life, and necessarily belonged essentially to God; life was from Him in an especial manner; but fat also was never to be eaten but burnt, and so

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

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offered to God. The use of this symbol, fat, is sufficiently familiar in the word. "Their heart is fat as brawn." "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." "They are enclosed in their own fat, with their mouth they speak proudly." It is the energy and force of the inward will, the inwards of a man's heart. Hence, where Christ expresses His entire mortification, He declares they could tell all His bones; and, in Psalm cii., "By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin."

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

If the eye of God passed, as the dove of Noah, over this earth, swept by the deluge of sin, nowhere, till Jesus was seen in it, could His eye have rested in complacency and peace; there on Him it could. Heaven, as to the expression of its satisfaction, whatever its counsels, was closed till Jesus (the second and perfect Man, the Holy One, He who offered Himself to God, coming to do His will) was on earth. The moment He presented Himself in public service, heaven opened, the Holy Ghost descended to dwell in this His one resting-place here, and the Father's voice, impossible now to be withheld, declares from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in

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whom I am well pleased." (Was this object (too great, too excellent, for the silence of heaven and the Father's love) to lose its excellence and its savour in the midst of a world of sin? Far otherwise. It was there its excellency was proved.)

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

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

The same practice existed among the heathen; hence the reasoning of the apostle as to eating things offered to idols. So alluding to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the purport of which is strongly associated with

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this type, "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" And this was so much the case, that in the desert, when it was practicable (and the analogous order needful to maintain the principle was established in the land), no one could eat of the flesh of any animal unless he first brought it to the tabernacle as an offering. We indeed should eat in the name of the Lord Jesus, offering our sacrifices of thanksgivings, the calves of our lips and so consecrate all we partake of, and ourselves in it, in communion with the Giver, and Him who secures us in it; but here it was a proper sacrifice.

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

Jesus then, as priest, finds a delight in the joy of

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

This joy of worship necessarily associates itself also with the whole body of the redeemed, viewed as in the heavenly places. Aaron and his sons were to have their part also. Aaron and his sons were ever the type of the church, viewed as the whole body of its members, having title to enter into the heavenly places, and offer incense—made priests to God. For these were the patterns of things in the heavens, and those who compose the church are the body of heavenly priests to God. Hence worship to God, true worship, cannot thus separate itself from the whole body of true believers. I cannot really come with my sacrifice unto the tabernacle of God, without finding necessarily there the priests of the tabernacle. Without the one Priest all is vain; for what without Jesus? But I cannot find Him without His whole body of manifested people. God withal has His priests, and I cannot approach Him but in the way

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which He has ordained, and in association with, and in recognition of, those whom He has placed around His house, the whole body of those that are sanctified in Christ. He who walks not in this spirit is in conflict with the ordinance of God, and has no true peace-offering according to God's institution.

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

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

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to the Lord. (Chap. vii. 20, 21.) The unclean had no title there. True worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. If worship and communion be by the Spirit, it is evident that those only who have the Spirit of Christ, and also have not grieved the Spirit (and thus rendered the communion, which is by the Spirit, impossible by the defilements of sin) can participate.

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

There was another very important direction in this worship. In the case of a vow, it might be eaten the second day after the burning of the fat—Jehovah's food of the offering; in the case of thanksgiving-offering, it was to be eaten the same day. This identified the purity of the service of the worshippers with the offering of the fat to God. So is it impossible to separate true spiritual worship and communion from the perfect offering of Christ to God. The moment our worship separates itself from this, from its efficacy

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and the consciousness of that infinite acceptability of Jesus before the Father, it becomes carnal, and either a form, or the delight, of the flesh. If the peace-offering was eaten separately from this offering of the fat, it was a mere carnal festivity, or a form of worship, which had no real communion with the delight and good pleasure of God, and was worse than unacceptable—it was really iniquity.

When the Holy Spirit leads us into real spiritual worship, it leads us into communion with God, into the presence of God; and then, necessarily, all the infinite acceptability to Him of the offering of Christ is present to our spirit. We are associated with it: it forms an integral and necessary part of our communion and worship. We cannot be in the presence of God in communion without finding it there. It is indeed the ground of our acceptance, as of our communion.

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

There was a difference in the value of the various kinds of this offering: in the case of a vow it might be

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

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

III.

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It is good to bear strongly in mind this expression, "which pertain to Jehovah" (chap. vii. 20); the worship, what passes in our hearts in it, is not ours—it is the Lord's. The Lord has put it there for our joy, that we may participate in the offering of Christ, His joy in Christ; but the moment we make it ours, we desecrate it. Hence what remained was burnt in the fire; hence what was unclean *must have nothing to do with it;* hence the necessity of associating it with the fat burnt to Jehovah, that it be really Christ in us, and so true communion, the giving forth of Christ, on whom our souls feed, towards God.

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

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and feeble in it, in the same acceptableness. We have the mind of Christ.

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

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

III.

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

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

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with the acceptance of the victim, marks the difference of these sacrifices and of the double aspect of the work of Christ very clearly.

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

The two other remarkable examples of sin-offering were the day of expiation, and the red heifer, which demand an examination apart. The circumstances of the offering were simple. In the case of the high priest and the body of the people sinning, it is evident that all communion was interrupted. It was not merely the restoration of the individual to communion which was needed, but the restoration of communion between God and the whole people; not the forming a relation (the day of atonement effected that), but the re-establishment of interrupted communion. Hence the blood was sprinkled before the veil seven times for the perfect restoration of this communion, and the blood also put on the horns of the altar of incense.

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When the sin was individual, the communion of the people in general was not interrupted, but the individual had lost his enjoyment of the blessing. The blood was sprinkled therefore, not where the priest approached—at the altar of incense; but where the individual did—at the altar of burnt-offering. The efficacy of the sin-offering of Christ is needed, but has been once for all accomplished, for every fault; but the communion of the worshipping body of the church, though defective and hindered, is not cut off by the individual sin; but when this is known, restoration is needed and the offering demanded.* That the Lord may punish the whole congregation, if the sin lie undetected, we know; for He did so in Achan. "Israel," said He, "hath sinned;" but Achan only suffers when the evil is known and purged, and blessing returns, though with much greater difficulty. The truth is, that He who knows how to unite general government with particular judgment, even where there is general faithfulness, puts in evidence individual evil, or permits it not (a yet higher and happier care); and, on the other hand, can employ the sin of the individual as a means of chastening the whole.

Indeed it appears to me very clear, in the case alluded

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

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

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

IV.

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

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

The bodies of those in which the whole people, or the high priest (which came to the same thing, for the communion of the whole body was interrupted), were concerned, were burnt without the camp, not those for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire; they had been made sin, and were carried out of the camp as such. The sacrifice itself was without blemish, and the fat was burnt on the altar; but, the offender having confessed his sins on its head, it was viewed as bearing these sins, and made sin of God, was taken without the camp; as Jesus (as the apostle himself applies it) suffered without the gate, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood. This was always the case when the blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin.

One of the sacrifices, of which I do not enter into the details here, was abstractedly and altogether viewed in this light of sin, and was slain and burnt, fat and blood (part of the blood having been first sprinkled at the door

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of the tabernacle), and every part of it, without the camp. This was the red heifer.

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

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

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Such also is the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. It is for ever on the mercy-seat, efficacious as the ground of the relationship between us and God. The other sin-offerings referred to were to maintain and restore the communion of those who were in this relationship. Hence, in Leviticus iv. 1—21, the blood was sprinkled on the altar of incense, which was the symbol of the exercise of this communion; the residue poured out, as habitually in the sacrifices, at the altar of burnt-offering—the place of accepted sacrifice; the body, as we have seen, was burnt. In the case of the offerings for the sin and trespass of an individual the communion of the body was not directly in question or interrupted, but he was deprived of the enjoyment of it. Hence the altar of incense was not defiled or incapacitated, as it were, in its use; on the contrary, it was continually used. The blood of these sacrifices, therefore, was put on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, which was always the place of individual approach. Here, by Christ and the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ once offered, every individual soul approaches; and, being thus accepted, enjoys all the blessing and the privileges of which the church at large is continually in possession. But for us the veil is rent, and as to conscience of guilt we are perfected for ever. If our walk be defiled, water by the word restores the communion of our souls.

But there was another circumstance in these sin-offerings for the individual. The priest who offered the blood ate the victim. Thus there was the most perfect identity between the priest and the victim which repre-

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sented the sin of the offerer. As Christ is both, the eating by the priest shews how He did thus make it His own. Only in Christ what was thus typified, was first effected when victim, and the priesthood comes after. Still this eating shews the heart of Christ taking it up as He does for us when we fail, not merely its being laid vicariously on Him, though then His heart took up our cause. But He cared for the sheep.

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

The fat was burnt on the altar, where the priest was identified with the sin which was on the offerer of the victim but transferred to it. It was lost, so to speak, and gone in the sacrifice. He who drew nigh came with confession and humiliation, but, as regarded guilt and judgment, it was taken up by the priest, and, atonement having been made, reached not the judgment-seat of God, so as to affect the relation between God and the offender. Yet here it was perpetual repetition. Communion was restored in the acceptance of the sacrifice, as the sin which hindered the communion was entirely taken away,

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or served only to renew (in a heart humbled into the dust, and annihilated before the goodness of God) the communion founded on goodness become infinitely more precious, and established on the renewed sense of the riches and security of that mediation there typically exhibited, but which Christ has accomplished once for all, eternally for us, as sacrifice, and makes good as to the blessings flowing from it continually on high; not to change the mind of God to us, but to secure our present communion and enjoyment, in spite of our miseries and faults, in the presence, the glory, and the love of Him who changes not.*

Some interesting circumstances remain to be observed. It is remarkable that nothing was so stamped with the character of holiness of entire, real separation to God, as the sin-offering. In the other cases, perfect accept-

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

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ance, a sweet savour, and in some cases our leavened cakes, are found therewith in the use of them; but all passed in the natural delight, so to speak, which God took in what was perfect and infinitely excellent, though it supposed sin and judgment to be there; but here the most remarkable and exact sanctions of its holiness were enjoined. (Lev. vi. 26—28.) There was nothing in the whole work of Jesus which so marked His entire and perfect separation to God, His positive holiness, as His bearing sin. He who knew no sin alone could be made sin, and the act itself was the most utter separation to God conceivable, to bear all, yea, beyond our thought, and to His glory. It was a total consecration of Himself, at all cost, to God's glory; as God, indeed, could accept nothing else. And the victim must have been as perfect as the self-offering was. As a sacrifice, then, for sin, Christ is specially holy; as indeed, now in the power of this sacrifice, a Priest present before God, making intercession, He is "holy, harmless, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens." Yet, so truly was it a bearing of sin that he who carried the goat before his letting loose, and he that gathered the ashes of the red heifer, and sprinkled the water of separation, were unclean until even, and must wash to come into the camp. Thus are these two great truths in the sin-offering of Christ distinctly presented to us in these sacrifices. For, indeed, how can we conceive a greater separation to God, in Christ, than His offering Himself as a victim for sin? And, on the other hand, had He not really borne our sins in all their evil, He could not have put them away really in the judgment of God.

VI.

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

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

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

Of the other sacrifices, the meat-offering and the sin-offering, the priest ate. The first pictures the saint feeding on the perfectness of Christ; the last, Christ, and even those who are His, as priests, in devoted

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love and in sympathy with others, identifying themselves with their sin and with the work of Christ for that sin. They are connected in grace with it according to the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ; they enjoy the grace of Christ therein. Christ enters into it directly for us, we in grace into what He did. This is, however, a solemn thing. It is only as priests that we can participate in it, and in the consciousness of what it means. The people ate of the peace-offerings, which, though they were holy, did not require that nearness to God. It was the joy of the communion of believers, based on the redemption and the acceptance of Christ. Therefore the directions follow those given for the sacrifices for sin and trespass, although the peace-offering comes before the sin-offering in the order of the sacrifices, because, in the former, it required to be a priest to partake of them. There are things which we do as priests; there are others which we do as simple believers.

The sacrifices and the rules for partaking of them being thus appointed, priesthood is established (chap. viii.) according to the ordinance. Aaron and his sons are washed; Aaron is then clothed, and the tabernacle, and all that was therein, anointed, Aaron also.

In this we have, I apprehend, a bright inlet into the way in which the universe is filled with glory. When Aaron alone is anointed without blood, the tabernacle is also. The fulness of the divine power and spiritual grace and glory which is in him fills the whole scene of created witness of the glory of God; that is, the energy of the Holy Ghost fills it with the claim and

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witnesses of the excellency of Christ. When the creature has had to do with it, then, indeed, as on the great day of atonement, it has all to be purified and reconciled with blood. But this does not undo the direct title in grace and divine excellency in Jesus. It is His on this ground too.

When Aaron's sons are brought in, the altar is purified with blood, because we have got out of the mere personal excellency and title of Christ. When the sons of Aaron are clothed with the priestly garments, the sacrifices are offered, beginning with the bullock for a sin-offering, and Aaron and his sons have its blood put upon ear and thumb and toe; and then Aaron and his garments, his sons and their garments with him, are sprinkled with oil and blood according to the directions given in Exodus. The blood of Christ and the Spirit are the ground on which we, associated with Him, have our place with God.

On the eighth day Jehovah was to appear and manifest the acceptance of the sacrifices offered on that day, and His presence in glory in the midst of the people. This manifestation took place accordingly: first Aaron, standing by the sacrifice, blesses the people; and then Moses and Aaron go into the tabernacle, and come out and bless the people. That is, there is first Christ, as Priest, blessing them, in virtue of the offered sacrifice; and then Christ, as King and Priest, going in and hiding Himself for a little in the tabernacle, and then coming out and blessing the people in this twofold character. When this takes place, as it will at the coming of Jesus, the acceptance of the sacrifice will be

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publicly manifested, and the glory of Jehovah will appear to the people, then become true worshippers through that means.

This is a scene of the deepest interest; but there is a remark to be made here. The church is not found in this place (though there are general principles which apply to any case of connection with God), unless it be in the persons of Moses and Aaron. The blessing comes and is made manifest; that is, the acceptance of the victim is made manifest when Moses and Aaron appear at their coming out of the tabernacle. It will be thus with Israel. When the Lord Jesus appears, and they recognize Him whom they pierced, the efficacy of this sacrifice will be manifested in favour of that nation. Our knowledge of that efficacy is during the stay of Christ within the veil, or rather in heaven itself, for the veil is now rent. Israel will not know the acceptance of the sacrifice until Christ comes forth as King; for us the Holy Ghost is come forth while He is yet within, so that we have the anticipative certitude of that reception, and are connected with Him there.

Here the manifestation takes place in the court where the sacrifice was offered, and when Moses and Aaron have come to the place where God talked with the people (not where He communed with the mediator only, that is upon the ark of the testimony, where the veil was no longer on the face of him who also communed with the Lord). There is a very peculiar circumstance connected with that. There had been no sacrifice whose blood was carried into the holy place, though the body

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was burnt without the camp.* A sin-offering was indeed offered, but it was such as ought to have been eaten by the priest. (See chap. x. 17, 18.) The relationships which had been established were comparatively external. The sin and defilement were carried clean out of the camp and done away; but there was no entering in within the veil, or meeting God there.

Lastly, we have what, alas! is always the case with man. The first day the priesthood was established, it comes short of the glory of God. Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire, acting as men in nature in their relationship with God, not founding their service on the altar of sacrifice, and they die.

The priests must on no account whatever depart from their consecration (vers. 6, 7); therefore they must be Nazarites (ver. 9), apart from that which is only the excitement of the flesh, separated unto God from all that which would let nature loose in His presence;

* It does not exactly appear whether the goat for the people was burnt without the camp; Aaron's calf was, though the blood was not carried within the veil. Of the goat it is merely said, "offered it for sin, as the first." Aaron's sacrifice seems to shew that the character of Christ's priesthood does not bring Israel into fellowship with what is within the veil, though Christ may have suffered on the cross for them. The blood was put on the altar in the court. The sons should have eaten that for the people, as for a particular fault of a people already in relationship with God, but who had lost the enjoyment of it. The reader may remark, as regards the remnant of Israel (the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are on mount Sion with the Lamb, the Sufferer in Israel, now King there), they are on earth, but they learn the song sung in heaven, though they are not there to sing it.

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from that which would prevent them from feeling its power—a state of abstraction in which the flesh has no place. The presence of God must have its full power, and the flesh must be silent before Him. It is only thus that they would be able to discern between that which is unclean and that which is pure—that which is profane and that which is holy. There are lawful things, real joys, which, however, do not belong to priesthood—joys which flow from God's blessings, and which do not keep the flesh in check as does His presence; for there is always a certain restraint on the heart, on nature and its activity, produced by the presence of God. But priesthood is exercised before Him.

Priesthood being established, there comes the discernment between holy things and profane, and the judgment of defilements (chap. xi.—xv.), and what was to be done for the purification of defiled persons. We see that it is this nearness of separation unto God which alone can discern thus, and such is the service and ever the duty of priests.

First, as to food, that which is allowed to be eaten. In general the principle seems to be, that anything is allowed that is clean, in this sense, first, that it is thoroughly according to its element, that is, in principle, divine order (of course here presented in a figure), as fishes having scales; secondly, that was allowed which united mature digestion to the absence of that wilful energy which goes boldly through everything. These two qualities must be united. The grossness which swallows down things as they are, or the lack of quiet firmness, rendered unclean. To be clean, it must be

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that which at the same time chews the cud and divides the hoof. Of birds, the carnivorous night birds and those which cannot be tamed are forbidden; creeping things also, what grovelled and trailed itself on the earth. In general, there was to be in their eating the discernment of what was clean.

Then we have the judgment of God fallen on that which would have been, for unfallen man, joy and blessing. The birth of a man, connected now with sin, renders unclean; that of a woman, in whom was the transgression, being deceived, still more so.*

Leprosy requires a little more detail. It was found in persons, in garments, in houses. Leprosy was sin acting in the flesh. The spiritual man—the priest—discerns as to it. If the raw flesh appears, he is unclean; the strength of the flesh is at work. If the man was white all over, it was only the effect, as sin entirely confessed but no longer active; he was clean. The thing spreads in man, if it be evil in the flesh. The first step is for him to confess, and to confess under full spiritual discernment, and the judgment of God who has brought to light what was acting in his nature. He makes up his mind as one judged and detected. He has

* Connected with this was the weakness of fallen nature. (Compare Gen. i. 28.) All that belonged even to weakness of nature, being the effect of sin, rendered unclean under the law. This is also true spiritually. All this was the result of some manifestation or other of the life that was in the flesh. It was so with the leper; raw flesh rendered unclean, as well as any other case where this life (which had become unclean, and had been as set aside and under judgment through sin), manifested itself externally, even though weakness alone were the cause of it.

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no part in the assembly of God, though making part of it in one sense. He is put out, without the camp.

Leprosy (sin) manifested itself in circumstances, in that which surrounds us, as well as in personal conduct. If it was only a spot, the garment was washed, and it was clean; if the plague spot, on the contrary, spread, the whole was burned; if the plague, though it did not spread, remained, after washing, unchanged, the whole was burned. If changed and it spread no more, the spot was torn out.

If we get thus defiled by our circumstances, and it is not in the things themselves, we need only wash and remain where we are; if a part of them be essentially bad, that it spread defilingly in our whole condition, all that part of our outward life must be given up; if, in spite of washing, sin be still found the same there, if we cannot walk therein with God, such a position must be *wholly* given up at any cost; if it be affected by the washing and cease to spread, the general state being un*affected*, the particular thing which had defiled is to be given up.

As to purification, the leper was first considered as being outside the camp, not belonging to it; but if the activity of the disease was stopped in him, he was healed, but not yet purified. Thus this type supposes that the flesh, instead of being active and characteristic of the state of man, is judged and arrested in its activity. It is the enjoyment of a recognized relationship with God which is to be established.

The first part of the purification relates to this position. Christ being dead and risen, man sprinkled with

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His blood is fit, as regards the controversy with God, and His requirements, to enter the camp of God's people; and then he can share in the efficacy of the means which they can use there, of that which is found within, in order to present himself as acceptable before the tabernacle of God. Two birds were to be taken, and one killed by some one, at the command of the priest; for the priest's office never properly began till there was blood to offer or sprinkle, though the high priest represented Israel on the great day of atonement. The two birds, however, are identified, so that we hear no more of that which was killed, though the efficacy of the blood be everything in the work of cleansing; the second is dipped in the blood of the first.

Thus Christ dead is no more found; but, being raised, He sprinkles His blood, as priest, on the unclean sinner. The earthen vessel, over running water, presents to us the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, according to the all-powerful efficacy of which, in Christ as man, this work of the death of Jesus has been accomplished: through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God—God having brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He, the sinner, was under the efficacy of Christ's work.

But now there is, before he can offer, the work done on himself, the actual cleansing applied to him. He who cleansed himself washed himself—a purification of water as well as of blood, which is always found, and which is in virtue of the death of Christ, seen as His work for us, for the water comes out of His pierced

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side. The leper rids himself of anything to which impurity might have attached, or had had a share in it, and now he enters the camp; and the work of bringing him into communion with God in his conscience begins.

When it was a question of consecrating those who were recognized as to their persons, they were first washed, and the sacrifice of Christ, viewed under every aspect, was the measure of their relation with God in every way, and the basis of their communion in its inward efficacy upon the soul. But here, the sinner being viewed in his sin outside the camp, it was necessary first to lay the basis for the possibility of intercourse with God. This was done in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then, being washed (the efficacious operation of the Spirit), he can be in relationship.

After that comes the realizing of all the efficacy of the work of Christ, with reference to conscience itself—*not* only as to the acceptance of the person, according to God's knowledge of that acceptance, but as to the purification of the conscience, and as to a knowledge of God, based on a moral appreciation of the work of Christ in every aspect, and the excellent work of the power of the Spirit of God. This is the second part of the cleansing of the leper, that which took place after he had re-entered the camp.

It is important to recognize the work of Christ under these two aspects. Its intrinsic efficacy for the acceptance of the person on the one hand, and, on the other, the purification of the conscience itself, in order that there may be communion with God, according to the price and the perfection of that work, known in the con-

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science as a means of drawing near to God, and as the moral condition of that nearness.

Let us now examine what took place. The first thing was the trespass-offering. The conscience must be purified, by the blood of Christ, of all that with which, as a matter of fact, it is charged; and man must be consecrated to God with an intelligence which applies the value of that blood to his whole walk, his whole conduct, his whole thoughts, and upon the principle of obedience. It is the moral purification of the whole man, upon the principle of intelligent obedience—a purification acting upon his conscience; not merely an outward rule for a man freed from sin, but a purification of his conscience felt in the knowledge of good and evil, of which the blood of Christ is the measure before God. If it were a mere rule, it would be easy; but man being a sinner, having failed, the work must take place in the conscience which takes an humbling knowledge of it, and in becoming cleansed, through the precious efficacy of the blood of Christ, does so through the sorrow of conscience for all that is contrary to the perfection of that blood, and which has required the shedding of it.

Man is thus consecrated. The heart is first purified in the conscience. The things to which he had given way are, as it were, brought to the conscience, which takes a painful knowledge of them, according to the value of the blood of the precious Lamb of God, who, without spot, and perfect in obedience, had to suffer the agony caused by the sin of which we have to be cleansed —wretched creatures that we are.

Afterwards the heart makes progress in the power of

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its communion, through the knowledge of the most precious objects of its faith. As to communion, this work must go on again from time to time in the conscience, whenever there is something in our nature which is not in subjection to Christ, which is not brought captive to the obedince of Christ.

The blood then was put upon the tip of his right ear, his right hand, his right foot—his thoughts, his conduct, and his walk purified on the principle of obedience, according to the measure of Christ's death, and the claim of the love displayed in it. Over that, they sprinkled oil—the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit as given to us—not washing (that was typified by water, the application of the word by the Spirit), but given to consecrate in knowledge and power of purpose and affection to God; the whole man being thus consecrated, according to the intelligence and the devotedness wrought by the Holy Spirit, to God. After that the oil was put upon his head, his whole person being thus consecrated to Him. The work was complete upon him who was to be cleansed; after that the sin-offering was offered. That is, Christ (not only for the purification of the conscience in a practical sense, for its actual faults, but that sin might be judged in its full extent before God; for Christ was made sin for us, as well as bore our sins) thus acts on our consciences with regard to those sins—makes us estimate sin, such as it is in itself, seen in the sacrifice of Christ.

Then the burnt-offering with the meat-offering was offered, the appreciation of the perfection of the death of Christ, seen as the devoting of Himself to God unto

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death, to vindicate all the rights of His majesty. This death was of infinite perfection in itself, as a work, for it can be said, "*Therefore* doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." It was not as bearing sins, but absolute devotedness to God and His glory in the circumstances that sin had brought us into, and thus Christ also, by grace, if God was to be fully glorified in Him.

In the meat-offering was found, besides, all the perfectness of the grace of Christ in His life—humanity, pure, without doubt, but kneaded with oil, humanity having in it all the strength, the taste, and savour of the Holy Spirit in its nature; for it is in that aspect that it is presented here, not as anointed with oil—as power—but kneaded with oil in its substance. Now the man is clean.

And how great is the importance and the reality of the reconciliation of a soul to God, if it values all that is thus unfolded of the work of Christ, and of its application to the soul; and certainly its reconciliation does not take place without! Alas! our trifling hearts pass, perhaps lightly, over this, and the dealings of that hand of God which does marvellous things with the quiet ease which perfect grace and power give. However, we do see, sometimes, in some souls (according to the wisdom of God), the anguish and the suffering which accompany this work when the conscience, in view of the reality of things before God, and through Christ, takes knowledge of the state of the heart, sinful and distant from God in its nature.

This is the restoration of the soul on the part of God.

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It is all the working of divine power, not merely as to the work and resurrection of Christ, but even as to the soul itself; for the case here under supposition is that of a man already vitally cleansed. The *priest* judged him already clean, but the leper was not himself restored to God in his conscience;* and the Spirit of God, for this purpose, goes over the work of Christ, and its application to the soul itself, and its relationship with the work and presence of the Holy Spirit in its work, whether in purifying the sinner, or in consecrating the man. May our gracious God render us attentive to this! happy that the work should be His, though it takes place in us as well as for us.

There remains to be considered leprosy in a house. In the case of the leprous person, the whole referred to the tabernacle. They were still in the wilderness. The walk in the world was concerned; but here the being in the land of promise is supposed. It does not refer to the cleansing of the person, it is more typical of an assembly. When defilement appears there, they take out the stones and the plaster: the external walk is quite changed, and the individuals which have corrupted this walk are taken out, and thrown amongst the unclean. If the whole be thereupon healed, the house remains; if not, it is wholly destroyed; the evil is in the assembly itself, and it was manifest, as in the case of the leper. If its source was

* This difference is important, and shews how the working of sin may be stopped, and the desires and will set right, and in a certain sense the affections, but the conscience not yet restored: communion consequently not yet re-established, or the blessed confidence and affections founded on it.

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in the stones taken away, if it was only there, the end was accomplished by taking out the stones and removing the plaster, reforming the whole external walk. Purification consisted in taking away the wicked who corrupted the public testimony—that which was manifested outside. It was not a question of restoring the conscience; the whole rests anew on the primitive efficacy of the work of Christ, which renders the assembly acceptable with God.

We shall find that the Apostle Paul, in his Epistles addressed to assemblies, says, "grace and peace;" and, when writing to individuals, adds "mercy." Philemon seems an exception; but the church is addressed with him.

In the case of garments it is no question about cleansing one's person, but of getting rid of defiled circumstances. We see that the case of the house is presented separate, being in the land of promise, and not in the walk of the wilderness. The same truth is found in the application, I doubt not. The assembly is in the land of promise; the individual walks in the wilderness. However, stones which corrupt the house may be found there.

Other cases connected with the weakness of nature are mentioned, but which point out that, sin having come in, all that is of nature, of the flesh, defiles (whatever may be the excuse as to the weakness and the unavoidable character of the thing). If it cannot be avoided, it is the manifestation, or at least the inevitable existence, of that which is shameful, because it is a nature fallen and sinful.

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We shall find, however, that, though being shameful, the case is supposed less morally serious than leprosy. In leprosy there was the manifestation of positive corruption, existing beforehand in the nature, which was admitted in the heart, so that a long process was necessary to purify the conscience. Here they only washed once, and they offered merely a sin-offering, and they were thereby able, in offering their burnt-offering, to enter into communion through the sweet savour of Christ.

Having made provision for such defilements of the people as allowed of it, we have the revelation of the general provision for the purification of the sanctuary which was in the midst of a people who defiled it, and for the atonement of the sins of the people themselves.

In general, there are two great ideas; first, that the atonement was made, so that the relationship of the people with God was maintained notwithstanding their sins; and then, in the second place, in the difficulties which surrounded the entrance of Aaron into the holy place, there was the testimony (according to the Epistle to the Hebrews itself) that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest during that dispensation.

It is important to examine this chapter under these two points of view. It stands alone. No mention is made anywhere else of what took place on that solemn day. The sacrifice of Christ, as meeting God's righteousness against sin as the ground of redemption, was typified by the passover. It was here a question of drawing near unto God who revealed Himself on His

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throne—of cleansing defilements—of taking away the sins of those who would draw near, and of purifying their conscience. Now, while presenting to us in figure God's means of doing this, it signified indeed that the thing was not done. As to the general idea of its efficacy, the high priest drew near personally, and filled the most holy place with incense. So Christ goes in personally in the perfect savour of what He is for God. The place of God's presence was full of it.

The expression "that he die not" expresses the absolutely obligatory nature of anything which was fulfilled in Christ. Personally he appears before God, being as ointment poured forth, a sweet savour, connected with fire from the altar, that is, judgment and death, but only bringing out a perfect sweet odour to God: not blood for others, but fire by the testing of His perfectness; not in this case to cleanse, but to bring out the odour of this good ointment. Then he took some blood, which he put on the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. Atonement or propitiation was made according to the requirement of the nature and majesty of the throne of God Himself, so that the full satisfaction made to His majesty rendered the throne of *justice* favourable, a place of acceptance; grace had free course, and the worshipper found the blood there before him when he drew near, and even as a testimony before the throne. Then the high priest cleansed the tabernacle, the altar, and all that was found there.

Thus, in virtue of the sprinkling of His blood, Christ will reconcile all things, having made peace through the blood of His cross. There could be no guiltiness in the

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tabernacle, but God would cleanse away the defilements, that they might not appear before Him.

In the third place, the high priest confessed the sins of the people over the scape-goat, which, sent away unto a land not inhabited, bore all the sins away from God, never to be found again. It is here that the idea of substitution is presented most clearly. There are three things: the blood on the mercy-seat, the reconciliation of all things, and the sins confessed and borne by another. This order is found in Colossians i.—peace made, the reconciliation of all things by Christ, and in speaking of believers, "you hath he now reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death."

It is evident that, though the scape-goat was sent away alive, he was identified as to the efficacy of the work with the death of the other. The idea of the eternal sending away of sins out of remembrance is only added to the thought of death. The glory of God was established, and His rights vindicated, on one side, in the putting of the blood on the mercy-seat; and, on the other, there was the substitution of the scape-goat, of the Lord Jesus, in His precious grace, for the guilty persons whose cause He had undertaken; and, the sins of these having been borne, their deliverance was full, entire, and final. The first goat was Jehovah's lot—it was a question of His character and His majesty. The other was the lot of the people, which definitively represented the people in their sins.

These two aspects of the death of Jesus must be carefully distinguished in the atoning sacrifice He has accomplished. He has glorified God, and God acts

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according to the value of that blood towards all.* He has borne the sins of His people; and the salvation of His people is complete. And, in a certain sense, the first part is the most important. Sin having come in, the justice of God might, it is true, have got rid of the sinner; but where would then have been His love and His counsels of grace, pardon, and even the maintenance of His glory according to His true nature as love, while righteous and holy too?

I am not speaking here of the persons who were to be saved, but of the glory of God Himself. But the perfect death of Jesus—His blood put on the throne of God—has established and brought into evidence all that God is—all His glory, as no creation could have done it; His truth (for He had passed sentence of death), it is made good in the highest way in Jesus; His majesty, for His Son submits to all for His glory; His justice against sin; His infinite love. God found means therein to accomplish His counsels of grace, in maintaining all the majesty of His justice and of His divine dignity; for what, like the death of Jesus, could have glorified them?

Therefore this devotedness of Jesus, God's Son, to His glory—His submission, even unto death, that God might be maintained in the full glory of His rights, has given its outlet to the love of God—freedom to its action; wherefore Jesus says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

* See John xiii. 31, 32, and xvii. 1, 4. And this entitles man to glory, does not merely justify him.

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His heart, full of love, was driven back, in its personal manifestation, by the sin of man, who would it not; but through the atonement it could flow forth to the sinner, in the accomplishment of God's grace and of His counsels, unhindered; and Jesus Himself had, so to speak, rights upon that love—a position we are brought into through grace, and which has none like it. "*Therefore* doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."

We speak with reverence of such things, but it is good to speak of them; for the glory of our God, and of Him whom He has sent, is found therein established and manifested. There is not one attribute, one trait of the divine character, which has not been manifested in all its perfection, and fully glorified in that which took place between God and Jesus Himself. That we have been saved and redeemed, and that our sins have been atoned for in that same sacrifice, according to the counsels of the grace of God, is (I presume to say it, precious and important as it is for us) the inferior part of that work, if anything whatever may be called inferior where everything is perfect: its object at least—we sinners—is inferior, if the work is equally perfect in every point of view.

Having considered a little the grand principles, we may now examine the particular circumstances.

It will have been observed that there were two sacrifices; one for Aaron and his family, the other for the *people*. Aaron and his sons always represent the church, not in the sense of one body, but as a company of *priests*.

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Thus we have, even in the day of atonement, the distinction between those who form the church, and the earthly people who form the camp of God on the earth. Believers have their place outside the camp, where their Head has suffered, as sacrifice for sin; but in consequence, they have their place in the presence of God in the heavens, where their Head has entered. Outside the camp,* here below, answers to a heavenly portion above: they are the two positions of the ever blessed Christ.

If the professing church takes the position of the camp here below, the place of the *believer* is always outside. It is, indeed, what she has done; she boasts of it—but it is Jewish. Israel must indeed recognize themselves outside at last, in order to be saved and to be brought in again, through grace, because the Saviour, whom they despised in a day of blindness, has in grace borne all their sins as a nation, for He died for that nation. We anticipate that position whilst Christ is in heaven. The heart of the remnant of Israel will indeed be brought back to Jehovah before that time; they will only enter into the power of the sacrifice when they shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn for Him. Therefore was it prescribed that it should be a day to afflict their souls, and that he who did not should be cut off.

The day of atonement supposes, moreover, according to the state of things found in the wilderness, that the

* The camp is an earthly religious relationship with God outside the sanctuary, and established on earth with priests between us and God. This the Jews were; they cast Christ out of it; and it is now utterly rejected.

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people were in a state of incapacity for the enjoyment of the relations with God fully manifested. God had redeemed them, had spoken to them; but the heart of Israel, of man however favoured, was incapable of it in its natural state. Israel had made the golden calf, and Moses put a veil over his face; Nadab and Abihu had offered strange fire upon the altar of God—fire which had not been taken from the altar of burnt-offering. The way into the holiest is closed; Aaron is forbidden to enter there at all times. He never went in in his garments of glory and beauty. When he went in, it was not for communion, but for the cleansing of the defilements of a people among whom God dwelt; and the day of atonement is only introduced with a prohibition of entering at all times into the holy place, and is conspicuous as taking place after the death of the sons of Aaron. He does it with a cloud of incense, lest he die. It was truly a gracious provision, in order that the people should not perish on account of their defilements; but the Holy Ghost was signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.

In what, then, is our position changed? The veil is rent; and we enter, as priests, with boldness into the holiest, by a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, the flesh of Christ. We enter in without conscience of sin, because the blow which rent the veil, to shew all the glory and the majesty of the throne, and the holiness of Him who sits thereon, has taken away the sins which would have incapacitated us from entering in, or from looking within. We are even

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seated there in Christ our Head—the Head of His body the church.

In the meantime, Israel is outside. The church is seen in the person of Christ, the High Priest, and the whole of this dispensation is the day of atonement, during which Israel's High Priest is hid within the veil. The veil which hid the import of all these figures is indeed done away in Christ, so that we have full liberty by the Spirit, but it is upon their hearts. He maintains there within, it is true, their cause through the blood which He presents; but the testimony of it is not yet presented to them outside, nor their consciences freed by the knowledge that their sins are lost for ever in a land not inhabited, where they will never be found again.

Now our position is, properly speaking, inside, in the person of Aaron, the blood being on the mercy-seat. We are not only justified by the scape-goat, as being without; that is done, it is clear, and once for all, for the veil is only on the heart of Israel, it is no longer between us and God. But we have gone in with the High Priest, as united to Him; we are not waiting for reconciliation till He comes out. Israel, though the forgiveness be the same, will receive these things, when the true Aaron comes out of the tabernacle. This is why that which characterized the sacrifice of Aaron and his sons was the blood put inside on the mercy-seat, and the going in of Aaron in person.

But the church is composed of persons who are here below, who have committed sins. Thus seen in the world, they are, as to their conscience, in the rank of the out-

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side people, as well as Aaron himself, not viewed as a typical individual; and the conscience is purified by the certainty that Christ has borne all our sins in His body on the tree. Our position is within according to the value of the blood of Christ, and the perfect acceptance of His person.

It is the same with regard to the expectation of Christ. If I consider myself as a man responsible upon earth, I expect Him for the deliverance of all things, and to put an end to all suffering, and to all the power of evil; and so individually myself, as a servant, I look to receive, at His appearing here, the testimony of His approval, as a Master, before the whole world. But if I think of my privileges, as a member of His body, I think of my union with Him above, and that I shall come back with Him when He shall come to appear in His glory.

It is well we should know how to make this distinction; without it there will be confusion in our thoughts, and in our use of many passages. The same thing is true in the personal religion of every day. I can consider myself as in Christ, and united to Him, seated in Him in heavenly places, enjoying all the privileges which He enjoys before God, His Father, and united to Him as Head of the body. I may also look upon myself as a poor weak being, walking individually upon the earth, having wants, faults, and temptations to overcome; and I see Christ above, whilst I am here below—Christ appearing alone for me before the throne—for me, happy in having, in the presence of God, Him who is perfect, but who has gone through the experience of my sorrows;

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who is no longer in the circumstances in which I find myself, but with God for me who am in them. This is the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews;* whilst the union of the church with Christ is more particularly taught in that to the Ephesians.

After this quite special instruction of the day of atonement come some directions, not to purify from defilements, but to preserve from them either the people or the service of the priests. (Chap. xvii.) It is to maintain them as a people holy to God, and keep them from all that would dishonour Him in their relations with Him and themselves in their relations with others. Life belongs to God. And where it is taken, it must be offered in sacrifice and in sacrifice of course to God. The blood must be sprinkled, and the fat burned on the altar. Thus the secret departure of the heart to demons, and God's title to life, and the truth of sacrifice were all maintained—all vital truths. Thus God was owned and honoured, and man's relationship with Him.

Chapter xviii. keeps them from dishonouring themselves in the things which belong to nature itself, to what man ought to be in his natural relations, that he might not dishonour *himself*. *Man* ought not to do it; but, not having honoured God, he has been left to dis-

* The difference of 1 John ii. is this: there communion is in question, and Christ is our Advocate with the *Father*. Sin interrupts that communion, but the advocacy is founded on righteousness and propitiation. In Hebrews it is approach to God which is in question, and for this we are perfected for ever, have boldness to enter into the holiest. Sin is not thus in question, but mercy and grace to help in time of need.

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honour himself. (Compare Rom. i.) The people of God, being brought into nearness to Him, are taught on this subject. They were separated from the evil of the world they were called out of, and the reckless profligacy into which Satan had driven degraded man as his sport. Jehovah's statutes and judgments were to guide them: man in probation walking in them would live.

Chapters xix., xx., carry us somewhat farther. They were to be holy, for Jehovah was holy. Chapter xix. takes up rather the side of good, though keeping themselves from all that was profane, or profaning what was holy; but we find what is good and kind and comely, what ought to be their conduct, in various details, in the relationship they sustain one with the other, either with regard to various dangers to which they were exposed in their walk, in their every-day circumstances: for they had to do with God, and Jehovah was their God. The people of God were, in all their ways, to walk in a manner worthy of this relationship, and even to understand what was suitable to man, to every relationship in which they were found, according to God. Thus, though it was not here priesthood, it was the practical maintenance of this relationship with Him who dwelt among them, and to whom they drew nigh, by guarding against defilements unsuited to those who were in it. It is here we find the precept to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Chapter xx. guards more against the evil and corruption which was found amongst the nations. In both they are called to be holy, in chapter xix. more in conformity to the character of God, in chapter xx. to keep

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apart from idols and evil because Jehovah had sanctified them to Himself. It insists upon purity in every respect.

Chapter xxi. specially presents what becomes the priests as set apart for Jehovah: this more intimate nearness supposed a conduct corresponding with it. All in their state must be fit for God's presence. So it is with us.

Chapter xxii. If there was, through weakness or neglect, anything unbecoming this nearness, they were to keep at a distance. Consequently there were things of which the priests, and those of their families in priestly separation, alone could eat. It is the same with us: there are things of the spiritual food of Christ, offered to God, upon which we can only feed inasmuch as the heart is really separated unto Him, by the power of the Spirit. The offerings themselves must be pure, and such as become the eyes of God to whom they are presented, and a right appreciation of His majesty, and of our relationship with Him. All this is indeed found in Christ. No hardness of nature is allowed, but holiness. In what is connected with our own joy before God holiness must be maintained in what is offered.

In chapter xx., where they are forbidden to follow the brutal and superstitious customs (to which Satan had degraded man) of idolatry, and are warned against all impurity, which indeed was always inseparable from it, and for which the influence of the devil gave license, we have this simple and beautiful exposition of the principle which was to govern them: "Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy: *for I am* Jehovah your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am Jehovah

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which sanctify you." They are bound to holiness and to sanctify themselves practically, because they are in the house, and the Master of it is holy. Sanctification supposed that they were in an acknowledged relationship with God, who will have the inmates of His house clean according to His own cleanness.

But then His word was to be the rule. They were to obey Him in *His* directions, for it was He who was separating them to Himself. This is a very instructive word as to the standard of all our thoughts with regard to that. If any are in my house, I will have them clean, because they are there; those outside are no concern of mine. Then it was Jehovah who was separating them for that. There are interesting instructions with regard to what the priests ate, which we shall find again in the following book, and consider when we come to it.

We have now come to the feasts. (Chap. xxiii.) It is the full* year of the counsels of God towards His people, and the rest which was the end of those counsels.

There were consequently seven—a number expressive of perfection well known in the word:—the sabbath, the passover and the feast of unleavened bread, the first-fruits of harvest or Pentecost, the feast of trumpets in the seventh month, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles.

* I add, to give the intelligence of this expression, that the word translated "feast" signifies an appointed or definite time, and which returned consequently at the revolution of the year. The series of the feasts embraced the whole year, inasmuch as they returned regularly each consecutive year.

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If the sabbath be separated and reckoned by itself, the passover would be distinguished from the feast of unleavened bread, which would make the seventh. I do not say this to preserve the number, but because the chapter itself speaks thus: having counted the sabbath amongst the others, it resumes and calls the others (without the sabbath) the solemn feasts. For, in one sense, it was indeed a feast; in another, it was the rest, when the whole was ended.* In general, these feasts present us, then, with all the bases on which God has entered into relationship with His people; the principles on which He has gathered them around Him, in His ways with this people, upon the earth. Their bearing was wider than that, in other respects; but it is in this point of view that these circumstances, that is, these

* The idea of these feasts is God gathering the people around Himself as a holy convocation. The solemn feasts were, then, the gathering of God's people around Him, and in detail the ways of God in gathering them thus. Hence the distinction made in this chapter. It is evident that the sabbath, the rest of God, will be the great gathering of the people of God around Him, as the centre of peace and blessing. So that the sabbath is truly a solemn feast, a holy convocation; but, also, it is evidently apart and distinct from the means and the operations which gathered the people. Hence we find it mentioned at the beginning, and reckoned amongst the solemn feasts; then the Spirit of God begins afresh (ver. 4) and gives the solemn feasts, as embracing all the ways of God in the gathering of His people, leaving out the sabbath. In reckoning the feasts, the passover and the feast of unleavened bread may be considered as one, for both were at the same time, and treated together; or, looking upon the sabbath as separate, they may be estimated as two feasts. Both these things are found in the word.

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facts, are here considered. They are seen in their accomplishment upon the earth.

There is another way of dividing them, by taking the words, "And Jehovah spake unto Moses"* as the title of each part: the sabbath, the passover, and the unleavened bread (ver. 1—8); the first-fruits and the Pentecost (ver. 9—22); the feast of trumpets (ver. 23—25); the day of atonement (ver. 26—32); the feast of tabernacles (ver. 33 to the end). This latter division gives us the moral distinction of the feasts—that is, the ways of God therein. Let us examine them a little more in detail.

The very first thing presented is the sabbath, as being the end and the result of all the ways of God. The promise is left us of entering into God's rest. It is a

* It is well to observe, in passing, that this formula gives, in the whole Pentateuch, the true division of the subjects. Sometimes the directions are addressed to Aaron, which supposes some internal relations based on the existence of priesthood—sometimes to Moses and Aaron; and in that case they are not purely communications and commandments to establish relations, but also directions for the exercise of functions thus established. Consequently we have in Leviticus x., for the first time I think, "Jehovah spake unto Aaron;"—chapter xi. to "Moses and Aaron;" because that, whilst it treats of commandments and ordinances given for the first time, it is also a question of the discernment consequent upon relations existing between God and the people, and in which the exercise of the priesthood came in. These general principles will assist in apprehending the nature of the communications made by God to His people. (See chap. xiii.) Chapter xiv., as far as verse 32, consists of ordinances to settle simply what priesthood must do; verse 33, priestly discernment is again in exercise.

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feast to Jehovah; but the feasts, which present rather the ways of God to lead us there, begin again at the fourth verse, as we have already said. (Compare ver. 37, 38.) This distinction being noticed, we can take the sabbath,* the passover, and the feast of unleavened bread

* I shall here add a few words on the subject of the sabbath, submitting them to the spiritual thoughts of my brethren. It is well to be subject to the word. First, the participation in *God's* rest is what distinguishes His people—their distinctive privilege. The heart of the believer holds that fast, whatever may be the sign that God has given of it. (Heb. iv.) God had established it at the beginning; but there is no appearance that man ever enjoyed in fact any share in it. He did not work in the creation, nor was he set to labour or toil in the garden of Eden; he was to dress and keep it, indeed, but he had nothing to do but continually to enjoy. However the day was hallowed from the beginning. Afterwards the sabbath was given as a memorial of the deliverance out of Egypt (Deut. v. 15), and the prophets specially insist on that point—that the sabbath was given as a sign of God's covenant. (Ezek. xx.; Ex. xxxi. 13.) It was plain that it was but the earnest of that word, "My presence shall go, and I will give thee rest." (Ex. xxxiii. 14; xxxi. 13; Lev. xix. 30.) It is a sign that the people are sanctified to God. (Ezek. xx. 12, 13—16, 20; Neh. ix. 14: compare Isa. lvi. 2—6; lviii. 13; Jer. xvii. 22; Lam. i. 7; ii. 6; Ezek. xxii. 8; xxiii. 38; xliv. 24.) Besides these passages, we see that, whenever God gives any new principle or form of relation with Himself, the sabbath is added: thus in grace to Israel (Ex. xvi. 23); as law. (Ex. xx. 10.) See also, besides the verse we are occupied with, Exodus xxxi. 13, 14; xxxiv. 21; when they are restored afresh by the patience of God through mediation (chap. xxxv. 2), and in the new covenant of Deuteronomy already quoted in the passage.

These remarks shew us what was the radical and essential importance of the sabbath, as the thought of God and the sign of the

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as making a whole. (Ver. 1—8.) Of the two latter, the unleavened bread was the feast, properly speaking; the passover was the sacrifice on which the feast was grounded. As the apostle says, "Christ our passover

relation between His people and Himself, though, being only a sign, a solemnity, and not in itself a moral commandment; for the thing signified the association with God in His rest, and is of the highest order of truth in connecting the heart with God. But if that be of the utmost importance, it is of an equal and even higher importance to remember that the covenant between God and the Jewish people is entirely set aside for us, and that the sign of this covenant does not belong to us, although God's rest be yet quite as precious to us, and even more so; that our rest is not in this creation—a rest of which the seventh day was the sign; and moreover (which is more important still) that the Lord Jesus is Lord of the sabbath, a remark of all importance as to His person, and null if He was to do nothing with regard to the sabbath; and that, as a fact, He has omitted all mention of it in the sermon on the mount, where He has given such a precious summary of the fundamental principles suited to the kingdom, with the addition of the name of the Father and the fact of a suffering Messiah, and the revelation of the heavenly reward, making a whole of the principles of His kingdom, and that He uniformly thwarted the thoughts of the Jews on this point; a circumstance which the evangelists (that is, the Holy Ghost) have been careful to record. The sabbath itself Jesus passed in a state of death, a terrible sign of the position of the Jews as to their covenant—for us, of the birth of much better things.

It has been tried, with much trouble, to prove that the seventh day was in fact the first. A single remark demolishes the whole edifice thus reared; it is, that the word of God calls this last the first in contrast with the seventh. What is, then, the first day? It is for us the day of all days—the day of the resurrection of Jesus, by which we are begotten again unto a lively hope, which is the source of all our joy, our salvation, and that which characterizes

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is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with leaven," &c.

What was indeed necessary for the sabbath, for the rest of God, was the sacrifice of Christ, and purity; the perfect absence of leaven in Him, and accomplished in

our life. Thus we shall find the rest of God in the resurrection. Morally, in this world, we begin our spiritual life by the rest, instead of finding it at the end of our labours. Our rest is in the new creation; we are the beginning, after Christ, who is the Head of it, of that new dispensation.

It is clear, then, that the rest of God cannot, in our case, be connected with the sign of the rest of creation here below. Have we any authority in the New Testament for distinguishing the first day of the week from the others? For my part, I do not doubt it. It is certain we have not commandments like those of the old law; they would be quite contrary to the spirit of the gospel of grace. But the Spirit of God has marked out, in divers manners, the first day of the week, though that day is not made binding upon us in a way contrary to the nature of the economy. The Lord, being raised on that day according to His promise, appears in the midst of His disciples gathered according to His word: the week following He does the same. In the Acts the first day of the week is marked as the day on which they gathered together to break bread.

In 1 Corinthians xvi. Christians are exhorted to lay by what they had earned, each first day of the week. In Revelation it is positively called the Lord's day, that is, designated in a direct manner by a distinctive name by the Holy Spirit. I am well aware that it has been sought to persuade us that John speaks of being in Spirit in the millennium. But there are two fatal objections to that interpretation. First, the Greek says quite another thing, and uses the same word that is used for the Lord's supper, lordly or dominical—the dominical supper, the dominical day. Who can doubt as to the meaning of such an expression, or, consequently, can fail in admitting that the first day of the week was

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us, inasmuch as we possess Christ as our life. It is thus that we have seen the manna connected with the sabbath in Exodus xvi. Without leaven was the perfection of the person of Christ living upon earth, and of the walk upon earth of him who is partaker of His life. In the true and final sabbath, of course, all leaven will

distinguished from others (as the Lord's supper was distinguished from other suppers), not as an imposed sabbath, but as a privileged day? But the reasoning to prove it refers to the millennium is founded on a totally false idea, in that only a minimum portion of the Revelation speaks of the millennium. The book is about the things which precede it, and in the place where the expression is found, there is decidedly no mention whatever of it, but of the existing churches, whatever withal might be their prophetic character; so that, if we hold to the word of God, we are forced to say that the first day of the week is distinguished in the word of God as being the Lord's day. We are also bound to say, if we desire to maintain the authority of the Son of man, that He is superior to the sabbath—"Lord of the sabbath;" so that in maintaining for us the authority of the Jewish sabbath as such, we are in danger of denying the authority, the dignity, and the rights of the Lord Jesus Himself, and of re-establishing the old covenant, of which it was the appointed sign, of seeking rest as the result of labour under the law. The more the true importance of the sabbath, the seventh day, is felt, the more we shall feel the importance of the consideration that it is no longer the seventh, but the first day which has privileges for us. Let us take care, on the other hand, because we are no longer under law but under grace, not to weaken the thought not only of man's rest but of *God's*—a governing thought in the whole of the revelation of His relationships with man. The final rest for us is rest from *spiritual* labours in the midst of evil, not merely from sin; a rest which we, as fellow-labourers, shall enjoy with Him who has said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

XXIII.

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be absent from us. The sacrifice of Christ and purity of life render one capable of participating in God's rest.

After that comes the power, the firstfruits—that is, the resurrection of Christ on the morrow after the sabbath—the first day of the week. It was the beginning of the true harvest—harvest gathered, by power, outside and beyond the natural life of the world. According to the Jewish law nothing of the harvest could be touched before: Christ was the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. With these firstfruits were offered sacrifices for a sweet savour, but not for sin. It is clear there was no need for it. It is Christ who has been offered to God, quite pure, and waved before God —placed fully before His eyes for us, as raised from the dead.

Connected with that comes the meat-offering at the end of the seven weeks. It is no longer Christ here, but those who are His, the firstfruits of His creatures; they are considered as being upon earth, and leaven is found in them. Therefore, though offered to God, they were not burned as a sweet savour (Lev. ii. 12); but with the loaves was offered a sin-offering, which answered by its efficacy to the leaven found in them. They are the saints of which Pentecost commenced the ingathering.

This feast was followed by a long space of time, in which there was nothing new in the ways of God. Only they were commanded, when they reaped the harvest, not to make clean riddance of the corners of the field. A part of the good grain was to be left in the field, after the harvest was gathered into the garner, but

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not to be lost; it was for those who were not enjoying the riches of God's people, but who would participate exceptionally by grace in the provision which God had made for them—in the abundance which God had granted them. This will take place at the end of this age.

Pentecostal work being ended, another series of events begins (ver. 23) with the words referred to, "And Jehovah spake unto Moses." They blow up the trumpet in the new moon. (Compare Ps. lxxxi.; Numb. x. 3, 10.) It was the renewal of the blessing and the splendour of the people—Israel gathered as an assembly before Jehovah. It is not yet the restoration of joy and gladness, but at least the renewal of the light and reflected glory which had disappeared takes place, and enlightens their expectant eyes; and they gather the assembly to re-establish the glory.

But Israel must at least feel their sin; and in the solemn feast which follows, the affliction of the people is connected with the sacrifice of the day of atonement: Israel shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. The nation (at least the spared remnant who become the nation) will participate in the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, and that in their state here below, repenting, and recognized of God, so that the times of refreshing will be come. This is then the repentance of the people, but in connection with the atoning sacrifice. The efficacy is in the sacrifice—their participation in it is connected with the affliction of their souls. (Compare Zech. xii.) But Israel did nothing—it was a sabbath—they were assembled in humiliation in the presence

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of God. They accept the pierced One under the sense of the sin of which they have been guilty in rejecting Him.

Then follows the feast of tabernacles. They offered, during seven days, offerings made by fire unto Jehovah; and on the eighth day there was again a holy convocation—an extraordinary day of a new week which went beyond the full time—including, I doubt not, the resurrection; that is, the participation of those who are raised in that joy.

It was a solemn assembly—that eighth day, the great day of the feast, on which the Lord (having declared of the then time that His hour was not yet come to shew Himself to the world—His brethren [the Jews] not believing in Him either) announced that for him who believed in Him there would be, in the meanwhile, rivers of living water which would flow from his belly—that is, the Holy Spirit, who would be a living power working in, and flowing forth from, the heart, and in the expression of its intimate affections. Israel had indeed drunk of the living water out of the rock in the wilderness, the sojourn in which, now past when the feast of tabernacles is celebrated, was celebrated with joy in the memorial of that which was over, to enhance the joy of the rest into which they were ushered. But believers now meanwhile were not only to drink, for blessed are those who have not seen and have believed: the river itself would flow from the heart—that is, the Holy Spirit in power, which they would have received through Christ before He should be manifested to the world, or they have their place in the heavenly Canaan.

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Thus, the feast of tabernacles is the joy of the millennium, when Israel have come out of the wilderness where their sins have placed them, but to which will be added this first day of another week—the resurrection joy of those who are raised with the Lord Jesus, to which the presence of the Holy Ghost answers meanwhile.

Consequently, we find that the feast of tabernacles took place after the increase of the earth had been gathered in, and, as we learn elsewhere, not only after the harvest but after the vintage also; that is, after separation by judgment and the final execution of judgment on the earth, when heavenly and earthly saints should be all gathered in. Israel would rejoice seven days before Jehovah.

The passover has had its antitype, Pentecost its also; but this day of joy is yet awaiting Him who is to be the centre and spring of it all, the Lord Jesus, who will rejoice in the great congregation, and whose praise will begin with Jehovah in the great assembly. (Ps. xxii.) He had already done it in the midst of the assembly of His brethren; but now the whole race of Jacob is called to glorify Him, and all the ends of the world shall remember themselves.

The expression, *solemn assembly*, is not found applied to any of the feasts but this, except to the seventh day of the passover (Deut. xvi.), as it seems to me somewhat in the same sense. The feast of tabernacles could not be kept in the wilderness. In order to observe it, the people were to be in possession of the land, as is plain. It is also to be observed, that it never was kept according

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to the prescriptions of the law from Joshua till Nehemiah. (Neh. viii. 17.) Israel had forgotten that they had been strangers in the wilderness. Joy, without the remembrance of this, tends to ruin; the very enjoyment of the blessing leads to it.

It will be remarked that, properly speaking, all the feasts are types of what is done on earth and in connection with Israel, unless we except the eighth day of tabernacles. The church period as such is the lapse of time from Pentecost to the tenth month. We may, and of course do, get the benefit of, at any rate, the two first; but historically the type refers to Israel.

The remaining chapters of this book appear to me to have a special bearing. The Spirit of God has presented, in chapter xxiii., the history of the ways of God towards His people upon earth from beginning to end, from Christ to the millennial rest.

Chapter xxiv. presents first the internal work, so to speak, which related to priesthood alone on the one hand, and the public sin of an apostate on the other—the fruit of the alliance with an Egyptian who blasphemed Jehovah. Through the care of priesthood (whatever might be God's public ways, and the state of Israel) the gracious light of the Spirit would be maintained, and that particularly from the evening until the morning —the time during which darkness brooded over Israel.

Moreover, the incense which was on the memorial of the bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, was burned as a sweet smell to Jehovah, and the priests identified themselves with the tribes—a continual signification of feeding thus employed.

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Thus priesthood maintained the light with respect to Israel, when all was darkness in the midst of them, and the memorial of Israel was in sweet savour before God, the priesthood identifying itself with them; although the people were in the eyes of man as lost, they exist through the priesthood of Jesus on high, as a memorial before God. There is a certain sense in which the church participates in this, as is explained doctrinally in Romans xi. In Isaiah liv. we see that believers are reckoned to Jerusalem, in grace, though she were a widow.

Externally the judgment of cutting off and death without mercy is executed against him that had cursed.

Chapter xxv. The land itself is held for Jehovah, as being His; it must enjoy God's rest; and moreover he who had lost his inheritance therein should find it again, according to the counsels of God, at the appointed time. The trumpet of the jubilee would sound and God would re-establish each one in his possession, according to His (God's) rights, for the land was His. Their persons also were to be free then, for the children of Israel were God's servants. It was not so with those not belonging to God's people. And although Israel have sold themselves to the stranger, He who made Himself nigh of kin has redeemed them from his hands. The day of jubilee will free the people, whatever may be the power of those who hold them captives.

Chapter xxvi. We have a touching picture of the ways of God in patience and in chastisement, if Israel walked contrary to Him. When they acknowledged

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their fault, then He would remember the covenant made with their fathers, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was a covenant made without condition, and with the land. Then He would remember the covenant made with their ancestors, under His name of Jehovah, when they came out of Egypt.* God will take these two titles on their restoration: Almighty, the name of His relationship with the fathers; and Jehovah, the name of His relationship with the people, viewed as taken to Himself at their coming out of Egypt.

The last chapter (xxvii.) treats of the rights and the appointments of God in all that relates to things which are devoted to Him through the medium of priesthood. This necessarily finds its place in that which treats of priesthood; but it has, I doubt not, a much wider meaning. The subject treated is that of him who devoted himself to God, and that of the lands belonging to him—of the rights of Israel, whose possession it was not, and of their selling it to others.

As to Christ, He offered Himself without spot to God; He was valued at a low price. Israel by right belonged to Jehovah. As Emmanuel's land, Israel only enjoyed the land without being proprietors; he could only pledge it till jubilee. It shall return to its possessor as Emmanuel's land. Israel (looked at as the possessor of the gift of God) not having redeemed it when sold to the stranger, when the jubilee comes the land will be absolutely the Lord's; the priest

* I take this to be the covenant of Exodus vi., not the law.

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will possess it. In Zechariah xi. Christ is thus valued, "whom they of the children of Israel did value."

I only point out the principle presented in the chapter, without pretending to enter into all the details of application which may suggest themselves. The principle is the important thing to enable one to understand the purpose of God; in the case of any vow, whether it be redeemed or not; or of land, whether it shall return in the day of jubilee, when God shall take possession again of His rights in the land of Israel, and cause to enter those whose right it is.

It is to be observed also, that the judgment is according to the judgment of the priest. But although this be attributed to the priest, it is to the king in Jeshurun (the upright) that the appreciation is entrusted. This shews plainly who is to do it, and under what character, though being according to the discernment, the grace, and the rights of priesthood. It is Christ as Priest, but Christ as King in Israel, who will order all that.

XXVII.

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NUMBERS.

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

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

The first thing to be noticed is, that God numbers His people exactly, and arranges them, once thus recognized, around His tabernacle: sweet thought, to be thus recognized and placed around God Himself!

Three tribes on each side of the court kept the tabernacle of Jehovah. Levi alone was excepted, in order to

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be consecrated to the service of God: therefore the tribe of Levi encamped according to their families directly round the court. Moses, Aaron, and the priests were placed opposite the entrance whereby God was approached. The least things in the word deserve to be noticed. Psalm lxxx. is entirely opened by the position of the tribes. The spirit of the psalmist asks, in the last days of the desolation of Israel, for God to lead them and to manifest His power as He did when He led them through the wilderness; he asks for the power of His presence on the ark of testimony, as God manifested it when it was said, at the moment when Israel set forward, "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered." Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were the three tribes nearest the ark in the camp of Israel; that is why it is said, in verse 2 of the Psalm, "before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh."

In the setting forward of the camp, the order given was that the tabernacle, surrounded by the Levites, should be in the midst of the tribes, as it was when the camp was at rest. (Chap. ii. 17.)

In chapter x. we shall find that another arrangement took place as a matter of fact: of this in its place.

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

The Levites were first-fruits offered to God, for they were instead of the first-born in whom God had taken

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Israel to Himself, when He smote the first-born of the Egyptians.

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

But, besides, the Levites were entirely given to Aaron the high priest; for the service of the church or of its members is wholly dependent on Christ in the presence of God, and has no other object but that which concerns Him, and that which is connected with and flows from the place and service which He Himself renders to God in the true tabernacle. The service of the saints has no value (on the contrary, it is sin), except as it is united to the priesthood (that is to Christ on high, in the presence of God for us, with whom we, indeed, are also associated in this nearness, priests by grace); and hence all is accomplished in direct reference to Him in that heavenly character.

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

* I speak always of the church here in its individual members.

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vice; but, in the exercise of this capacity and of this gift, we are the servants of Christ.

Thus, as regards our service, we have these three principles: 1, we are redeemed, delivered from the judgments, under which are the enemies of God, being taken from the midst of those enemies; 2, as a consequence of this first fact, we belong absolutely to God; bought with a price, we are no longer our own, but God's, to glorify Him in our bodies which are His; 3, we are entirely given to Christ, who is the Head of the house of God, the Priest for the service of His tabernacle. Blessed bondage, happy self-renunciation, true deliverance from a world of sin! Service is rendered under the dependence of Christ and in the communion of the Lord: it is linked to the priesthood.

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

We may remark here, that with regard to that which is most elevated in the calling of the church, all her members are one. The priests, the high priest excepted, accomplished all equally, or together, the service of the offerings to God. And so it is with the church; all its members equally draw near unto God, and are in the

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same relationship with Him. (A priest acting for another Israelite who brought an offering, or who had sinned, represented rather Christ Himself.)

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

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

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

After the instructions intended to teach us how it is given to us to draw near God, the connection between

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the manifestations of God in Christ and our walk here below are, for us, what is most essential.

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

In the wilderness, they put on certain characters, one of them especially; but others also, in certain cases. I consider them, therefore, as the manifestation of certain relationships existing between the walk of the Christian and various manifestations of God in Christ.*

The ark of the covenant represented the throne of God in heaven, the holiness and the justice which are there manifested in God. It was first of all covered

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

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with the veil of the humanity of Christ, such as He was here below in His person; that is, that divine holiness and righteousness have clothed themselves in humanity. Over this were the badgers' skins.

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

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

After the ark comes the table of shewbread; it was a figure of Christ in the divine perfection of justice and holiness, according to the power of the Eternal Spirit, in connection with the perfection of human administration, which manifests itself in the number twelve and in the loaves, of which the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles were the expression. Here the heavenly covering was placed immediately upon the golden table; the part properly divine put on the heavenly character. Upon this covering were put the utensils and the loaves, which were covered over with a second covering of scar-

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let (that is, as it appears to me, human glory and splendour).* This glory and this splendour were of God, but they were human. Over all were the badgers' skins to preserve the whole from evil. This external protection is always needful for anyone, save the person of Christ. Christ was assuredly sheltered from evil; but it was in an internal and deeper manner. That which was heavenly was seen in Him at the first glance by those who had eyes to see: "the second man is the Lord from heaven."

As regards us, we have within ourselves that which is heavenly; but we must keep it carefully, with a vigilance most decided, and commensurate with the evil we are passing through, and from which it is of consequence we should keep ourselves. Therefore Christ, in His relationship with the government of the world in Israel in the age to come, will put on, in principle, that which is here represented by the badgers' skins, which, in the case of the ark, were inside. There will be in Him the divine character, then the heavenly, then the perfection of human government covered over with the brightness of the glory. In His passage in the wilderness, all this was guarded by a power which, in the wisdom of God, repelled all evil. In the manifestation of the kingdom

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

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it will be in the judicial exercise of power. But here we treat of the wilderness. The principle is the same, the repelling of evil, of all injury to the holy thing entrusted to be guarded; only one is moral and spiritual power, the other judicial. (See Ps. ci.)

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

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

With regard to the brazen altar it was different. Its covering was a purple cloth, the royal colour. If we suffer, we shall reign. There is a connection between the cross and the crown upon the earth and in heaven. Thus was it with Christ, the King of the Jews, according to the superscription written on the cross; and the very throne of God was the answer to His sufferings, inasmuch as He was the burnt-offering, offered according to the power of the eternal Spirit acting in man, according to the exigency of the divine majesty.* But what

* The comparison of Psalms xix., xx., xxi., xxii. is, under this point of view, most interesting. Psalm xix. contains testimonies of the creation and the law; Psalm xx. presents Messiah suffering,

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was thus crowned was perfection itself; that which was being accomplished in man, according to the energy of the eternal Spirit, was also divine; so that the Lord could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again."

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

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

but externally, so that man can take an interest in Him; Psalm xxi. Messiah exalted, and, as a consequence, vengeance striking His enemies who had rejected Him; Psalm xxii. His sufferings as forsaken by God Himself. This is the expression of Christ alone, whilst in Psalms xx., xxi. the Jewish remnant were speaking of His outward sufferings. There is no vengeance in connection with those sufferings consequent on His being forsaken of God, for it was expiation; there is nothing but blessing, which the mouth of the Saviour announces, and to which He Himself responded by praising in the midst of His saints. This blessing will extend to the ends of the earth during the millennium.

* The laver is not among the things to which these commands

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

Every defilement was to be purged out.

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

Then comes the question of jealousy. If the faithfulness of Israel, the church, or an individual, to God or to Christ, be questioned, there must be the trial of it. It seems to me that the dust of the tabernacle was the power of death in God's presence, fatal to the natural

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

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man, but precious, as the death of sin, for him who has life. The water is the power of the Holy Ghost acting by the word on the *conscience*.

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

In the offering without either oil or frankincense, the woman is set before God, according to the judgment which God has borne against sin, in His holiness and majesty, when Christ was made sin for us. Sin which is confessed has never that effect; for the conscience is

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purified from it by Christ. The unfaithfulness here spoken of is that of the heart of Israel—of the church to Christ. All these things apply, not to the acceptance of the believer, or of the church as to righteousness—that is treated of where drawing near to God is in question—but to the judgment of our ways in the wilderness journey, inasmuch as God is in our midst.

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

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

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

As to this too, however, He must take His separate and Nazarite character, and, true as His affection was for *His disciples*, even in that human sphere where He, who saw through weakness, delighted in the true "excellent *of the earth*," the poor of the flock that waited on Him, yet He must be separated from this joy too. "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine," says the Lord, "until that day when I shall drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." He separated Himself indeed from that intercourse which, miserable as even His own were, His love had led Him to desire to have with them. He had said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." These natural affections were already denied, because God's consecration was upon His head. "What have I to do with thee?" had already expressed this to His mother. It is not that He had not the most tender affection for her;

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but now He was separated from everything to be God's.*

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

Man has his place as the representative and the glory of God, and in that place he is encompassed by a multitude of affections, joys, and rights, which have their centre in himself. He can give up this place for the special service of God, seeing that sin has entered into all these things, which, far from being bad in themselves, are, on the contrary, good in their proper place. This Christ has done. Having made Himself a Nazarite, He did not take His place as a man, His rights as Son of man; but, for the glory of God, He made Himself completely

* The difference of these two phases of the Nazarite character of Christ in His life and in His death is not so great as might appear. He was ever separated from human joy as from all evil—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, as passing in holy love though a world of sinners—His love driven back, and thus He straitened and pent up: His atonement opened its sluices. He is now, in fact, outwardly made separate from sinners. The early rejection of His mother's claim in John has its natural place in John, because in that Gospel He stands from the beginning apart in His own person, and the Jews as a rejected people.

† 1 Corinthians xi. 10.

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subject; He submitted to all that that glory required. He identified Himself with the godly remnant of the sinful people whom He had loved, and became a stranger to His mother's children. He did nothing that was not prescribed to Him; He lived by the word that proceeded out of the mouth of God; He separated Himself from all the links of human life to devote Himself to the glory, the service of God, and obedience to Him. If He found, in the love of His own, any consolation, which can only have been very small and poor, He had to give up this also, and with regard to this, as to everything else, become, in His death, a complete Nazarite, alone in His separation to God. The church should have followed Him; but alas! she has taken strong drink; she has eaten and drunk with the drunken, and has begun to smite the servants of the house.

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

If we have devoted ourselves to the Lord in a way which is pleasing in His sight, enjoyment follows this devotedness in the measure of the testimony which is rendered to Him. God is with His servant according to His call; but it is a secret between His servant and Himself, though the external effects are seen by others. If we have failed in this separateness, we must begin all afresh: divine influence and power in the work are lost.

VI.

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There may be nothing amiss in other respects; we may arise to shake ourselves, like Samson, but we have lost our strength without being aware of it. God is no longer with us. The case of Samson is an extreme but a solemn one; for it may be that our strength has placed us in the presence of evil, and then, if God be with us, His magnificent glory manifests itself; but if not with us, the enemy has the sad opportunity of glorying over one long known as a champion for God, and apparently over God Himself. In this second alternative the inward secret, the true strength of separation unto God, was lost.

Let us beware, in ordinary things, of the first step that would separate us from inward holiness. If grace has called us to separation for an extraordinary service in anything whatever, let us keep ourselves from any lack of obedience to the word of the cross, whereby we are crucified to the world, sin, and the law.*

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

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

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

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

Such is the life of God here below. That which He

* Not of course that there was any *evil* nature in Him to deny as there is in us, but in will and nature where there was no evil; as "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" which I take

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

Lastly, when the Nazarite vow was fulfilled, all the sacrifices were offered, and the hair of the head of his separation was burnt in the fire which consumed the sacrifice of the peace-offerings: a type of the full communion which is the result of the sacrifice of Christ. When, in the time fixed by God, the sacrifice of Christ shall have obtained, in its effects, its full and entire efficacy, the energizing power of separation will merge in the communion which will be the happy consequence of this sacrifice. We are thankful to know that the power of the Holy Spirit, now spent, in a great measure, in checking the lusts of the flesh, will then be wholly a power of joy in God, and of communion with all that will surround us.

Let us now speak of the ways of God when the

only as an example. On the cross when all was finished, He carefully owned her. Honey could not be in a sacrifice any more than leaven.

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

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

VI.

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Here ends this part of the book. The camp, arranged according to God's order, is placed under His blessing. Thereupon the princes of the people offer a free-will offering to Jehovah for the dedication of the altar according to the number of the tribes. Then we have the form of the communications of Jehovah with Moses to instruct him in the way. We see that it is in the tabernacle from between the cherubim.

Chapter viii. speaks of the candlestick.* The lamps were to give light to it, and cause its beauty to be seen, as well as to diffuse their light around and before it. This is the case when that which is the vessel of the Holy Spirit shines with the light of God. Whether it be Israel or the church, it throws light before it. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is because the profession of the Christian was clear and unequivocal that men, seeing his good works, knew to whom to attribute them.

We have next the purification of the Levites and their consecration to the service of Jehovah. This prefigures the consecration of the church to God for service. The Levites were washed, then shorn like the lepers. After that the whole people laid their hands upon them, and they laid theirs upon the sacrifices. In the offerings which accompanied their consecration there was no peace-offering, because it was a question of service and not of communion; but the sacrifices which

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

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represented the efficacy of the atonement, and the devotedness unto death of the Lord Jesus, were offered.

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

We find here again, what we have already seen, that the Levites were given to Aaron and his sons, as the church is given to Christ, the true Priest and Son over the house of God, to be used in the service of the house. The passover, the memorial of redemption, and in consequence the symbol of the unity* of the people of God, as an assembly redeemed by Him, is obligatory during the journey through the wilderness.† Only God makes a provision, in grace and forbearance, for those

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

† Yet those who had *only* wilderness character were not in a condition to keep it. None from there were circumcised till they came to Gilgal across the Jordan.

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who were not able to keep it according to *His* will, to whom it had reference.

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

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

All was thus done according to communion with God in His sanctuary. After the people were brought into the land, if war arose, they sounded an alarm: they pro-

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claimed the testimony of God, without being afraid, and God remembered His people and interfered. So with us, we need never fear the attack of the enemy; instead of being frightened, let us give a faithful testimony, in answer to which God has pledged Himself to come in in power. Let us not fear.

The trumpets were also used in the solemn feasts; for the testimony and the memorial of God constitute the joy of His gathered people.

At length the people are called to take the first stage of their journey. The order followed in the march differs from that which had been prescribed, in this, that the tabernacle, with its curtains, went after the first three tribes, that it might be set up to receive the ark, which followed the second division. But besides God appears in a remarkable manner in grace, outside the whole order He had prescribed; for it is the ark itself which precedes the whole camp. Moses had asked a *child* of the wilderness to be to them instead of eyes; but what man does not care to do, God takes upon Himself. *He comes* out of the place which He had taken in the midst of the tribes, to be taken care of, so to speak, and honoured there, and makes Himself, in some sort, their servant, seeking a place where they might rest in this unknown way.

It was not in Canaan, but a place in the wilderness, where the Lord went a three days' journey to seek a rest for them. A beautiful picture of the tender and precious grace of Him who, if He makes us pass through the wilderness for our good, does not fail to be there with us, and who takes care, in putting out His sheep, to go

before them, and to solace them with His love. Mighty leader of His people by the way, He is their joy and their glory when He comes to rest in their midst!

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

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

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

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

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

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

After that (for what form will not rebellion assume?)

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

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

Aaron resumes his place of intercessor, and speaks humbly to Moses (a figure, I think, of the humiliation of Israel, grounded on the value of the intercession of Christ, identifying Himself with the position of the people). God's answer is, that Miriam should be humbled and chastened, shut out, for a time, from intercourse with Him, then restored into favour again. The people wait for her restoration. Let us remember that the Lord here recalls this fact, that the most glorious position for Moses was that when he was separated from the people —when he pitched his tent without the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation or meeting. The people had but too much forgotten this. When the

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church also, in the thought of making themselves spiritual, take advantage of their glory and position as prophets and priests (characters which do indeed belong to them), to disown the rights of Christ, as king in Jeshurun, having authority over the house of God, there is room for considering whether they are not guilty of the rebellion here spoken of. For my part, I believe they are.

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

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

* See Deuteronomy i. 20—23.

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

How often is this the case, that the difficulties which draw out the unbelief of the heart lead to speak evil of the position to which we have been divinely called, and of which once we had tasted the blessedness! All flowed from forgetfulness of God. Was He a grasshopper, in comparison with the sons of Anak? What matter if walls were high if they fell down at the blowing of a ram's horn? But now God Himself interferes. They will be dealt with according to their faith; they shall perish in the wilderness, according to their wish. The faithful ones and the children will alone be brought into the land; but not without undergoing, in their march, the consequences of the unbelief of the mass. However, other hopes and other consolations will be their portion.

The effect of the intercession of Moses is to obtain from God that the people should be spared; but this is His declaration—He will be glorified in judgment over a rebellious people who despise the promises, and *the earth shall thus be filled with His glory.* Moses here appeals to the revelation of the name of Jehovah, on

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which footing He governs the people, and not to the promises made to the fathers; and the answer he receives is in keeping with that name. Caleb prefigures the faithful remnant. Joshua is not named (ver. 24), for he represents Christ introducing the people into the land of promise.

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

After all this unbelief of the people, when God had declared that the earth should be filled with His glory, by the cutting off of the rebellious congregation, and when one might have supposed they had forfeited the land for ever, it is perfectly beautiful, in chapter xv., to see the Lord returning into the perfect rest of His foreordained counsels, and of His immutable being, and giving instructions relative to the time when the people shall have entered the land He has given them. It speaks of the offerings of righteousness they are invited to bring to Him of their free-will, and of the wine of joy which was to accompany these offerings; and as this is grace, the love of God reaches out beyond Israel, and, bringing the stranger near to His people, He makes one law for both. The first-fruits belong to Him. The sins

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of ignorance are forgiven by means of the sacrifice required by the perfectness of the ways of God. The sin committed presumptuously alone brings destruction. God orders them to put upon the fringe of the borders of their garments a ribband of blue, that they may remember His commandments, and be kept from that which would render them profane. The heavenly principle must enter into the minutest details of life, even into those that are nearest to the earth, if we wish to escape the serious evils which bring down the judgment of God. The introduction of the stranger in this chapter is of the highest interest, as a testimony of grace. But we have not, as yet, seen the final apostasy which brings down the judgment at the very moment when it is accomplished.

Chapter xvi. contains the open rebellion against Moses of Dathan and Abiram, but especially the pretension of the ministry in Israel to arrogate priesthood to itself. Some of the chiefs of the people were indeed parties in this rebellion, and for a moment all the people, but too well prepared, were led away by the ambition of a man who discharged the functions of the ministry. The New Testament calls it "the gainsaying of Core;" he is the first addressed by Moses; and the main point of the sin, as Moses insists on it, was this taking too much upon them by the sons of Levi. He drew others in by flattering them, but to the assumption of official priesthood. Dathan and Abiram's was a side question of Moses's authority, of the word of God by him, and the judgment was a thing apart. But this claim of priesthood by the ministry is identified with

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open rebellion against God in the authority of His word as borne by Moses. It is not, however, the corruption of ministry in teaching error itself, as the distinction made by Jude shews us.

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

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

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

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

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As to Core, Moses announces that God will shew who is holy and whom He has chosen. Core and the two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly are consumed; Dathan, Abiram, and theirs swallowed up. But the spirit of rebellion had laid hold of the whole assembly. Now the priesthood and the intercession of Aaron are made evident. Aaron, with a censer, stands between the dead and the living, and the plague is stayed.

We shall see the importance of this last remark in what follows, and what is the principle on which alone, considering sins and the flesh, God can bring His people through the wilderness. There that priesthood is needed which Core had despised; but it is by priesthood alone that man can get through the wilderness with God.* Moses, in replying to Core, declares that God will shew whom He had chosen for this end; and this He soon does in fact. Moses, vexed at the contempt and the injustice of Dathan and Abiram, appeals to the justice and the judgment of God. God intervenes by a judgment of pure destruction. But the glory and the house of God are at stake, when the question is, By whom is He to be approached? Now, authority is insufficient to conduct such as we are through the wilderness. The

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

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flesh is rebellious, and the last resource of authority is destruction. But this does not lead a people to a good end for the glory of God, though He is therein glorified in righteousness.

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

From chapter xvii. to xx. this subject is set forth with the circumstances relative to it. First, the authority of Aaron is established by signs shewn by the power of God, in his rod, put with the others near God—the source of all authority. The power of life and blessing displays itself with a rapidity which makes manifest the presence of God. The buds, the flowers, and the fruit grow on dry wood. Priesthood, living and victorious over death, through divine efficacy,* must lead the people; God's authority is entrusted to it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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is only eaten in the character and the spirit of a priest.

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

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

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

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

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in eating of it as a priest, is a very holy thing, a privilege enjoyed in a very holy place; everything is specially holiness here.

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

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

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

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

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

Then, if anybody contracted defilement, though it were merely through neglect, in whatever way it might be, God took account of the defilement. To cleanse the defiled person, they took some running water, into which they put the ashes of the heifer, and the man was sprinkled on the third and on the seventh days; then he was clean: signifying that the Spirit of God, without applying anew the blood to the soul, takes the sufferings of Christ (the proof that sin and all that is of the natural man and of the world have been burned in His expiatory death), and applies them to it.

It is the proof, the intimate conviction, that nothing is nor can be imputed. It was in this respect wholly done away in the sacrifice, whose ashes (the witness that it was consumed) are now applied. But it produces

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upon the heart the deeply painful conviction that it has got defiled, notwithstanding redemption, and by the sins for which Christ has suffered in accomplishing it. We have found our will and pleasure, if only for a moment, in that—in what was the cause of His pain, and this in the face of His sufferings for sin, but, alas! in forgetfulness of them—even for that sin the motions of which we yield to so lightly now: a feeling much deeper than that of having sins imputed. For it is in reality the new man, in his best feelings, who judges by the Spirit and according to God, and who takes knowledge of the sufferings of Christ and of sin, as seen in Him on the cross.

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

We may remark that, as it is merely the needed purifying for the way, nothing else is noticed; no sacrifices, as in the case of the leper. There it was drawing nigh to God, according to the value of Christ's work, when cleansed from sin. Here it is the practical restoration of the soul inwardly. There is no sprinkling with blood: the purifying is by water, Christ's death being fully

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brought in in its power by the Holy Ghost. The details shew the exactness of God, as to these defilements, though He cleanses us from them. They shew also that anyone who has to do with the sin of another, though it be in the way of duty to cleanse it, is defiled; not as the guilty person, it is true, but we cannot touch sin without being defiled. The value of grace and of priesthood is also made evident.

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

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

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

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

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comparison with His grace! The grace of priesthood can alone bring such a people as we are through the wilderness.

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

The question is not exactly to conduct the people with patience through the wilderness, where the flesh manifests itself; but there are enemies and difficulties to be met; for there are difficulties distinct from the conduct and the patience of life. The Israelites fight with the Canaanites in the south, though they have not got into the land. But the king of the Canaanites has been in-

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formed of their coming by the presence of the spies. This was another fruit of the want of boldness of faith which had caused them to be sent. How little we gain by the prudence of unbelief! It gives occasion to the power and attacks of the enemy.

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

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

Next, Israel goes forward, but they are not yet in the land. God relieves and refreshes them of His own free

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grace, without their murmuring. He gathers the people. Israel celebrates anew, close by the land, the wells which are found in the wilderness. They can now say themselves, "Spring up, O well;" no more rock to smite, no more murmurings near the land. Life at the end of their course is no longer the question; it is salvation from the deadly wound of the serpent. They are healed; they walk and drink with joy and songs of praise. They dug—for their activity displayed itself in the presence of the grace of God—and the water sprang up in the wilderness.

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

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

Balak sends for Balaam. The grand question in this touching scene is this, "Can Satan succeed in cursing the people of God, so as to prevent their entrance into

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the land of promise?"* It is not merely a question of redemption and of the joy of redemption at the beginning of their course, but in the end, when all their unfaithfulness has been manifested—their unfaithfulness even after the Lord has brought them to Himself. Can Satan succeed then? No.

When Moses, in those same plains, has to say, with regard to their conduct towards God, "You have been a perverse and rebellious people from that day that I knew you," (and indeed, they had been excessively froward, a most stiff-necked people. Do we not know this?) well, God says by the mouth of Balaam, the involuntary witness of the truth, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." What a testimony! What wonderful grace!

* It is of the highest interest to see the special character of this prophecy.

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

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What perfection in the ways of God! God sees aright; He makes no mistakes. He speaks the truth according to the perfectness of His infinite intelligence; and it is because it is infinite, that He can see no iniquity in the redeemed people. How could He see any in those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb? Nor is it His mind to see it.

In His dealings with the people He will see everything, take knowledge of everything; but with the accuser it is a question of righteousness. God only sees this, that, according to the counsels of His grace, He has given a ransom; the sins of His people have been atoned for. He could not in justice see those sins. The mouth of the accuser is therefore obliged to confess that there are none, and that there is no power of the enemy against Jacob.

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

Balaam was a sad character. Forced to see from afar

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

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

Consequently, when there is a renewal of the temptation, he says that he cannot transgress the commandment of Jehovah his God: he puts on piety, and, in reality, he was not entirely without sincerity, for God held him close, and, indeed, allowed all this. But, at the same time, Balaam induces the messengers of Balak to tarry and see what God would say further. What did he

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want to know more about an invitation to curse that people who, God had told him, were blessed? He had no sympathy whatever with the thoughts of the heart of God, none with Himself; he was governed by the fear of consequences. Otherwise, he would have been so happy in the blessing of the people, that he would have shuddered at the idea of cursing what God had blessed. God, however, will use him, to give a glorious testimony on behalf of His people, whilst, at the same time, condemning the crooked ways of the prophet, for they were indeed crooked. He shews him his perverseness, his folly, to be more stupid than the ass he was riding; but, at the same time, He makes him go on his way.

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

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

The first prophecy announces the separation of the people from the world. "*The people shall dwell alone*,"

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separated unto God, a people not reckoned among the nations.

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

Balaam, seeing at last that God was bent upon blessing, yields to the power of God, goes no longer to the meeting of enchantments, and the Spirit of God comes upon him. The justification of the people being now declared, the Spirit of God can bear testimony to them, instead of confining His testimony to the thoughts and intentions of God. Balaam sees them from above; seeing the vision of the Almighty, he sees the people according to the thoughts of the Spirit of God, as seen in the mind of God from above. The eyes of the prophet are open. And remark, here, that it is neither the anticipation of Canaan, nor Israel in their permanent habitations: Balaam turns his face *towards the wilderness* and sees Israel abiding in their tents. There the Spirit sees them, and declares the beauty and the order of the people in the eyes of God. The water of the refreshing of God was also always with them there; they were as trees that Jehovah had planted, therefore will they be great amongst the nations, a source of power and joy. They drink from the sources of God, and pour out from them abundantly for others. God had brought them out of

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Egypt, they were the work of God, and the power of God was to go with them against their enemies.

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

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

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

It is very important for us to see sometimes the church from above, in the wilderness, but in the beauty of the thoughts of God, a pearl without price. In the midst of the camp below, in the desert, what murmurings, complainings; how much indifference, what carnal motives, would have been witnessed and heard! From above, for him who has the vision of God, who has his eyes open, everything is beautiful. "I stand in doubt

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of you," says the apostle; and, immediately after, "I have confidence in you, *through the Lord.*" We must get up to Him, and we shall have His thoughts of grace, who sees the beauty of His people, of His assembly, through everything else, for she is beautiful. But for this one would be either entirely discouraged or satisfied with evil. This vision of God removes these two thoughts at once.

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

A few words more on the position of Balaam.

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

At last, the unhappy Balaam, whose heart was in the

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

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

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

In chapters xxviii. and xxix. we have the worship of the people, the sacrifices which are the meat of God. We

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shall dwell a little on these chapters. They are not the ways of God, and the gathering together the people to Himself, as in chapter xxiii. of Leviticus, but the offerings themselves as offered to God and especially those of sweet savour, made by fire, except that which was purely accessory.

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

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

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

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

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month, and the decreasing number of the feast of tabernacles.

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

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

If the worship of the people was in connection with the resurrection of Christ (chap. xxviii. 17), it was the same thing; so in the case of the work of the Spirit in gathering together. (Ver. 26.) It was the exercise of power on the part of God which made an opportunity for worship; the answer on the part of the people was the same.

The first day of the seventh month had reference to the recall of Israel, which was a speciality, the renewal, according to the value of Christ's work, of God's connection with the earth, and especially with Israel. Hence besides the regular recognition of grace on the first of the month, an additional bullock, ram, and seven lambs were offered. The general testimony or answer to Christ's work was offered but a special and partial one besides, for the earthly restoration of Israel. So on the day of atonement, when Israel, seeing the

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Lord, will be fully restored in grace. The general and complete testimony—when the resurrection of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, which allowed the Gentiles also to come in and thus extended to the perfect testimony of the relations between God and man, it produced, as thus witnessed in the offerings, an answer from below which fully recognized the good which God had done, and the relations established thereupon, in being to Him according to the sweet savour of Christ, either in consecration or in the intelligent estimate of the offering of Christ. The unction of the Spirit and joy accompanied it. And the offering took place all the seven days of the feast, a testimony to its completeness.

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

It is evident that the same principle applies to the *tenth* day of the seventh month. It is the application of the atonement of Christ to Israel on earth. There was *the* bullock added. The principle of consecration and the intrinsic value of the sacrifice remained the same.

The feast of tabernacles introduced another order of ideas, at least a new development of those ideas; it is the coming dispensation. There is no perfection in that which is offered joyfully of one's own free will to God; but that is nearly realized — thirteen bullocks are *offered*. The millennium will bring upon earth a joy of worship and thanksgiving, which (Satan being bound,

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and the blessing of the reign of Christ being spread everywhere) will be, externally at least, almost perfect.

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

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

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

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

Chapter xxx. is the case of the vows of women, which has reference also to the fate of Israel who have indeed

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taken these vows upon themselves, in the hearing of God, who has not disannulled them in His government here below; and Israel have continued responsible to the vow wherewith they have bound themselves, and of which, on the other hand, the precious Saviour has been obliged to take the burden upon Himself.

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

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

How often we must act the part of enemies with the world, because we have sought to have to do with them as friends, and they were a snare to our souls! However, God gives a complete victory as soon as we treat them as foes: only, all that seduced must be utterly destroyed. There must be nothing spared, no concession.

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

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

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

However, the tribes engaging to go equally forward until the land were conquered, he grants their request and settles them in the land, with the half-tribe of Manasseh. Nevertheless, the history of the holy book shews us that these tribes were the first to suffer, and to

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fall into the hands of the Gentiles. "Do you not know," says Ahab, "that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and the Syrians possess it?" Happy they who patiently wait for the blessings of God, till they have gone over Jordan, and who, in the meanwhile, take patience for their portion, rather than the blessings which are on this side! Though they are the gifts of the providence of God, they are less secure, and even spiritual blessings if the assembly take this world as the seat of them, though real, yet deceive the hopes of the saints. There are no frontiers like Jordan, appointed by God as such in His counsels of grace.

If God numbers His people name by name, He shews, at the same time, His government and His faithfulness; for, though He had kept them, as a people, yet there were none of the first numbering left, save Caleb and Joshua. He remembers, also, all their long journey through the wilderness; each stage is before His eyes and in His memory; and now He lays down, in principle, the possession of the land by the people, and the total destruction of the inhabitants, who were to be entirely driven away and not abide in the midst of Israel: else those who were left would be a torment for the people, and God also would do unto Israel, as He had done to those nations.

It is a dangerous charity, then, that which spares the enemies of God, or rather which spares itself, through unbelief, in its conflicts with them, and which is soon led to form with them connections that bring the judgment which those enemies have inherited, and themselves also deserved.

XXXII.

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Finally, God takes care of His people in all respects; He marks the limits of the country they were to enjoy. He settles the taking possession, the portion of His servants, the Levites, who were not to have any inheritance.

Six of their cities were to be refuges for those who had unwilfully committed murder; a precious type of God's dealings with Israel, who, in their ignorance, killed the Christ. In this sense, God judges them to be innocent. They are guilty of blood which they could not bear; but guilty in their ignorance, like Saul himself, who is a striking figure, as one born out of due time (ἔκτρωμα, 1 Cor. xv. 8), of this same position. Such a murderer, however, remains out of his possession until the death of the priest living in those days.

And so it will be with regard to Israel. As long as Christ retains His actual priesthood above, Israel will remain out of their possession, but under the safe keeping of God. The servants of God at least, who have no inheritance, serve as a refuge to them, and understand their position, and recognize them as being under the keeping of God. When this priesthood above, such as it now is, ends, Israel will return into their possession. If they did before, it would be to pass over the blood of Christ, as if the shedding of it were no matter, and the land would be defiled thereby. Now, the actual position of Christ is always a testimony of this rejection, and of His death in the midst of the people.

God maintains the inheritance, however, as He has appointed it. (Chap. xxxvi.)

This last part, then, of the book presents, not the

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passage itself through the desert, but the relationship between that position and the possession of the promises and of the rest which follows. It is in the plains of Moab that Moses bore testimony, and a true testimony, to the perverseness of the people; but where God justified them, shewing His counsels of grace, in taking their side against the enemy, without even their knowledge, and pursued all the designs of His grace and of His determinate purpose for the complete establishment of His people in the land He had promised them. Blessed be His name! Happy are we in being allowed to study His ways!

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DEUTERONOMY.

We now come to the Book of Deuteronomy, a book full of interest in its moral warnings as to testimony, but presenting fewer subjects for interpretation and exegesis than those, the summary of which we have hitherto sought to give.

This book takes up Israel just on the borders of Canaan, and insists upon the faithful maintenance of their relationship with God, and on obedience to His commandments, as the only ground on which Israel can enter and continue therein, adding warnings as to the consequence of failure in obedience. It takes in the main the ground of their historical state (not of typical forms, presenting the thoughts of God, as the books we have just been considering do).*

The book may be divided into three parts. The first eleven chapters insist upon obedience, presenting various motives to lead the people to it. Then come, as far as the end of the twenty-ninth, divers commandments; to which are added, by way of sanction, the consequences of obedience and the curse upon disobedience. From

* After the earlier chapters of Exodus, there is very little of which the object is historical in the previous books of Moses. And even in Genesis and the beginning of Exodus principles and types are the most important aspect of what is related. As to the history of Israel, the apostle tells us this expressly in 1 Corinthians x. 11.

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the thirtieth to the end we have things to come, the blessing of the people, and the death of Moses.

Of the first eleven chapters, the first four form rather a distinct part.

That which strikes one in the first chapters is, the pains that Jehovah takes to present all possible motives to that poor people to lead them to obedience, in order that they may be blessed. These things, which ought at least to have touched the heart, served, alas! only to prove its hardness, and to shew that, if man is to be blessed, God must give him a new heart, as it is written in the chapter which closes the second part of His exhortations to obedience: "Yet Jehovah hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." (Chap. xxix. 4.)

Deuteronomy is, then, of all the books of Moses, that which is the most essentially conditional—that is to say, the first two divisions which I have pointed out.

Chapter xxix., which is the last of the second division, ends, consequently, by saying, "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

The chapters which follow throw this into greater prominence, by unfolding the secret things which were to happen after the people had completely failed in the fulfilment of the law, as chapter xxx., and, still more strikingly, chapter xxxii., by speaking of righteousness by faith. For the discussion as to righteousness by the law ended with chapter xxix.; and chapter xxx. supposes

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the people in a position in which the securing of righteousness by the law was impossible, and where there could only be question of the spirit and end of the law, in the counsels of God.

Now, Christ was the end of it, and it is thus the apostle applies the passage. (Rom. x.) It is interesting also to see that the Lord always quotes Deuteronomy in answering Satan. He put Himself on the true ground where Israel stood, in order to possess and keep the land; being not only the faithful man, but the Jew, the true Son called out of Egypt, put to the test, as to His faithfulness, in the conditions under which the people were placed by Deuteronomy.

Let us examine a little more closely these chapters, which shew the pains the Spirit took to set before the eyes of the people all the motives which could induce them to walk faithfully in the career which now lay before them.

He begins with the narrative of what had occurred since the sojourn of the children of Israel at Sinai; and Moses reminds them of the commandment to leave that place and to go to the mount of the Amorites,* to go up and possess the land. They get there, and, discouraged by the spies, they will not go up; then, trying to do so without God, they are smitten before their enemies. Passing by the borders of Esau and Moab, God gives them the land of Sihon and of Og.

* It is interesting to put together the second and third verses. For an eleven days' journey Israel took forty years. Alas! how often is it thus with us, owing to our unfaithfulness.

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In a word, Moses relates to them, in general, what had taken place with regard to their entrance into the land of which they are to take possession—the patience and the goodness of God.

In reminding them of Horeb, he insists on the privilege they had enjoyed in nearness to God, who Himself had spoken to them out of the midst of the fire, when they saw no similitude—on the authority of the word—its majesty—excluding thus all thought of idolatry. He shews them that all that were of full age had perished, as a consequence of their unbelief; that he himself could not enter into that good land; that God is a jealous God, a consuming fire; and that, if they made any graven image, they would utterly perish from off the land they were about to enter, and would be scattered amongst the nations and left to serve the gods they had loved; that, nevertheless, they should find God if they sought Him with all their heart, for He is a merciful God, who would not forsake them; that if Sinai had been the brightness of His majesty, it was also true that such a God of majesty had never vouchsafed to come so near to a people, elect and chosen for their fathers' sakes. Such is the basis of the government of this people.

Moses sets apart three cities of refuge, as a token of possession, on the part of God, of what was on this side Jordan.

In chapter v. Moses reminds them of the ten commandments given in Horeb; and it is to be remarked, that the deliverance out of Egypt (*not* the rest of God after the work of creation) is the reason he gives for the sabbath.

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He reminds them of their fear in the presence of the Lord; engages them, in chapter vi., to love God with all their heart; and exhorts them to remember His words in every way, and to keep them, when they should enjoy the land, having nothing to do with other gods.

When they should have cast out their enemies, as Jehovah had spoken, and when their children should ask the meaning of the ordinances, they were to tell them of the deliverances and of the signs wrought in Egypt.

They were to destroy every vestige of false gods, being a people holy to Jehovah, and that, not on account of their own importance, but because of the election and love of God. He assures them that their faithfulness would also be the channel of blessing, for God would recompense them according to their ways. Neither ought they to fear, after all the signs they had seen.

In chapter viii., in the most instructive and touching language as to the care God had taken of them, and His object in doing so, he also brings to mind the dealings of God with them by the way,* as a motive; and how God had humbled and had exercised them, lest, through the enjoyment of the blessings of the good land into which He was bringing them, they should be puffed up (for it was God who gave them the needed strength); that otherwise God would destroy them, as He had destroyed the nations. (Chap. ix.) He reminds them of their continual perverseness, in order to shew them that it was not on account of their righteousness, but because

* See particularly verses 2—4; 15, 16.

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of the wickedness of the nations, that God drove them out before them.

This he applies to them (chap. x.), reminding them that God had renewed the law, urging them to circumcise their hearts, to care for the stranger, remembering how God had enlarged them since they went down as strangers to Egypt.

Then, in chapter xi., he brings to their remembrance the judgments upon the Egyptians, and those upon Dathan and Abiram, and declares to them the beauty and excellency of the land into which they are about to enter, a land upon which the eyes of Jehovah ever rested;* and, lastly, he puts before them the blessing and the curse which there awaited them, according to their conduct, when brought in; charging them to keep carefully the commandments of the Lord, and to teach them to their children. And it is added, that, by keeping the commandments of God, they would be able to take possession, according to the full extent of the promise.

The second division begins with chapter xii., and contains the statutes and ordinances they were bound to observe. It is not a repetition of the old ordinances, but what specially referred to their conduct in the land, that they might keep it and be blessed in it. It is a covenant, or the conditions of their relationship with God, and of the enjoyment of His promises, added to what had been said before. (See chap. xxix. 1.)

The ordinances tended in general to this, that they

* The terms in which this is expressed present a perfectly beautiful contrast between the carefulness of man in seeking for blessing and the grace from above.

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were a people belonging to Jehovah, and that they were to give up every other relationship in order to be His; and keep themselves from all that could seduce them to form such relationships, or defile them in those which they had with Jehovah. At the same time, directions are given as to the details of the maintenance of those relationships.

But in all this, and in the whole book, this point is treated as a question of a direct relationship of the people itself with God. The priests are, in general, mentioned, more as being the objects of the care of the people when in the land, according to ordinances already given. The people were to behave in such-and-such a way towards them; but the relationship is immediate between the people and God.

The first principle laid down to confirm these relationships is the choice of a place as the centre of their exercise. They were to go thither with all their offerings; they might eat flesh elsewhere—without the blood; but the consecrated things could only be eaten in the place chosen of God. They were not to forget the Levites. They were not even to inquire about the ways of those who had been driven out of the land.

If the signs of a prophet, who would entice them to serve other gods, came to pass, or if a relative, or the beloved of their souls, enticed them, such were to be put to death; if any of a city, the whole city was to be reduced to a heap of stones. No relationship with any but with the true God was to be allowed—no forbearance toward that which ensnared them to follow another.

Chapter xiv. forbids that the people, as being the

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children of the living God, should imitate the profane customs which indicated the devotedness of idolaters to the impure beings they worshipped. God had chosen Israel for Himself. Neither were they to defile themselves by eating abominable things. They were a holy people. The tithes and all the first-fruits were to be offered to God.

Thus consecrated, each one might eat them in the place where God had put His name. The same command had been given (chap. xii.) with regard to the place where it was to be eaten, with the addition that the children, menservants, and maidservants, might partake of them, applying it also to the vows, the free-will offerings and the heave-offering. These ordinances are very remarkable.*

Another, found at the end of chapter xiv., may be added here. The tithe of the third year was to be laid up within their gates, and the Levite, the fatherless, and

* It is generally explained that there was a double tithe, that is, that this does not refer to the regular tithe paid to the Levites as ordered in the other places in the law, and that two years they carried the different offerings to the place chosen of Jehovah, and ate and rejoiced, but the third invited the Levite and the poor at home. Amos iv. 4 shews there was some special habit of tithing every third year, there at Bethel; at any rate what characterizes Deuteronomy is their enjoying God's goodness together and making the poor enjoy it with them, Levites and strangers; while priests, though named, are on these points wholly ignored. (See chap. xii. 6, 7, 11, 12, 17, 18; xiv. 22—28.) The priests' portion is in chapter xviii. 3, 4. But firstlings and firstfruits in chapter xii. are not the same word; nor is chapter xiv. 23. But the whole tone of Deuteronomy is fellowship and enjoyment only before the Lord, not priestly or altar service.

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the stranger, were to come and eat of it; and he who did thus would be blessed of Jehovah in all the work of his hands.

Here everything was sanctified, as having been presented to Jehovah. There was thus the recognition, on the one hand, that the people were His, on the other, that all they had was of Him; but in giving Him back what He had given them, they enjoyed, in fellowship with Him, and their families, the things common to God and the people, given by Him, offered to Him, and enjoyed in His presence in communion one with another, God Himself partaking of them, for the whole was offered to Him.

It was not here the priests opening out a way for the people to draw near to God: God was honoured by the offering. God enjoyed the piety of the people, and the people themselves offered with joy. Seated before God Himself, in the joy of communion with Him, as at the same table, it was the people who enjoyed the privilege.

In the case of the tithe of the third year, it is not the family joy of the people with God, but rather the grace that brings enjoyment to those who were strangers or in want, and to the servants of God who had no inheritance. It was within their gates that this took place. They had the privilege of acting in grace from Jehovah, in communicating to His poor what He had given them. They did not go to the house of Jehovah, but they invited the widow, the orphan, and the Levite, to their house to rejoice, and Jehovah blessed them. The immediate relationship of the people with God in family fellowship and in grace here is very remarkable. The priests are

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out of the scene; the Levites being the objects of the liberality of the people, as having no inheritance. (Compare xv. 19.)

Chapter xv. teaches each one among the people to consider with liberality and grace their poor brethren (this consideration being besides made sure to them by the year of release, which applied to debts and to the Hebrew slaves). The dependence of him, who thus respected Jehovah in His poor, was to be placed in God, who would bless him in thus acting according to His commandment; for the poor were His poor.

Chapter xvi. connects the people with the throne of Jehovah in Jerusalem, by solemnities in which He surrounds Himself with His people, blessed and happy in the deliverance which He has granted them under His reign.

It gives us three solemn feasts—the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The spirit of each of these feasts suggests a few remarks. The Passover recalled deliverance, deliverance from bondage in Egypt, under either sin or Satan. The unleavened bread, truth in the inward parts, was here the bread of affliction. The knowledge of Christ, or the application of Christ to the heart, though coupled with deliverance and salvation when it takes the form of repentance (and this is the case, when the question is of remembering one's deliverance), has always something bitter in it. Joy is not the point here. One has gone out in haste, by the mighty arm of God, and if one is happy, it is only as having escaped, feeling that it is through the power of God alone, and conscious of the state which required it all.

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They ate it during the night, and every one returned in the morning to his tent. They went home with the sense of the goodness of God, with the sense that it was a deliverance from the evil under which they had been by their own fault and to their own ruin.

Holiness is presented in repentance and deliverance from the power of evil, under the form of conscience and judgment of sin; it is an obligation. One dares not remain any longer in evil. They were cut off if leaven was found in the house; whereas this holiness is in itself the joy of the redeemed. They were bound to keep the feast wherever God should put His name. God gathered the people around His dwelling-place, and linked them with His name and with Himself. Their nationality and all their recollections were connected with the worship of Jehovah. It was another safeguard against idolatry. (Ver. 5—7.)

Seven weeks having elapsed, the people were again to gather around Jehovah. They numbered seven weeks from the time they began to put the sickle to the corn, from the day they began to reap the fruit of the land of promise. They waited for the perfect time of the work of God.

That which first of all characterized this feast was, that every one offered a free-will offering, according to the blessing wherewith Jehovah his God had blessed him. It is the Holy Spirit, and the blessing flowing from Him, which this type presents to us. It is not only redemption, but the power of the things which are the result of it—not in full, however; they were only first-fruits offered to God. The presentation of these first-fruits to

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God is the effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. They are the remnant of Israel, historically in the beginning of Christianity, on the principle of redemption and of the new covenant; but, in fact, Christians themselves become the first-fruits of the creation of God. But the effect produced by the Holy Spirit, the effect of His presence in general, is that which characterizes this feast.

There was no mention of free-will offerings at the passover; they ate in haste and returned home. But the Holy Spirit has made the renewed heart willing; and according to the enjoyment of the fruits of the promise—according to the measure of the blessing of the Spirit of God, it can and will render to God the first-fruits of the heart, and of all that He has given us. Therefore (and it is what always accompanies this free-will—fruit of the Holy Spirit) they were to rejoice in the presence of Jehovah their God.

The fruits of grace and of the Spirit manifest themselves in joy and in grace. Blessing manifests itself in the spirit of blessing, in the joy and the good-will of grace. Blessed and precious results! Joy, and the desire for the joy of others, always flow from grace, known according to the power of the Spirit of God.

Thus the worshipper, his son and his daughter, his manservant and his maidservant, the Levite within his gates, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, were to rejoice together in the place where Jehovah had set His name. God surrounded Himself with joy, the fruit of grace and of His blessing.

The remembrance of having been themselves bondmen

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was to touch the heart and influence the conduct of Israel; and, by comprehending the grace which had delivered them when they were in that condition, they were to be led to act in grace towards those who were bondmen to them. They are admonished, at the same time, to observe the statutes of Jehovah; for the presence of the Holy Spirit, whilst ministering joy, leads to watchfulness and obedience. We enjoy the earnest and the first-fruits before God; but still it is down here, where watchfulness and restraint are needed.

When the ingathering of the harvest and vintage were ended (that is, God having gathered in His own, hidden them in His garner, and trodden His enemies in the winepress), then came the Feast of Tabernacles; a feast, the antitype of which we have not, it is certain, yet seen.

Although all the effects of the Passover and Pentecost are not yet accomplished, yet they have been fulfilled as to the event marked by them; but there has been as yet no fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles. This will take place when Israel, restored to their land after the end of this dispensation, will fully enjoy the effect of the promise of God. Consequently joy is put in the foreground, whilst in that which prefigured the presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth the free-will offering came first.

This feast was to be kept during seven consecutive days. It is joy, full and complete joy; not according to the *measure* of the blessing, as in Pentecost, but because God had blessed them in *all* the works of their hands: therefore they certainly ought to rejoice. The spirit of

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that day belongs to us, although the fulfilment of it has not yet taken place.

There is a joy that manifests itself in us in connection with the measure of the present effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit, a joy which requires watchfulness and to walk in the narrow way, and in which the remembrance of our former condition strengthens in us the spirit of grace towards others, and the presence of the Lord is specially marked.

There is a joy known to the heart, although the things which cause it have not yet had their accomplishment, a joy connected with the time of rest, when labour will be ended, and when there will no longer be any need of vigilance, nor of the remembrance of our misery, to urge us to share our blessings with others. The feast itself will suffice for the joy of all: "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast." The Lord recalls the great principle of the three feasts, namely, to appear before Jehovah three times in a year, bringing offerings to Jehovah.

Verse 18 begins a new subject: the pains taken, and the instruments used, to preserve the blessing, and execute the judgments necessary to that effect. The thought is still to maintain the people in relationship with God alone. They were to appoint judges and officers in their gates. Whatever led to idolatry was forbidden; he who enticed them to it was to be stoned. (Chap. xvii.) If the matter were too hard, they were to come to the priests and the judges, and the people were to abide by their judgment.

The case of the people desiring a king is anticipated; and they are told that he must be of the people, and not

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act so as to open the way for intercourse with Egypt, nor so as to lead the people to idolatry; but he is to write a copy of the book of the law with his own hand, and read therein all the days of his life, being subject to it, so as not to despise his brethren.

Chapter xviii. The priests and the whole tribe of Levi have their portion assigned to them. The people are forbidden to do after those abominations, on account of which the nations which inhabited the land were driven out before Israel, inquiring of those who used divination. Jehovah would raise up a prophet like unto Moses, unto whom the people should hearken. These ordinances foresee in the people the lack of the faith needful in order to walk simply with the Lord. Christ is the true and only answer. They were not to fear a prophet who gave a sign which did not come to pass, for Jehovah had not spoken by him.

One word here as to the portion of the priests. First, the normal condition of the people was that of being guided by the priests, and, in case of need, by judges raised up in an extraordinary way; and to abide under the keeping of God in the land, enjoying His blessing. It was, properly speaking, theocracy. The laws of God directed the people; they enjoyed the blessing of God; and the priests settled any questions which arose, a judge being raised up in exceptional cases.

The priests are introduced here in connection with that which was necessary to the enjoyment of the land, not as a means of drawing near to God. Consequently, they were there to fulfil their ministry before God, and a certain portion belonged to them.

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The king was only thought of in the case when the people would ask one, in order to be like the nations; and in that case he was to remain, as much as possible, simple in the midst of Israel, that the law of God might have its full authority. The people are always accounted to be themselves responsible before God, and enjoying the land under this responsibility, though for that reason subject to the decisions of the priests. They had the land from God. The position spoken of here is not that of drawing near to Him, but acknowledging His deliverance and His goodness, as in the feasts which we have considered.

Thus he who went up to the place which Jehovah had chosen ate with his family, and sometimes with the Levite, the stranger, &c., the tithes of each year (in the third year there were some for the Levite and the poor), the firstling of the herd and of the flock, the vows, the freewill offerings, and the heave-offerings, all before Jehovah. But at the same time that they offered them to Jehovah, the offerer partook of the enjoyment of them. (See chap. xiv. 23, 28, 29; xii. 7, 11, 12, 17.) Whilst, in chapter xviii. the priest had a certain portion of the sacrifice, the first-fruit of the corn, of the wine, and the oil, and the first of the fleece of the sheep.

The first part of these ordinances is so much the more remarkable, that, in the Book of Numbers (chap. xviii.), the firstborn, the heave-offerings, all sorts of offerings for sin, and the meat-offerings, are given to the priests, and the tithes to the Levites.

We may remark here the difference between that which was in this case for the priests, and that which in

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Deuteronomy is given to the people, and in the other books to the priests. We have already pointed out the difference of position.

In the three preceding books, what is brought before the mind is drawing near to God, and the priests alone are looked upon as able to do this; and thus, in the relationship of priests, they ate in the holy place all that was offered. They alone were near God, and that which was offered to God (according to the force of the word,* that which was brought near to God) was theirs, as being near. They were all as one company in the camp and the whole was essentially typical.

Thus all the arrangements of the tabernacle were made for a people who found themselves in the wilderness—strangers there; and it is to be observed that Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, never speaks of anything but the tabernacle, never of the temple. The relationship he speaks of is that of pilgrims with God.

It is no longer thus in Deuteronomy. There the dwelling of the people in the land of promise is considered; and, consequently, the people are accounted, not as needing to learn how to draw near to God, but as enjoying, from God, the effect of His promise in His presence and before Him, so that the people are directly concerned in the sacrifices. They are in the enjoyment of the promises, in the presence of God, and they realize, in the communion of Jehovah, all the means through which it is enjoyed, and they partake, in communion,

* The word translated "an offering" (that is, *corban*) comes from a word which means "to draw near," and, in the form Hiphil, "to bring near."

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of all that is devoted to Him, as a sign of the redemption through which this enjoyment was procured for them.

It is otherwise with regard to the first-fruits of the land—that which it yields. Enjoying those fruits of the goodness of God, the people gave Him back the first-fruits, as a testimony that all came from Him, and that all was His, and that His grace had communicated it to them. (See chap. xxvi.) Therefore the first-fruits were not for the people to eat: they offered them to God, and ate of all the rest. It was the recognition of God, while sharing His blessings. The first-fruits then were offered to God, and thus fell into the hands of the priests as their portion.

Chapter xix. opens with ordinances which contemplate the people in possession and enjoyment of the land; they were to observe them, that the land might not be defiled, and that the people might walk in the strength of Jehovah.

Three cities of refuge are appointed, and he who kills his neighbour, without hating him, is distinguished from the murderer: an important principle, as to the fate of the Jewish nation, which makes a distinction between those who have taken a voluntary part in the death of the Lord, or who afterwards heartily approve the deed, and those who have done it ignorantly. The regulations of righteousness also against false witnesses are given here.

In chapter xx. we have the ordinances relative to war.

In chapter xxi. we have three interesting cases, because of the principles which apply to the ways of God

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with Israel: the case of the man found slain; that of the child of the hated wife; and that of the rebellious son. The land of Jehovah must be kept pure. Israel will have to make this confession in the latter days, and to clear themselves of the blood of Messiah.

If the case of the two wives applies to Israel upon earth, it applies still more closely to Christ (Head of the Gentiles) and the assembly with whom He will inherit all things, although upon earth Israel be the wife beloved.

However, Israel, as a rebellious son under the old covenant, is condemned and cut off; as regards the redeemed, the curse of the law has fallen upon another. Those who read the Bible are too well acquainted with the application of the end of this chapter to make it needful for me to dwell upon it. The point here under consideration is the defiling of the land, which Jehovah had given for an inheritance to the people; the hardness of heart of the priests in applying the precept under the circumstances is appalling, yet natural.

I will now briefly sum up the subjects we have looked at from chapter xvi. 18. We have the means, in point of authority, employed of God to maintain the people in His ways, and in the knowledge of His will, that they might enjoy the land in peace. Judges and officers were to be appointed, and to judge with uprightness. The priest and the judge, raised up in an extraordinary manner, were to communicate, in case of need, the judgment and will of God, and the people were to obey them. In case the people wished for a king, directions are given respecting his conduct.

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Directions are given for those Levites who should devote themselves to the service of Jehovah, in the place chosen by Him as His dwelling-place. The people, seeking to know the will of God, were not to consult diviners. Jehovah would raise up a prophet. Afterwards there is provision made to keep the land from being polluted with blood; the elders of the cities were to take knowledge of the deed, whether the slayer had killed without set purpose.

The cities of refuge present a beautiful type of the state of Israel, as to their sin, in having killed the Lord Jesus, whether ignorantly (as the grace of God looks upon it with regard to those who repent) or knowingly (as perseverance in rejecting Him would be the proof of): this is the principle upon which God will judge them. So, in this last point of view, the people were placed under the searching severity of the law.

In chapter xx. provision is made to reconcile any war that might arise with the enjoyment of the land and the blessing of God, either individually or in case of conquest; and directions are given to secure the presence of the power of God, and to shew how the enemies were to be treated according to the mind of God; all mercy towards the nations of Canaan being prohibited, in order that Israel might not learn the abominations they were guilty of.

Chapter xxi. gives another provision for preventing the land from defilement by blood, while declaring (as elsewhere) that life belongs to God, that, when His rights are infringed, He will not wink at it. We cannot fail to see that the blood of Christ is, above all, that of which

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Israel is here (chap. xxi.) guilty (see Psalm li.), and the blood of Jesus is the only atonement for the sin which shed it. The elders excuse themselves by pleading their ignorance of what had been done. The same thing will take place with regard to Israel. So pleads also Paul. However, there is nothing but the blood of the heifer which never bore the yoke that can wipe away sin. Thus will the guilt of innocent blood be taken from off the people.

The following directions are indeed practical directions for Israel; but they seem to me to contain, at the same time, some of God's principles towards His people. Thus Israel upon earth, and the assembly in heaven, have both been the true firstborn, whom God will not disinherit. And the rebellious son presents also Israel in final disobedience to God.

Chapter xxii. appears to contain ordinances to guard the people from want of benevolence and mercy, and of that which would offend the sensibilities of nature, either with regard to tenderness or purity. So also all mixture was forbidden in ploughing or sowing. We find the same with regard to women: they were protected against the dishonour done to them by a brutish, inconsiderate husband; whilst impurity was punished with death.

Thus (chap. xxiii.) the people are taught what sentiments became them, according to God, with reference to the nations (taking the ways and doings of those nations into consideration) in case of war. They are also instructed in what was proper, as to the purity of the camp in case of war, seeing God was there. So

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with regard to all sorts of things, such as the slave that was escaped from his master; things morally impure, even the neighbour's vineyard; and (chap. xxiv.) a more serious thing, divorce, and everything relative to it; delicacy towards the poor, the hire of labourers, the gleaning for the poor.

The spirit of all these ordinances is very instructive, and the goodness and the tenderness of God, who deigns to take knowledge of all these things, and to teach His people delicacy, propriety, consideration for others, sensitiveness, and those feelings which, by removing brutality, and softening the hardness of the heart of man, fashion his ways according to that love with which the Spirit of God clothes Himself when He acts in the heart of man. Here, it is true, everything is imperfect. There are things taken for granted here which form the basis of these ordinances, which the full operation of the Spirit of Christ would entirely take away; divorce, for instance, and other things endured, owing their existence to the hardness of man's heart. But the limitations and conditions, assigned by the law of God, keep in check the wickedness of that will which hardens itself while it oppresses others.

Chapter xxv. adds ordinances which are a continuation of what we have already read; taking care that none of their brethren should be dishonoured in their eyes, and that no family should perish from among the people (there being, at the same time, the maintenance of purity and uprightness).

As to the inveterate enemies of God and His people, Israel was never to seek peace with them. Human

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amiability is often enmity with God. This ordinance is so much the more remarkable, because it follows so many others which made provision for kindness, even to a bird.

Jehovah had taken care that an Egyptian should find the entrance into the assembly of God; but those affections were to be in exercise towards the Egyptians for the good of the souls of the Israelites themselves. They were not to harden their hearts against those in whose midst they had sojourned. But to spare the Amalekites (who came to meet Israel to shut up their way and destroy the feeble ones among them) was to forget what was due to God, who brought them back; and, as regarded the people, it would have proved indifference of heart to evil, and not the effusion of a natural affection; neither was it yielding to remembrances, with which charity might mingle for good, by a becoming forgetfulness of wrongs formerly received. Where there is nobleness of sentiment, men who know (though they have injured) each other, still will own one another when the evil is over.

But there is a spirit which claims nothing but disgust: to tolerate it is only sparing oneself, and admitting that very spirit into one's heart so as to partake of it. What is in question is not judging, but the state of one's own heart. The distance of an Egyptian from God was recognized; but if he were in relationship with him during three generations, why should he be kept at a distance? why should he remain a stranger? But Amalek did not fear God—did not recognize Him. What then could be recognized in such a nation? We must bring

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God into our affairs—our relationships; and charity, firmness, justness in our judgments, will each find its place, and be reproduced in all our ways.

To close this succession of ordinances, we have (chap. xxvi.) a most beautiful picture of the worship consequent on the enjoyment of the land according to the promises of God, a picture full of instruction for us too.

First, we find the main subject of this book appear as everywhere else: Israel is in the land which God had given him for an inheritance.

But, as to worship, it is not looked at here in the light of drawing near to God in the holy place, by means of sacrifices which, supposing sin, opened the way for the people into the presence of Jehovah. They enjoy the promise, and present themselves as worshippers, giving thanks as enjoying it. In presenting the first-fruits of the land of promise, they were to go up to the place where the Lord had placed His name. What then was the spirit of that worship?

First, it was based on the open confession that they were in the full enjoyment of the effect of the promise of God. "I profess this day unto Jehovah that I am come unto the country which Jehovah sware unto our fathers to give us." That is the first feature of that worship—the full profession of being in the enjoyment of the effect of the promise. It was the acknowledgment of the faithfulness of God in the present communion of His goodness. *Thereupon* the offering was presented.

Then, in the presence of Jehovah, the worshipper made confession of the redemption and deliverance of

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the people. A Syrian, ready to perish, was his father; and afterwards, when his children, oppressed by the Egyptians, cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah had heard and delivered them with an outstretched arm, and had, by a display of His power, brought them up into the land they were enjoying.

The second feature, then, is the confession of what their misery had been, of their impotency in time past, and that their redemption has been accomplished by Jehovah alone, to whom they were indebted for all these blessings. Thereupon the worshipper directly addresses Jehovah, presenting Him with the first-fruits of those blessings. It was the recognition of God in the blessings, (the infallible effect of a work of God in the heart), and the only means of truly enjoying them; for God's blessings turn the heart away *from* Him, if their first effect is not to turn it *to* Him. That is the history of Israel, and a thousand times alas! in the details of life that of our own hearts. A pious heart acknowledges God Himself in the blessing, before enjoying it. See a beautiful example in the conduct of Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, sent to fetch a wife for Isaac.

Then it is added, "And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which Jehovah thy God hath given unto thee." They were to enjoy them with God; and, consequently, observe here, that in this the spirit of grace manifests itself at once: "Thou, the Levite, and the stranger that is within thy gate." It is impossible truly to rejoice in the blessing of God *before Him*, without the spirit of grace being present—without returning blessing for cursing, knowing that we are called to

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inherit His blessing. The same truth is found again in the tithes of the third year, given to the poor, the Levite, &c., according to the spirit which we have just spoken of.

Another feature of the state of heart of the true worshipper was holiness in consecrating to Jehovah, with uprightness of heart, that which was due to Him according to grace. He was not to be robbed in anything for appropriation to oneself: nothing was to be profaned by applying it to self—to defiled or interested uses.

In a word, the conscience was good as regarded consecration to Jehovah, in the things by which the worshipper acknowledged Him as the true and sole Author of all the blessings. And if Jehovah was the Author of them, communion with Him, in acknowledging Him, was enjoyed in the spirit of holiness, of consecration to Him, and in the spirit of goodness and grace that was in Him towards His poor and forsaken ones. The character of God is introduced again and again, and His name brought in, in that which is recognized in the communion of His people; if overlooked, the people were guilty and defiled, in that they had profaned the name of the Lord. This consecration in purity to God, and this expression of His goodness, are singularly beautiful. Then the blessing of God was implored, not only upon oneself, from God who cared for all His people, but upon all Israel, upon the land which was the proof of the faithfulness of God and of the riches of His goodness.

This worship was, then, a bond between the people and God, in the communion of what He was; that is, a bond in worship, by acknowledging what He was; and

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by bearing witness to it. Thus, according to the commandments of Jehovah, looked at as the conditions of this bond, God had that day acknowledged the people, and the people had acknowledged Jehovah for their God.

Now comes the sanction; that is to say, that which gives vigour to His law; in the consequences (blessings and curses) which were to correspond with obedience or disobedience. This is brought out in chapter xxvii. and two following chapters.

Chapter xxvii. is by itself, however, and is of rather wide scope in the understanding of the word of God. If individual piety expressed itself in the manner we have seen in the preceding chapter, the public relations of the people with God were based on the threats of the law. When the people should have gone over Jordan to take possession of the land of promise (an idea which constantly presents itself), having set up great stones and plastered them with plaster, they were to write the law upon them. This law contained the conditions on which the land was to be enjoyed.

The people were to divide themselves into two companies of tribes, part being placed upon Mount Gerizim to bless, the other upon Ebal to curse. Upon the latter was an altar to be erected to Jehovah, not for sin-offerings, but for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings: a worship pre-supposing a righteous people in communion with Jehovah, but placed under the curse if they should break the law. The announcement of the curses follows, ending with that curse which would rest on every one not continuing in all the things which were written in

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the book of the law to do them. But the blessings of Gerizim are entirely omitted.

It is needless to insist upon the importance of this blank. "As many as are of the works of the law* are under the curse," says the apostle: "for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law." There is no possibility of escape. No one, except the Lord Jesus, has accomplished it; and He, if one may so speak, did not raise an altar for burnt-offering, an altar of worship for a righteous man who had fulfilled the law—for Himself alone; but He offered Himself for us on that mountain of cursing as an offering for sin, and has thus silenced for ever all those threats and curses. The blessing of Gerizim, consequently, is not sufficient either. Heaven, and, moreover, for Him, the Father's throne, are the only worthy answer and reward for what He has accomplished by suffering for our sins.

The connection between the principles of chapter xxvi. and those of chapter xxvii. is deeply interesting: the fulfilment of the promise in the enjoyment of the land, the basis of thanksgivings and of the worship which has its source in redemption; afterwards the altar, the service to be rendered to God, a service linked to His law, the violation of which, in a single point, brought the curse. This was the condition of their enjoyment of it.

* This expression does not contemplate the conduct, but the principle on which we stand before God. Those who are *of faith* are linked with faithful Abraham; those that are of the works of the law are under the curse, for the law saith, "Cursed," &c.

XXVII.

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It is in that point of view, the only one which went to the root of the question, that the apostle looks at it. It is on the ground of this covenant of Deuteronomy that the people became the people of Jehovah on their entering the land. (Compare ver. 2, 10, and chap. xxix. 1.)

In chapter xxviii. we have the principles of God's government in the midst of that people, and the immediate consequences of obedience or disobedience—consequences so solemnly fulfilled in the fate of that unhappy people, still beloved for the fathers' sakes. The consequences of the violation of the law as a principle of relationship with God, as to the point of everlasting righteousness, must not be confounded with the temporary consequences of disobedience under the government of God. It is to these latter that chapter xxviii. has reference. We may notice for ourselves the deep instruction of verses 47, 48. As to Israel, universal history presents to us the accomplishment of the threats of the chapter.

Chapter xxix. is the personal application to the conscience of the people, both collectively and individually, of all that precedes, that there may be no bitter root of sin. (Compare Heb. xii. 15, the application of this exhortation to the discipline and the loving care of the church.)

Verse 29 requires to be noticed. We find in it the contrast between the consequences thus *revealed* of obedience and disobedience, and the purposes of God in behalf of the people, *notwithstanding their disobedience*—purposes which evidently could not be a rule for their conduct. The rule was found in the ordinance of the

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law. The meaning of this verse has been so twisted, that it is worth while thus pointing out its force. The secret things are the purposes of God with regard to the people, though they should have been disobedient and driven out of the land; but, although they are not the rule of conduct, they are *revealed* and are of deep interest. In what follows, God begins already to present them to our attention, and surely it becomes us to consider them.

Thus we have, in these chapters, the relationship of the pious Jew with God, grounded upon the accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers, in the present enjoyment of the land; the relationship of the people with God, in view of the curse pronounced upon the violation of the law; the relationship of the people with God, according to the principles of His government, the consequences brought on either by their obedience or disobedience: and, finally, after the disobedience and when this has produced its fruit, the designs of God according to His purpose, which nothing could alter.

We must now dwell a little on this last point. Chapter xxx. furnishes us with an important principle. It supposes that the people have already incurred the consequences of obedience or disobedience, and they are seen as driven out of the land, and strangers among distant nations. The law could not be followed out in such a case; and, indeed, the violation of the law had even then produced its fruits.

But then quite a new principle is introduced: the return of the hearts of the people to Jehovah, and obe-

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dience, one must add, *in spirit*. Thereupon Jehovah brings them back into their land, and blesses them in it. The curse is put on their enemies; and they are to observe in the land the ordinances of Jehovah, enjoying anew His full blessing; for the commandment was neither in heaven, nor beyond the seas, but in the mouth and in the heart. This was not the new covenant, but faith laying hold of the spirit of the law in principle, and turning the heart towards Jehovah, when the law was externally impracticable.

The establishment of the new covenant, based on this return of the heart, at a time appointed of God, will be something well defined. Here, we have the principle of their return when under the curse of the law they had broken. Hence, the apostle quotes this passage for the basis of the principle, as a testimony given to what righteousness by faith was, applying it to Christ Himself —the return of the heart to the object and end of the law, when judgment was on them for its violation, and hope of righteousness by its accomplishment impossible —how Christ was the end of the law for righteousness. The principle is found here. The apostle brings in Christ as the true accomplishment of it. At the end of the chapter, Moses declares that he has now set before them the good and the evil, and that they would have to bear the consequence of their choice.

In chapter xxxi. he introduces Joshua, as the leader under whom the people were to take possession of the promised land. He orders that the law should be read before all every seventh year, in order that every one might take notice of it, in that solemn moment when,

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enjoying afresh, as it were, the blessing which it secured to them, they submitted to it as a testimony that the land, as well as everything, belonged to Jehovah. Afterwards, when Joshua is established in his charge, Moses is ordered to communicate to the people a song inspired of God, which, based upon the certainty of the iniquity of the people, announces the ways of the Lord towards them; commanding the Levites, at the same time, to put the written law by the side of the ark, as a witness against the people.

Chapter xxxii. We have the prophetic song, which is based on the foreknown fall of the people. First, it declares the perfectness of Jehovah, whatever may take place; it is Israel who have corrupted themselves. (Compare Ps. xxii. 3. Christ can say, "Why?") At the same time (ver. 8) we have an all-important declaration; namely, that God, in His government of the world, had made Israel the centre, and had arranged the nations of the earth, in their various localities, as having respect to the bounds of Israel as being the first object of those ways. For His earthly people are Jehovah's portion, His inheritance upon earth. But Jeshurun (Israel) waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook the Rock of his strength. Consequently God moves them to jealousy with those that are not a people. It is the call of the Gentiles, according to Romans x. 19.

The judgment, nevertheless, falls upon Israel, so that God would have destroyed them, had not the glory of His name hindered Him, for the Gentiles proved themselves perfectly wicked. Then, the people being distressed, without strength and without hope, He remembers

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them, and finally takes vengeance on their enemies, those idolatrous Gentiles. But, though avenging Himself, it is then that, having restored His people Israel, He will cause the Gentiles to rejoice in Him.

This principle is true already ; but the testimony it furnishes will be fully accomplished when Israel is again restored to the enjoyment of the promises ; when God will manifest His mercy towards *His* land, as well as towards His people. The whole course of His dealings, in respect of the people who form the centre of His ways upon earth, is thus fully brought out. Afterwards, Moses puts obedience (the great end of this book) before them again, and reminds them that thereby they would prolong their days in the land which they were going up to possess.

At last poor Moses has to go up Mount Nebo, to see the land into which he cannot enter, not having answered the requirement of the glory of God in the wilderness, nor sanctified His name by faith. It is the unavoidable consequence of the just government of God towards a *servant*—I mean under the law. He does not get into the enjoyment of the promise. A single fault deprives him of it.

We have also the blessings of this man of God, pronounced over the people before his death. (Chap. xxxiii.) The blessings of Jacob were more historical regarding the future. Here they are rather relationship with God according to His government. Twelve is still the number of the tribes (Simeon being omitted to make room for two tribes of the posterity of Joseph, the firstborn as to the inheritance, instead of Reuben). Here it is according to the

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blessing of God, and not according to the rights of nature. Upon this latter principle, Israel, represented by Reuben, will be diminished, but will not die.

Jehovah is there in majesty, with the terror of the law in His right hand; but He loves the people, that is to say, His saints there surrounding Him to receive His words. The people receive a law, through the mediation of Moses, which is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. This Moses is there as king. These, then, are the relationships on which these blessings are based.

The blessings are not here presented historically as those of the children of the fathers, and, consequently, in connection with Shiloh, the Rock of Israel, nor as a complete view of God's ways in Israel, as in Genesis; but the subject is the relationship of Jehovah with the people, as in possession of the land (as in the rest of the book), and placed under the government of God: Jehovah blessing, but blessing according to the majesty of Sinai, and of His revelation of Himself in the bush; Moses, the king, being the channel of these blessings, which had thus reference to the nation, and were based upon this relationship with God.

Thus Levi is blessed, having been faithful to Jehovah; Joseph has the blessing and the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush, having been separated from his brethren, fearing God, and being the vessel of His purposes. This was accordingly the position of the two tribes in the land, as Simeon, not mentioned here, was, so to speak, lost in the land; his portion was where the Philistines dwelt.

We must also remark here, that the chief blessings

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rest upon him who, for the sake of God, neither knew his father nor his mother, that is, Levi; and upon Joseph, who, for the glory of God, was separated from his own. Both were His. Levi has the most excellent place; his separation, which should actually take place, was a fruit of faithfulness. Joseph has, perhaps, more sensible enjoyment; he was faithful to God in his involuntary separation. Both these are completely realized in Christ.

If the blessing of God preserves life to Reuben, with but few men, Judah is presented to Jehovah, that he may be heard, and that the help of Jehovah may be with him. The expression, "Bring him unto his people," deserves careful notice, in the relations which have existed between that people and God, seeing the position of Judah in their history, under the government of God, and its present dispersion, and in that which is yet to take place, when the union of the whole people will be restored in their own place.

Levi occupies the third place, Simeon being left out. The request of the prophet-king for him (Levi) is the everlasting priesthood of the people of God (upon earth, of course). "His holy one" is used in the sense of piety towards God—grace in the heart. He requests that light and perfection (Urim and Thummim) in the intelligence of the relations which would in reality exist at all times between the people and God, and between God and the people in return, might be with the man of grace and piety, officially the priestly tribe.

But the basis of this request is remarkable, as to the government of God. *God* proved the people at Massah,

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and strove with them at Meribah. Now, that is precisely what is attributed to *Israel* historically. They tried (or tempted) God at Massah, and strove with Him at Meribah. But where the flesh manifested itself in Israel, there did God put His priest to the test; and at the waters of Meribah, where Moses did not sanctify Him, He was in controversy with Moses.* Painful circumstance the being deprived of the stream of manifest and sensible blessings in the midst of the people of God, a state which makes room for the manifestation of rebellious flesh, and for murmurs against God in the wilderness, tempting God and saying, "Is He amongst us?" —are trials to which God subjects His priests. The church, in her priestly position, and especially those who have the good of the church at heart, are also put to the test, to see whether they know how to reckon upon the blessing of God, however things may be.

But, although Levi was put to the test in his priesthood, he had been put to the test in order to obtain it; and Levi had not hesitated one moment in choosing between man and God—even man in the nearest relationship according to the flesh. That is the sole basis of all priesthood. One can only stand before God on the behalf of another, in proportion as one has oneself stood truly for God before man. For with what God would one be a mediator? It would not be with the holy God,

* No doubt the fall of this man of God was the effect of his previous state, for he was a man. Trial, when we are not going on well, is chastening, but needful chastening, and a blessing in result. Therefore, at the same time that it is a blessing, it is said, "Lead us not into temptation."

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who has a right to our whole being. There could only, as to sinners, be the sympathy of the flesh, which connects itself with sins.

One must be accepted in the presence of God, according to His holiness, in order to be able to intercede for man in his weakness. This is absolutely true of Jesus, and of us all in a practical sense. But to be so, there must be the testimony when the question is raised; and this must needs cost us something before men. One must be for God, not sparing oneself, hating father and mother. This instruction is important. There must also be the distinguishing between the trial of our priesthood and the trial of ourselves before entering upon it. Here the practical trial, where we are so, is spoken of, for we are priests by grace.

It would seem that the place of Benjamin, in relation with Jehovah, was in His favour; being kept near Him, as has been the case with that tribe, within whose limits was Jerusalem.

Joseph had his earthly blessing by the title of first-born; as to the inheritance, his land is blessed, the double portion is assigned to him.

I have no remarks to make on the other blessings, except that those of Zebulun and Issachar seem to be yet future, and those of Gad to establish the relations which existed already.

But, moreover, if the ways of God towards His people were connected with their faithfulness and the manifestation of Himself—if God suited His ways to their conduct to manifest His government and Himself, He also exalted Himself above all to bless and to keep.

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He would fall back upon the title of His own glory in order to be to them an infallible source of blessing and security; He would make known His glory in the behalf of Israel; He rode upon the heavens in their help. Where His majesty was, there was the help of the people. He would uphold them also, would destroy their enemies, and then should Israel dwell in safety alone. The nation should dwell in a fruitful land, on which the heavens would drop down blessings as dew. Happy people! objects of the deliverance of God, who was unto them as a shield and a sword. Their enemies would be subdued under them.

Thus, whatever might be the details of the relationship of the people with God, in His government of them, He would bless them in the end, as a people, according to His sovereign glory and majesty.

We have now to consider a little the prohibition to which Moses was subjected, not to enter the land of promise. Moses, the man of God, might pronounce the blessings on Israel as in the land; but he himself, as servant of God, belonged to the wilderness. There are more things than one to be weighed here. As to the position of Moses, it was that of the government of a people, placed under the principles of Sinai; that is, while under the government of God, it was in the flesh that His people were subjected to that government. (Compare Rom. xi. 5, where the subject is fully discussed.)

Now, man in the flesh, under the government of God, cannot come into the enjoyment of the promise. This is true even of a Christian. Risen with Christ, he

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is seated in the heavenly places, he enjoys the promise in the presence of God; or, at least, his affections look up there, his life is hid there with Christ,* but, as a man upon earth, he is under the government of God, who acts towards him according to the manifestation of the spiritual life here below; and Christ is between him and God, exercising priesthood and advocacy, which do not establish righteousness (that is done once for all), but which maintain the relationship of weak men with God in the light, to the fellowship of which they are called in Christ who is in it, by obtaining mercy and grace to help in time of need so that they should not fall, or to restore them if they do through the advocacy by the operation of the Spirit upon earth.

Crossing Jordan was our death and resurrection with Christ in a figure. Joshua always represents Christ, Head of His people, *according to the power of the Spirit.* But the wilderness is this world. Moses directs and governs the people there according to God; consequently he does not enter into Canaan.

The difference (we shall dwell on that more at length when we study the Book of Joshua) between the Red Sea and Jordan is, that the Red Sea was the efficacy of

* The former is the teaching of the Ephesians, the second, of the Colossians. In the former, dead in sin, he is raised up and set in Christ in heavenly places. It is a new creation. In the latter, he has died to sin and is risen with Christ and his affections are to be set on heavenly things. In this last epistle he is viewed also as dead in sins and quickened together with Christ, but not as sitting in heavenly places.

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redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ Himself, and we are viewed, withal, *in* Him; Jordan was the application of it to the soul, as having died with Him in order to the enjoyment of the promises. The passage of the Red Sea was followed by songs of joy; that of Jordan, by conflict and the realization of the promises.

As to Moses himself, personally, the fault which precluded his entrance into the land is well known. Provoked by the rebellion of Israel, and wearied with caring for the people, instead of exalting God in the eyes of Israel, he exalted himself. He made use of the gift of God for that purpose; he did not sanctify Jehovah in the eyes of the people; he did not give Him His place. God does not become weary in His goodness; and thus acting in discipline, for the good of His people, according to His majesty, He can always fall back upon those ways of direct blessing which flow from His unfailing grace. Man, wearied with the evil that vexes him, tries to exalt himself, to put himself above the evil, and to shelter himself from it, because he is not above it. He no longer glorifies God; he exalts himself and he is abased.

If Moses, instead of acting according to the flesh, had remembered that it was not he or his glory which was in question (and how often had he himself told them so!) but God, he would have felt that the people could not touch the glory of God; and this unfailing glory would have sustained him, looking only at that glory which ever maintains itself; so that if we only seek to maintain it, we may rest upon it.

But he lacked faith, and was forbidden to enter into

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that which only the perfection of glory could open to men; and, indeed, what could lead Israel safely through the desert and into the land of Canaan? Pure grace alone. Moses was not able to apprehend the height of the grace that conquers everything. It was according to that grace, as we have seen, that God acted at Meribah.

Now, the law could not lead into life; and therefore the flesh, the world, and the law, ever correlative in the ways of God, were found in the journey through the wilderness; and Moses remains there. He might, as a man of God and a prophet, tell of grace, as making sure the blessing of Israel. (Chap. xxxiii. 26—29.) Faithful in all his house, as a servant, he remains on this side Jordan; a proof, in these touching circumstances, that an absolutely new creation is needed to enjoy the promises of God, according to that grace which can alone, after all, bring one in safety even through the wilderness—the unfailing grace of our God.

Moses dies, and, buried by Jehovah, does not serve as an object of carnal veneration to a people at all times ready to fall into this sin, when his name gave them honour according to the flesh; just as they continually opposed him, when his presence according to God thwarted the flesh. He was a man honoured of God, who scarcely had his equal (He of course excepted who had none); but nevertheless he was man, and man is but vanity.

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JOSHUA.

We have gone through, by the goodness of God, the five books of Moses. They have set before us, on the one side, the great principles on which the relations of man with God, and of God with man, are founded; and on the other, the deliverance of a people set apart for Himself, and the different conditions in which they were placed: whether under grace, under law, or under God's government established over them by the special mediation of Moses.

We have had occasion in them to examine the history of this people in the wilderness; and the pattern presented, by the tabernacle, of things to be afterwards revealed; sacrifices and priesthood, means of relationship with God granted to sinners, wherein is indeed wanting the image of our perfect liberty to approach God, the veil not being then rent, but wherein the shadow of heavenly things is placed before our eyes with most interesting detail.

Finally, we have seen that God, having at the end of the journey, in the wilderness, pronounced the definitive justification of His people, and caused His blessing to rest upon them in spite of the efforts of their enemies, declares under what conditions the people should retain possession of the land, and enjoy His blessing in it, in the liberty and grace of God's free gift in immediate relationship with Himself; and what would be the con-

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sequences of disobedience; revealing, at the same time, His purposes with respect to this people, purposes which He would accomplish for His own glory. This brings us to the taking possession of the land of promise by the people under the guidance of Joshua.

As the Book of Numbers set forth the spiritual journey through the wilderness in which the flesh was tested and tried, so this book is full of interest and instruction, as setting before us in type the conflicts of the inheritors of heaven with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, when we have entered into them, which is the other part of the christian life. Christians are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, as Israel was to enjoy temporal blessings in earthly places. It is easy to understand that, if we may rightly use (as I do not doubt) the name of Canaan as a figurative expression of the rest of the people of God, that which we have here to do with is not the rest itself, but the spiritual conflict which secures the enjoyment of the promises of God to true believers. The Epistle to the Ephesians presents that which precisely answers, indeed alludes, to the position of Israel in this book. The saints in the assembly having been quickened and raised up with Jesus, have their conflict in the heavenly places, as it is to those who dwell there the assembly is a testimony, the testimony of the manifold wisdom of God.

It is worthy of notice, if Jordan represent death and Canaan glory, how short common christian views must come of some intended christian position; for the effect of the crossing of Jordan, and what characterized what followed, was war. The angel of Jehovah comes with a

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drawn sword as captain of Jehovah's host. It leads to see that the Christian is to learn that he is dead and risen while here, and has his place in the heavenlies in Christ, and that it is in this position that his true conflicts take place.

Joshua, then, represents Christ, not as coming down in person to take possession of the earth, but as leading His people through the power of the Holy Ghost, who acts and dwells in the midst of this people. Yet in Joshua, as in all other typical persons, those errors and sins are found which betray the weakness of the instrument, and the fragility of the vessel in which, for the time, God had condescended to put His glory.

Let us apply ourselves now to the study of this book. The first chapter shews us Joshua placed in service by Jehovah, who commands him to go over Jordan into the land which He had given to the children of Israel.

Let us pause a moment over this immediate commission from Jehovah. Moses here holds the place, not of the living mediator, but of the written word. All that he commanded, being from God, was evidently the word of God for Israel. Joshua is the energy which brings them into possession of the promises.

First of all, we have the principle on which possession is taken. The boundaries of the promised land are given; but the knowledge of the boundaries assigned by God was not enough: God had defined them very accurately; but a condition was attached to their possession. "Every place that *the sole of your foot shall tread upon*, that have I given unto you." They must *go there*, overcome the

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obstacles with the help and by the power of God, and take actual possession. Without that they could not possess it; and, in fact, this is what happened. They never took possession of all the land which God had given. Nevertheless, to faith the promise was sure: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." The power of the Spirit of God, of Christ by His Spirit (the true energy of the believer), is all-sufficient. For it is, in fact, the power of Christ Himself, who has almighty power. At the same time, the promise of never being left nor forsaken (Deut. xxxi. 6, 8) is maintained in all its force. This is what may be reckoned upon in the Lord's service —such a power of His presence that none shall be able to stand before His servant, a power which will never forsake him. With this full encouragement, he who walks by the Spirit is called upon to be strong and of a good courage.

After this comes Jehovah's exhortation, in verse 7, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant (the title always given him here), commanded thee." Spiritual strength and energy, the courage of faith, are necessary, in order that the heart may be bold enough to obey, may be free from the influences, the fears, and the motives which act upon the natural man, and tend to turn believers aside from the path of obedience, and that he may *take heed unto the word of God.*

There is nothing so unreasonable in *the world* as the walk set before us in the word—nothing which so

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exposes us to the hatred of its prince. If, then, God be not with us, there is nothing so foolish, so mad; if He be with us, nothing so wise. If we have not the strength of His presence, we dare not take heed to His word; and, in that case, we must beware of going out to war. But having the courage, which the almighty power of God inspires by His promise, we may lay hold of the good and precious word of our God: its severest precepts are only wisdom to detect the flesh, and instruction how to mortify it, so that it may neither blind nor shackle us.

The most difficult path, that which leads to the sharpest conflict, is but the road to victory and repose, causing us to increase in the knowledge of God. It is the road in which we are in communion with God, with Him who is the source of all joy; it is the earnest and the foretaste of eternal and infinite happiness.

If only this word from God, Jehovah, is heard—"Turn not from it, to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper *whithersoever thou goest*"—what joy for him who, through grace, comes forward to do the work of God!

The Lord then exhorts him to the diligent study of this book of the law: "For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Here, then, are the two great principles of spiritual life and activity: 1st, the assured presence of the almighty power of God, so that nothing can stand before His servant; 2nd, the reception of His word, submission to His word, diligent study of His word, taking it as an

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absolute guide; and having courage to do so, because of the promise and exhortation of God.

In short, the Spirit and the word are all in all for spiritual life. Furnished with this power faith goes forward, strengthened by the encouraging word of our God. God has a way in the world where Satan cannot touch us. This is the path where Jesus walked. Satan is the prince of this world; but there is a divine path through it, but no other, and there God's power is. The word is the revelation of it. So the Lord bound the strong man. He acted by the power of the Spirit, and used the word. The Spirit and the word cannot be separated without falling into fanaticism on the one hand or into rationalism on the other—without putting oneself outside the place of dependence upon God and of His guidance. Mere reason would become the master of some; imagination, of others.

Moreover, there is nothing more imaginative than reason, when destitute of guidance! In result, the enemy of souls would take possession of both. We should have *man* under Satan's influence, in the place of God. Miserable exchange! for which the unbeliever is consoled by flattering himself that there is nothing beyond his reach, because he reduces everything to the limits of his own mind. Nothing appears to me more pitiful than this unbelief, which pretends that there is nothing in the moral and intellectual sphere beyond the thoughts of man, and which denies man's capacity to receive light from a more exalted mind—the only thing that raises man above himself, while at the same time rendering him morally excellent, by

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making him humble through the sense of superiority in another.

Blessed be God, that some are to be found who have profited by the grace which has communicated to man of His perfect wisdom! Even though the imperfect vessel which received it may have a little impaired its features and its perfection, they have nevertheless profited by it so as to take their true place. Happy place, before the presence of Him whom to know is infinite and everlasting joy!

There is yet an important practical rule to be recognized in these words, "*Have not I commanded thee?*" (Chap. i. 9.) If we are not conscious that we are doing the will of God—if, before we begin to act, we have not assured ourselves of this in His presence, we shall have no courage in performing it. Perhaps indeed what we are doing is the will of God; but, not being conscious of this, we act with hesitation, without confidence, and without joy; we are repulsed by the smallest opposition, whilst, when we are assured of doing His will, and that He has said, "*Have not I commanded thee?*" nothing, through grace, can alarm us.

Nevertheless I add one word, or rather I call the reader's attention to what God says; for although the command of God inspires us with a courage which we could not have had without it, yet no revelation is by itself strength for action. But God adds, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for Jehovah thy God *is with thee* whithersoever thou goest."

We have in the New Testament a striking exemplification of this principle: Paul was caught up to the

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third heaven, where he heard things which it is not lawful for man to utter. Was this his strength in conflict? Doubtless it inwardly gave his views a scope which reacted upon his whole work; but this was not his strength for the work. On the contrary it tended to feed the false confidence of the flesh; at least the flesh would have used it for self-exaltation.

Such revelations rendered humiliation needful, and drew from God, not fresh favours (though all was favour), but, that which humbled the apostle, and rendered him weak and contemptible as to the flesh.* Being then weak, strength is given him in another way: not in the use or in the consciousness of revelations—that would have made him weak, by ministering to the exaltation of the flesh, but—in the grace and strength of Christ, which were made perfect *in this infirmity.* There lay his only strength; and he gloried in this infirmity, in which the power of Christ was perfected in him, which gave occasion for the manifestation of this power; and which, in proving that Paul was weak, proved that Christ Himself was in the work with Paul. We always need immediate strength from Christ, when

* Idle curiosity inquires what this thorn in the flesh could be. It matters little to us what it was. There might be a different thorn for each case in which God saw fit to send one. It would be always something suited to humble him who needed it. It is enough for our spiritual instruction to know by the word, that as to Paul it was an infirmity which tended to make him personally contemptible in his preaching. (See Gal. iv. 14; 2 Cor. x. 10.) The object of God, in such a trial, as meeting the danger, is so evident to every spiritual mind, that it were useless to dwell upon it.

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acting on the part of Christ—strength which is made perfect in weakness, to do His work—abiding strength, for without Him we can do nothing. Let us remember this truth.

I add but one word on the end of the chapter. There are Christians (I cannot say approved of God) who take their place on this side of Jordan (that is to say, on this side of the power of death and resurrection, applied to the soul by the Spirit of God). The place in which they settle is not Egypt; it is beyond the Red Sea, it is within the limits of Israel's possessions—outside Egypt and this side the Euphrates, river of Babylon. But it is not Canaan. It is a land they have chosen for their cattle and their possessions; they establish their children and their wives there. It is not Joshua who conquered that land; it is not the place of testimony to the power of the Spirit of God—that Canaan which is beyond Jordan.

However, although the children and the families might be placed there, yet the men of war must, whether they will or no, take part in the conflicts of the children of God, who seek no rest except where the power of God is found, that is to say, in Canaan, in the heavenly places, all enemies being driven out. And indeed when the sin of Israel, and their consequent weakness, exposed the people to the successful attacks of their enemies, of the enemies of God, this country was the first that fell into their hands. "Know ye that Ramoth Gilead is ours?" leads to no blessing to the people when sorrowful on account of its loss. For the time all was well; that is, as long as Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of

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Manasseh remained under the authority of Joshua, and through him the power of God conducted the people. They too say to Joshua that which God had said, "Be strong and of a good courage."

How often among the children of God some principle or line of conduct is brought in, that is inferior in nature to the excellence of that work which is going on in the purpose of God; but which, as long as the power of God is working according to this purpose, does not disengage itself, so to say, from the work, so as to assume any prominence, and produce uneasiness and sorrow! But when this divine stream becomes shallow in consequence of man's unfaithfulness, then bitter fruits appear; spiritual declensions, weakness, heart-burnings, divisions, and direct subjection to the evil power, flowing from the impossibility of reconciling that which is spiritual with that which is carnal, and of maintaining a spiritual testimony while conforming to the ways of the world.

But this testimony belongs to the other side of Jordan. The two tribes and a half may follow this course if they will, but we cannot come out of Canaan to join them. Alas! these beautiful meadows, well suited to feed their flocks, have found but too many Lots, and tribes of Israel, to settle in them to their loss. The shoals that are met with in our christian voyage may perhaps be safely crossed at high tide; but at low tide skilful pilotage is needed to avoid them, and to float always in the full current of the grace of God in the channel it has made for itself. But there is a sure and stedfast pilot; and we are safe if we are content to follow Him. God has

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given us what we need for this. Perhaps we must be satisfied with a very little boat: the unerring pilot will be in it.

At the first Moses was not pleased with the proposal of the two tribes and a half. The thing was permitted certainly. But in general the first thoughts of faith are the best; they only contemplate the promises, the full effect of the promises and the thoughts of God. After-thoughts are not in connection with that.

The second chapter contains the interesting history of Rahab.

How beautiful it is to see the grace of God setting up its way-marks from the beginning, that the eye of faith might know where to rest, when God was obliged to narrow His dealings with respect to man, and to limit Himself in His relationship to man, until the precious blood of Christ gave that grace its full scope and liberty! Seed of the woman, seed of Abraham, seed of David—it narrows more and more. The promises even, as to the government of God, give place to the law, until a small remnant of Israel, proud in proportion to its poverty, becomes the vessel which contains the yet smaller remnant of faithful ones who were waiting for the redemption of Israel.

And what shallow thoughts, though true ones, were found in the hearts of these precious saints, in comparison with the hopes of an Abraham and the solemn declarations of an Enoch! The Lord, ever perfect, ever precious, might well say (one understands it, although the depths of His heart are infinitely beyond our reach),

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"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" But there have always been these signals for faith. If God acts, He goes beyond the limits of the existing dispensation, and oversteps His established relationships with man.

It is thus that the divine nature of Jesus, and the divine rights of His person, manifested themselves. He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was the limit of His formal relationship with men. But if faith lays hold of the goodness of God, can this goodness deny itself, or limit itself, to those who, for the time being, were the alone subjects of His dispensation? No, Christ could not say, God is not good, I am not good, to the degree you have imagined. How could God deny Himself? The Syrophenician woman obtains what she asks for. Precious prerogative of faith, which knows and owns God through everything; which honours Him as He is, and ever finds Him what He is!

Wherein was manifested that faith in Rahab which the apostle cites as a pattern? Admirable proof that the way in which God acts in grace is before and above law, that grace overleaps the boundary which law prescribes to man, even while maintaining its authority—an authority however which can only manifest itself in condemnation! What then was Rahab's faith? It was the faith which recognizes that God is with His people, all weak and few as they may be, unpossessed of their inheritance, wandering on the earth without a country, but *beloved of God.*

If Abraham believed God when there was not a people, Rahab identified herself with this people when they

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had nothing but God. She well knew that the inheritance was theirs, and that, however strong their enemies might be, in spite of their walled cities and their chariots of iron, their heart was melted. This is always the case with the instruments of the enemy, whatever appearances may be, when the people of God are under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the path of obedience which God has marked out for them.

Thus, in the midst of heathens, this poor simple woman, a bad and despised member of an accursed race doomed to destruction, is saved, and her name is a testimony to the glory of God. Her house, recognized by the sure mark, the line of scarlet thread, becomes the refuge and the security of all who take shelter in it, trusting to the promise given.

And now the people are to enter the promised land; but how enter it? For Jordan, with its flood at the highest, lay as a barrier before the people of God, guarding the territory of those that oppose their hopes. Now Jordan represents death, but death looked at rather as the end of human life, and the token of the enemy's power, than as the fruit and testimony of the just judgment of God. The passage of the Red Sea was also death; but the people were there as having part (in type) in the death and resurrection of Jesus accomplishing their redemption, and setting them free for ever from Egypt, their house of bondage, that is, from every claim of Satan,* as the blood on the door-

* It is important first to see Jesus alone in life and in death:

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posts had from the judgment of God. It was then that the people entered upon their pilgrimage in the wilderness.

Redemption, complete salvation, purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, introduces the Christian into this pilgrimage. With God he only passes through the world as a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; still, this pilgrimage is but the life down here, although it is the life of the redeemed.*

But, as we have seen, there is the heavenly life, the warfare in the heavenly places, which goes on at the same time. When I say at the same time, I do not mean at the same instant, but during the same period of our natural life on the earth. It is one thing to pass through this world faithfully, or unfaithfully, in our daily circumstances, under the influence of a better hope; it is another thing to be waging a spiritual warfare for the enjoyment of the promises and of heavenly privileges, as men already dead and risen, as being absolutely not of the world. Both these things are true of the christian

there we have the thing itself in its perfection. It is equally important then to know that God sees us there, that it expresses our place; that God sees us in Him, and that it is our place before God. But then there is also our taking that place, by the Spirit, in faith and in fact. The former was the Red Sea, as to death; it was Christ's death: Jordan, our entering into death with Him. The Red Sea was deliverance from Egypt; Jordan, entrance into Canaan. The Red Sea was condemning sin in the flesh, and so deliverance; Jordan, our bringing into heavenly places as risen with Christ. The people followed the ark in going through Jordan.

* To this the Epistle to the Romans answers.

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life. Now, it is as dead and risen again in Christ that we are in spiritual conflict: to make war in Canaan we must have crossed the Jordan.*

The Jordan then is death and resurrection with Christ, looked at in their spiritual power, not as to their efficacy for the justification of a sinner, but as to their realization for his life in the heavenly places, into which Christ has entered. A comparison between Philippians iii. and Colossians ii., iii. shews how death and resurrection are bound up with the true character of the circumcision of Christ. In Philippians iii. the return of Christ is introduced as completing the work by the resurrection of the body. We are not looked at as now risen with Him. In both passages the heavenly life is spoken of as a present thing; but there is entire separation, even down here, between the pilgrimage and this heavenly life itself, although the latter has a powerful influence on the character of our pilgrim life. This influence was perfect and entire in the case of the Lord Jesus; but His life in connection with men, although the ever-perfect expression of the effect of His life of heavenly communion, was evidently distinct from it. The joy of the heavenly life entirely set aside all the motives of the lower life; and, leading to the sufferings of His earthly life in connection with man, produced a *life* of perfect patience before God. In Him all was

* To this Ephesians answers. Colossians is partially both, life here in resurrection, but it does not set us in heavenly places, only our affections there. By heavenly life I mean living in spirit in heavenly places. Actually Christ was divinely there; we as united to Him by the Holy Ghost.

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sinless; but His joys were elsewhere. Thus also with the Christian; there is nothing in common between these two spheres of life. And, besides, nature has no part whatever in that above; in that below there are things which belong to nature and to the world, not in the bad sense of the word "world," but considered as creation. Nothing of this enters into the life of Canaan.

Christ alone could pass through death, and exhaust its strength, in being in it as shedding the blood of the everlasting covenant; and He alone could rise again from death, according to the power of the life that was in Him, "for in him was life." He has opened this way; He has converted death into a power that destroys the flesh which shackles us, and a deliverance from that in us which gives advantage to the enemy with whom we are to fight, being thenceforward brought into Canaan. Therefore the apostle says, "All things are yours whether life or death." Now, every true Christian is dead and risen in Christ; the knowing and realizing it is another thing. But the word of God sets christian privilege before us according to its real power in Christ.

The ark of Jehovah passed over before the people, who were to leave the space of two thousand cubits between it and them, "that they might know the way by which they must go; for they had not passed this way before." Who indeed had passed through death, to rise above its power, until Christ, the true Ark of the Covenant, had opened this way? Man, whether innocent or sinful, could do nothing here. This way was

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alike unknown to both, as was also the heavenly life that follows. This life is altogether beyond Jordan: the scenes of spiritual conflict do not belong to man in his life below. No wilderness experience, be it ever so faithful, has anything to do with it, although the grapes of Canaan may cheer the pilgrims by the way. But Christ has destroyed all the power of death for His people, so far as it is the power of the enemy and the token of his dominion. It is now but the witness of the power of Jesus. It is indeed death; but, as we have said, it is the death of that which fetters us.

I will add some brief remarks. "Lord of all the earth" is the title Joshua repeats, as that which God had here taken; for it is in testimony to this great truth that God had planted Israel in Canaan. Hereafter He will establish in power, according to His counsels, that which had been put into the hands of Israel, that they might keep it according to their responsibility. This last principle is the key to the whole history of the Bible, as to man, Israel, the law, and all it has to do with. All is first trusted to man, who ever fails, and then God accomplishes it in blessing and power.*

Thus this chapter supplies us with very clear indications of that which God has promised to accomplish in the last days, when He will indeed shew Himself to be "Lord of all the earth," in Israel brought back in grace by His mighty power. And we must attend to this testimony of the purpose of God in establishing Israel in

* And that in much fuller glory, according to His counsels before the world was, and in the Second Adam.

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their land. Harvest time will come, and the strength of the enemy will overflow its banks; but we, as Christians, are already on the other side. The strength of the enemy passed all bounds in the death of Jesus; and we do not say now, "Lord of all the earth;" but "All power is given unto him *in heaven and in earth.*"

Let us remark, also, how God encourages His people. They must combat. The sole of the foot must tread on every part of the promised land to possess it; and it must be in conflict that the power of the enemy and entire dependence upon God are realized. But, while fighting boldly for Him, He would have us know that victory is certain. The spies said to Joshua, "Truly Jehovah hath delivered into our hands all the land, for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." This is what we know and prove by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, so different from that of the flesh as brought by the ten who came back with Caleb and Joshua.

But if we are introduced into a life which is *on the other side* of death, by the power of the Spirit of God, as being dead and risen in Christ, there must be the remembrance of that death, by which we have been delivered from that which is *on this side of it*, of the ruin of man as he now is, and of the fallen creation to which he belongs. Twelve men, one out of each tribe, were to bring stones from the midst of Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm with the ark, while all Israel passed over on dry ground. The Holy Ghost brings with Him—so to speak—the touching

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memorial of the death of Jesus, by the mighty power of which He has turned all the effect of the enemy's strength into life and deliverance. Death comes with us from the grave of Jesus: no longer now as death, it is become life unto us. This memorial was to be set up at Gilgal. The meaning of this circumstance will be considered in the next chapter. We will only dwell here on the memorial itself. The twelve stones, for the twelve tribes, represented the tribes of God as a whole. This number is the symbol of perfection in human agency, in connection here, as elsewhere, with Christ, as in the case of the shewbread.

Here also the Spirit sets us—Christians—in a more advanced position. There were twelve loaves of the shewbread, and we form but one in our life of union by the Holy Ghost with Christ our Head, which is the life we speak of here. Now it is His death that is recalled to us in the memorial left us by the loving-kindness of our Lord, who condescends to value our remembrance of His love.

I only speak here of this memorial as the sign of that which should always be a reality. We eat His flesh, we drink His life given for us. Being one now in the power of our union with Christ risen, dead to the world and to sin, it is from the bottom of the river into which He went down to make it the way of life—heavenly life—for us, that we bring back the precious memorial of His love, and of the place in which He fulfilled His work. It is a *broken* body which we eat, a *poured out* blood which we drink; and this is the reason why blood was entirely prohibited to Israel after the flesh; for how can

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death be drunk by those who are mortal? But we drink it because, alive with Him, the death of Christ is our life, and it is in realizing the death of that which is mortal that we live with Him. The remembrance of Jordan, of death when Christ was in it, is the remembrance of that power which secured our salvation in the last stronghold of him who had the power of death. It is the remembrance of that love which went down into death, in order that, as to us, it should lose all its power, except that of doing us good, and being a witness unto us of infinite and unchangeable love.

The power of resurrection-life takes all strength from Satan: "He who is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy; and the creature has no strength against him, even though it should not be drawn away into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But, if this be true, it is also necessary to realize it practically. "Ye are dead . . . therefore mortify." (Col. iii.) This is what Gilgal means.

The matter in hand was not yet the taking of cities, the realization of God's magnificent promises. Self must first of all be mortified. Before conquering Midian, Gideon must cast down the altar that was in his own house.

Remark further, the wilderness is not the place where circumcision is carried out, even though we may have

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been faithful there. That is the character the world takes when we have been redeemed, and where the flesh which is in us is actually sifted. But death, and our entrance into heavenly places, judge the whole nature in which we live in this world. But then, consequent upon our death and resurrection with Christ, it is practically applied, and circumcision is the application of the Spirit's power to the mortification of the flesh in him who has fellowship with the death and resurrection of Jesus. (Compare 2 Cor. iv. 10, 12.) Therefore Paul says (Phil. iii.), "We are the circumcision." As to an outwardly moral life, Paul had that before. Had he now added true piety to his religion of forms, the true fear of God to his good works? It was far more than that. Christ had taken the place of all in him—first of all as to righteousness, which is the groundwork.

But further, the apostle says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Therefore it is in "pressing towards the mark" that he waits for the coming of Jesus to accomplish this resurrection as to his body. In the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter ii., he speaks to us of the circumcision of Christ. Is it only that he has ceased to sin (the certain effect indeed of this work of God)? No; for in describing this work he adds, "Being buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him, through faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead." The consequences of this heavenly life are found in chapter

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iii. 1, which is in immediate connection with the verse just quoted. Here also the work is crowned by the manifestation of the saints with Jesus when He shall appear.

Our Gilgal is in verse 5: "Mortify therefore." It is not "die to sin." Mortify is active power. It rests on the power of that which is already true to faith: "Ye are dead: mortify therefore." This being the standing, it is realized. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead," said the apostle (Rom. vi.), when speaking on the same subject.* This is the practical power of the type of the stones brought from Jordan. They are a symbol of our place, being the result of death with Christ who was dead.† But we are also raised up together with Him,‡ as having died with Him. But there is another aspect of truth, we were dead in sins. He came down in grace where we were, on the way down, so to speak, atoning for our sins. God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses.§ All that He did was for us; and now, associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Spirit, I am also sitting in, not yet with, Him in heavenly places;‖ I appropriate to myself, or rather God ascribes to me, all that He has done, as though it had happened to myself: He is dead to sin, in Him I am dead to sin. Therefore I can "mortify:"

* We have three steps in this process: God's judgment, "Ye are dead;" the recognition of it by faith, "Reckon yourselves dead;" and the carrying it out in practice, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

† So far the Romans. ‡ Thus far the Colossians.

§ Thus far, also, the Colossians. ‖ This is Ephesian teaching.

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which I could not do as being still alive in the flesh. Where was the nature, the life, to do it in? I am risen with Him, and in Him sitting in heavenly places, so far as death and resurrection with Him go, which is our present subject in Joshua.

Now, circumcision being the practical application of that of which we have been speaking, we remember the death of Christ, and the mortification of our members on the earth is accomplished through grace, in the consciousness of grace. Otherwise it would only be the effort of a soul under the law, and in this case there would be a bad conscience and no strength. This is what sincere monks attempted; but their efforts were not made in the power of grace, of Christ and His strength. If there was sincerity, there was also the deepest spiritual misery. In order to mortify there must be life; and if we have life, we have already died in Him who died for us.

The stones set up in Gilgal were taken out of the midst of Jordan, and Jordan was already crossed before Israel was circumcised. The memorial of grace and of death, as the witness to us of a love which wrought out our salvation, by taking up our sins in grace, and dying to sin once, stood in the place where death to sin was to be effected. In that He died, He died unto sin once; and we reckon ourselves dead to sin. Christ dying for sins, in perfect love, in unfailing efficacy, and His death to sin, give us peace through His blood, but also enable us through grace to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and to mortify our members which are on earth.

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In every circumstance, then, we must remember that we are dead, and say to ourselves, If through grace I am dead, what have I to do with sin, which supposes me to be alive? Christ is in this death in the beauty and in the power of His grace; it is deliverance itself. As to the glory, as running the race down here, the apostle says, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Thus, in being dead, and only thus, will the reproach of Egypt be taken away. Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly. It is only the heavenly man who has died with Christ that disentangles himself from all that is of Egypt. The life of the flesh always cleaves to Egypt; but the principle of worldliness is uprooted in him who is dead and risen with Christ and living a heavenly life. There is in the life of man a necessary link with the world as God sees it, that is, corrupt and sinful; with a dead man there is no such link. The life of a risen man is not of this world; it has no connection with it. He who possesses this life may pass through the world, and do many things that others do. He eats, works, suffers; but, as to his life and his object, he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. Christ, risen and ascended up on high, is his life. He subdues his flesh, he mortifies it, for in point of fact he is down here! but he does not live in it. The camp was *always* Gilgal. The people —the army of Jehovah—returned thither, after their victories and their conquests. If we do not do the same, we shall be feeble: the flesh will betray us. We shall fall

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before the enemy in the hour of conflict, even though it may be honestly entered into in the service of God. It is at Gilgal the monument of the stones from Jordan is set up; for if the consciousness of being dead with Jesus is necessary to enable us to mortify the flesh, it is through this mortification that we attain to the knowledge of what it is to be thus dead.

We do not realize the inward communion (I am not speaking now of justification), the sweet and divine enjoyment of the death of Jesus for us, if the flesh is unmortified. It is impossible. But if we return to Gilgal, to the blessed mortification of our own flesh, we find there all the sweetness (and it is infinite), all the powerful efficacy of this communion with the death of Jesus, with the love manifested in it. "Always bearing about in the body," says the apostle, "the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal body." Thus we do not remain in Jordan; but there remains in the heart all the preciousness of this glorious work, a work which the angels desire to look into, which is for us, and which Christ, in His love, appropriates to us. We find Him with us at Gilgal—a place of no outward show or victory to attract the eyes of men; but where He, who is the source of all victory, is found in the power and the communion which enable us to overcome.

But there were also twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan; and indeed, if we apply the power of the death of Christ to mortify the flesh, the heart—exercised in, and fully enjoying heavenly things—loves to turn again to Jordan, to the place where Jesus went down in

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the power of life and obedience, and to gaze upon that Ark of the Covenant, which stood there, and stayed those impetuous waters till all the people had passed over. One loves, now that He is risen, while viewing the power of death in all its extent, to behold Jesus there, who went down into it, but who destroyed its power for us. In the overflowing of the nations, Christ will be the security and the salvation of Israel; but He has been our security and our salvation with respect to much more terrible enemies. The heart loves to stand on the banks of that river—already crossed—and to realize, while studying what Jesus was, the work and the wondrous love of Him who went down into it *alone*, until all was accomplished. But in one sense we were there. The twelve stones shew that the people had to do with this work, although the ark was there alone when the waters were to be restrained.

In the Psalms we can especially there contemplate the Lord, now that we are in peace on the other side the stream. Oh, if the Christian, the assembly itself, knew how to seat himself there, and there meditate on Jesus! In doctrine the Psalms set forth also the connection between the death of Jesus and the residue of Israel passing through the waters of tribulation in the last days.

Behold then the people out of Egypt and in Canaan, according to the faithfulness of God's promise; not only redeemed out of Egypt, but brought into Canaan, the reproach of Egypt being rolled away, and the people of God having taken their place at Gilgal—the true circumcision of heart of which we have spoken.

Israel encamped at Gilgal.

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The character of their communion with God is then pointed out before their victories. They keep the passover in the plains of Jericho. Jehovah prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies.

The blood was no longer sprinkled, as in Egypt, upon the lintel and the two side-posts, that they might be sheltered from the destroyer, and preserved from the just judgment which spread terror throughout every house where the blood was not seen.

We need this aspect of the blood of Christ, while judgment threatens in the territory of sin and Satan, although called of God to come out of it. God's justice and our consciences require it. But here the passover is no longer this; it is the memorial of accomplished salvation. Neither is it participation by grace in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is the soul's communion; it is the sweet spiritual recollection (while peacefully sitting in the heavenlies) of a work all His own, of His death as a lamb without blemish. We feed upon it, as His redeemed people, in the enjoyment of this position in the land of promise and of God—a land which belongs to us in consequence of this redemption, and of our being raised up with Christ. The death of Jesus can only be thus enjoyed on the other side of Jordan, as risen with Him. Then, in peace, in fellowship with Him, and with ineffable feelings of thankfulness, we return to the death of the Lamb; we contemplate it; we feed upon it: our heavenly happiness and intelligence only increase our sense of its preciousness.

On the morrow after the passover the people ate of

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the old corn of the land. Thus, raised up and seated in the heavenly places, it is the "things above" which feed the soul, and maintain it in vigour and in joy.* From thenceforward, also, the manna ceased. This is the more remarkable, because Christ, we know, is the true manna, but Christ down here, Christ after the flesh. I contemplate Jesus (God manifest in the flesh) with adoration. My soul feeds upon the powerful attractions of His grace in His humiliation; but in that condition He remained alone. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; otherwise it abides alone.

But—while knowing what He has been—it is a Christ seated above, who died and is raised again, whom I now know. His death, of the memorial of which we have spoken, is undoubtedly the basis of all. There is nothing more precious: but it is a heavenly Christ with whom we have now to do.

We contemplate, while seeking to imitate, the precious model which He has set before us, as a heavenly man upon the earth. But, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He has, for our sakes, sanctified Himself, that we might be sanctified through the truth. We delight ourselves with the contemplation of all His grace here below; our

* Let us remark, also, that christian simplicity and sincerity, the practical holiness of the christian life, the unleavened bread which was eaten on the morrow after the passover, is a heavenly thing. Nothing on this side Jordan can be this. It is of the growth of that land; therefore it is connected with Jesus, and peace through His death as a thing previous.

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affections are drawn out by a suffering Saviour. Nothing more precious than the Son of God winning the confidence of man's heart to God by His love in their midst when far from Him; but our fellowship is with a Christ in heaven. And the Christ, whom we know on earth, is a heavenly Christ, and not an earthly Christ, as He will be to the Jews by and by. It was bread on earth no doubt, but bread come down from heaven. In passing through this wilderness (and we are passing through it), Christ, as the manna, is infinitely precious to us. His humiliation—His grace—comfort, relieve, and sustain us. We feel that He has passed through the same trials, and our heart is sustained by the thought that the same Christ is with us. This is the Christ we need for the wilderness — the bread which came down from heaven.

But, as a heavenly people, it is Christ, as belonging to heaven and heavenly things, which we feed upon; for it is to Christ ascended up on high that we are united; it is there that He is our life. In a word, we feed on heavenly things, on Christ above, on Christ dying indeed as a sweet remembrance, but on Christ living as the power of life and grace. We feed on the remembrance of Christ on the cross; this is the passover. But we keep the feast with a Christ who is the centre of heavenly things, and feed upon them all. (Col. iii. 1, 2.) It is the old corn of the land into which we have entered. For He belongs to heaven.

Thus, before giving battle, in front of the very walls of Jericho (representative of the enemy's power), God gives us to enjoy the fruit of this heavenly land as

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being all our own. We remember the death of Jesus, as redemption long since wrought out; and we feed on the old corn of the land, on heavenly things, as our own portion. For, being risen with Christ by His grace, all is ours.

After this beautiful picture of the position and the privileges of God's people, who—according to God's own rights—may enjoy everything before engaging in a single battle, we find that war must follow. But there is one thing necessary for making war and obtaining blessings by conquest.

Jehovah presented Himself as Captain of the host; it is He Himself who leads us. He is there with a drawn sword in His hand. Faith owns no neutrality in heavenly things.* "And Joshua said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of Jehovah am I come."

Remark here that the presence of Jehovah, as Captain of the host, as much demanded holiness and reverence, as when He came down to redeem His people (Exodus iii.) in that divine holiness and majesty which were manifested according to their just requirements in the death of Jesus, who gave Himself that He might magnify and establish them for ever. Such as He was, who called Himself "I am," when He thus came down in

* I say, in heavenly things, because the heart is sensible of good qualities in the creature. The Lord loved the rich young man when He had heard his replies. But when a rejected and ascended Lord is to be followed, the will always sets itself either for or against. Faith knows this; it knows too the rights of God, and it maintains them.

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righteousness and majesty; such also is He when standing in the midst of His people to bless and lead them in conflict.

The almighty power of God is with the church in its warfare. But His infinite holiness is there also, and He will not make good His power in their conflicts if His holiness is compromised by the defilement, the negligence, the heedless levity, of His people; or by their failure in those feelings and affections which become *the presence of God, for it is God Himself who is there.*

In chapter vi. we find the principles on which the conquests of Israel are founded. The work is altogether God's. He may indeed exercise His people in conflict, but it is He who does all. "They went up every man straight before him." There is submission here in the use of means, readiness to follow a course which, in the eyes of the world, is absurd and without object; but which loudly proclaims the presence of the Lord in the midst of His people. There is entire dependence upon God, a perfect confidence in Him, which openly declares it has nothing else to do but to obey Him.

The promise is sure; they act in obedience. That is the principle. Joshua—type of the energy and the mind of the Spirit in one who enjoys communion with the Lord—is certain of success; and in this assurance of faith he acts without hesitation. In effect, all the strength of the enemy falls to the ground without the use of any means that could account for it.

Another principle is, that there must be no fellowship

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whatever with that which constitutes the power of the enemy of God, with the world, and that which is its strength. All is accursed. It is so with us in this world. If the world of Sodom had enriched Abraham, he would have been dependent on that world; he would have owed it something; he would not have been at liberty from it to belong entirely to God. "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed." God may use these things by consecrating them to Himself, if He will. But if man, if the Christian, meddle with them, the Lord must judge him. Cities walled up to heaven, the greatest obstacles are as nothing; but holiness, complete separation from the world because power is of God—that is the condition of strength. Jericho, representing the enemy's power and means of defence (inasmuch as it was the first city standing as a barrier to arrest the progress of God's people), is put under a curse for ever; and sentence is passed against any one who should rebuild it. (See 1 Kings xvi. 34.) The abstract principles of the power of God and the enemy's strength are presented by this city and its fall, in what evidences them, and in contrast. But, if God is there, and the world is utterly condemned, His grace calls out from this world a people saved by faith from its abominations, and Rahab, a poor unworthy sinner, is saved from its judgment, and has her place and part with the people of God.*

* It is noticeable that she is, as Ruth the stranger was, in the line of the Lord's royal genealogy. (Matt. i. 5.)

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Chapter vii. lays open the principles of God's government, or His ways in the midst of His people who are in conflict. Victory leads to negligence. The work is thought easy. After a manifestation of God's power there is a kind of confidence which in reality is only self-confidence, for it neglects God. What proves this is that God is not consulted. Ai was but a small city. Two or three thousand men could easily take it. They went up and viewed the country, but God was forgotten. The consequence of this will be seen. If they had taken counsel of Jehovah, either He would have given no answer on account of the accursed thing, or He would have made its presence known. But they did not seek His counsel; they went forward, and they were defeated. The people of God, surrounded by the enemy, have lost their strength, and flee before the least city in the land. What will they do now? This is more than they know. Engaged in battle, and unable to conquer, what can they do there, where victory alone is their safety? "The hearts of the people melted and became as water." Joshua cries unto Jehovah, for in such a case even he who has the Spirit is taken by surprise, not having acted according to the Spirit. He must fall on his face before Jehovah, for their condition is not normal, not according to the Spirit who is the only guide and wisdom of His people. Joshua however recalls the power by which God had brought the people over Jordan, and contrasts it with their present condition, so evidently inconsistent with it. "Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had been content,

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and dwelt on the other side Jordan, O Lord! what shall I say?"

This was a perturbed state of mind, the effect of a mixture of unbelief with the remembrance of the wonders which the power of God had wrought. Joshua loves the people, and he sets before God the glory of His name; yet with a timorous wish that they had remained on the other side of Jordan (and what to do there? for unbelief ever reasons badly), away from the conflict which led to such disasters—a wish that betrayed the unbelief which disturbed his heart.

Such is the state of a believer's soul in the conflict which the Holy Ghost brings him into, when the state of his soul does not inwardly correspond with the presence of the Holy Ghost who is our only strength for conflict. There is no escape. The position in which the saints find themselves is one which absolutely requires strength; yet the very nature of God prevents His bestowing it. We lament, we recognize His power, we dread the enemy. We talk of God's glory; but we are thinking of our own fears and our own condition. Yet the thing was very simple. "Israel hath sinned." Man, even when spiritual, looks at results (because he is in close contact with them), even while owning the power of God, and the connection between Him and His people. But God looks at the cause, and also at what He is Himself. It is true that He is love, but He cannot sacrifice the very principles of His being, nor deny Himself in those relationships which are founded upon what He is. His glory is indeed connected through grace with the well-being of His people. But He will

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vindicate His glory, and even bless His people in the end, without compromising these principles. Faith must count on the sure result of His faithfulness, but bring the heart (submitting to God's ways) into accordance with those principles.

It would not be maintaining His glory in the midst of His people if He tolerated amongst them anything contrary to His essential character, and made use of His power to maintain them in a condition which would deny His nature. The relationship would be broken, and God Himself compromised—a thing absolutely impossible. They had sin amongst them, and the strength of God is no longer with them; for God cannot identify Himself with sin.

And let us remember that there was sin also in the neglect which went forward without seeking counsel from God. Joshua's cry did not at once bring deliverance, but, first of all, discovery of the sin, with respect to which God is very precise and exact. When the government of His people is in question, He searches into everything, and takes cognizance of the smallest details. (See ver. 11.)

Further, God not only said, "therefore Israel *could* not stand," but "Thou *canst* not stand." Their weakness would continue. Sorrowful change! Before it was "No man shall be able to stand before thee." Now they could not stand themselves. Where there is not holiness, God allows the weakness of His people to be practically seen; for there is no strength but in Him, and He will not go out with them where holiness is wanting, nor thus sanction and encourage sin. Only, let us remark

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here, that God does not always withdraw His blessing at once from those who are unfaithful. He frequently chastens them on one hand, and blesses them on the other. He deals patiently, He instructs them, in His grace; He does not bless them on the side where the evil is, but He acts with admirable tenderness and perfect knowledge, taking the trouble, so to say, of following the soul in detail according to its condition and for its good; for He is full of grace. How often He thus waits for the repentance of His people! Alas! how often He waits for it in vain. But we have here the great principle on which He acts (as in the case of Jericho, that of His power exercised on behalf of His people), proving that all is of God.

Another important principle is here set before us. The people of God are viewed corporately, as to the effects of sin amongst them. God is in their midst. Sin is committed there. He is there. But since there is only one God there, and the people are one, if God is displeased and cannot act, the whole people suffer in consequence, for they have no other strength but God. The only remedy is to put away the accursed thing.

We find the same thing at Corinth, modified according to the principles of grace. The wicked person must be put away. If not, they are all identified with the sin until they have put it away, and have thus "approved themselves to be clear." In doing so, they take God's part against the sin, and the relationship between God and the body reassumes its normal state. Nevertheless all this cannot fail to produce certain painful effects.

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If the accursed thing is there, although God may have been glorified in the manifestation of the perfection of His ways—of His jealousy of sin, and perfect knowledge of all that happens (for Achan's confession justifies God, and the people have not a word to say), still, though the sin is no longer concealed, discipline must be carried out. The confession of Achan (whose sin had been brought to light, through the obedience of the people, or of Joshua, to the Lord's directions) does but ratify, in the eyes of all, the just judgment of God.

But it is well to remember here that christian discipline has always the recovery of the soul for its object. Even if the offender should be delivered unto Satan, it is for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord—a most forcible reason for exercising this discipline, according to the measure of our spiritual power; for we cannot go beyond that. At the least we might always humble ourselves before God, in order that the evil may be removed. To be indifferent to the presence of evil in the church is to be guilty of high treason against God; it is taking advantage of His love to deny His holiness, despising and dishonouring Him before all. God acts in love in the church; but He acts with holiness and for the maintenance of holiness: otherwise it would not be the love of God which acted; it would not be seeking the prosperity of souls.

It is interesting to see that this valley of Achor, the witness and the memorial of the first sin committed by Israel after they had entered the land, is given them "for a door of hope" (Hosea ii. 15), when the sovereign grace of God is in action. It is always thus. Fear sin,

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but do not fear the bitterness of its discovery, nor that of its chastisement: for at this point God resumes the course of blessing. Blessed be His gracious name for it! Alas! Shinar (Babylon) and money soon begin to affect the ways of the people of God. They find these things amongst their enemies, and the carnal heart covets them. Observe also that, if there is faithfulness and obedience, God never fails to manifest and take away that which hinders the blessing of His people. Let us follow the history of the people's restoration to God's favour.

Chapter viii. exhibits the return of Israel to their strength in God.

If all the people were compromised by Achan's sin, it was needful that they should be sensibly restored to confidence, that they should be established, and consequently that they should go through whatever was necessary to their restoration. They must experience many things. Much experience of this kind would be avoided by walking in the simplicity and integrity of faith. Jacob had more of it than Abraham, and it was when unfaithful that Abraham went through the most (that is, of such experience as is really felt to exercise the heart). But God makes use of this to teach us what we are, and what He is: two things which—if we know them not—render experience necessary.

Success is now certain: but all the people must go up against this small city which, judging by human strength, might have been taken by two or three thousand men. Pride and false confidence are sharply rebuked by this. How much trouble must Joshua now

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take! Lay an ambush, feign to flee: all this to take a small city, and not much glory after all. It costs more pains to return into the path of blessing than it would have done to avoid the evil. But the simplicity of faith and its natural vigour can be regained no other way.

Meanwhile the power of God is with them, and everything succeeds; although the manifestation of this power was not such as it had been at Jericho. At length by God's command Joshua stretches out the spear that was in his hand toward the city. It does not appear that the ambush saw it, or that it was a concerted signal.* But as soon as it was stretched out, the ambush arose, entered the city, and set fire to it. It is thus that the Lord, working by His Spirit at the opportune moment, produces activity in those even who may not know why. At a given time they are impelled onwards, and think they act from motives of their own, while it is the Lord who directs all their steps in harmony with what He is doing elsewhere; and thus He brings about the success of the whole affair.

It is highly interesting to see the Lord thus the hidden spring of all action, giving impulse to the activity of His children, who in detail are ignorant of what it is that puts them in motion; although, on the whole, the mind of God is revealed to them, even as Israel had the

* It the more appears that this was not a concerted signal, but that the action had the meaning which I have here assigned to it, because Joshua drew not his hand back till they had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai; and this does not agree with the idea of a mere signal.

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general orders of Joshua. When Christ stretches out the spear, all is activity to bring about the counsels of His wisdom, and lead to the pre-determined results of His mighty grace. May we only have faith to believe it!

We have still two other important facts to consider in this chapter. Jehovah had already shewn in the taking of Jericho, that it was His might alone that gave victory, or rather that made everything fall before Israel, the prince of this world having no power against Him; and that, the gold and silver being Jehovah's, the people were not to seek the treasures of the conquered world, nor to enrich themselves with its spoils. In general, however, when Israel had exterminated their enemies, they took possession of everything, as of the promised land.

Now that these two great principles are established, (namely, that the power of God is with His people, and that He will have holiness and consecration to Himself maintained in the camp,) Joshua takes formal possession of the whole country, as belonging to Jehovah.

This is not celebrating the memorial of their salvation by the blood of the Lamb; nor is it feeding on the old corn of the heavenly land in the place of rest; where the grace and perfection of Christ and the redemption He has wrought out are peacefully remembered. The people treat the land itself as belonging of right to Jehovah, according to the strength of the spiritual might which is in activity to assert His rights, and which recognizes them, although the conquest of the land is only just begun. Before Jericho (in type) they had

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fellowship with the cross, and with things above, without striking a blow.

Here, the conditions of the warfare being laid down, they publicly declare beforehand that it is Jehovah's land. Though Satan is still in possession of the contested land, by right it is Jehovah's. There were two actions by which Joshua verified this. He commanded the dead body of the king of Ai to be taken down from the tree as soon as the sun was down. This was the ordinance in Deuteronomy xxi. 22, 23, "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God); that thy land be not defiled, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." Israel's victory was complete. The curse hung over their enemies, who were also God's enemies. They were made a curse, and declared to be so. Now, according to Joshua's faith, the land was so entirely Israel's, as the gift of God, that it ought not to be defiled; he had, therefore, the dead body taken down that it should not be so in fact.

The other action was Joshua's building an altar on Mount Ebal. Having taken possession of Canaan as a consecrated land, they recognize Jehovah as the *God of Israel* by worshipping Him in the land. The altar was there as a witness, and as a bond between the people and Jehovah who had given them the land. The erection of this altar has been already spoken of, when considering the Book of Deuteronomy; I will not recur to it. I leave it to the reader to judge whether Joshua would have done better to set up this altar *as soon as* they had crossed the Jordan. Be that as it may, we do

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not always turn at once to God, when we enjoy that which His power has wrought. Our not doing so only proves our folly, whether it be in things connected with our joy or our safety. It was the Lord's mind here to give us the testimony of divine strength and human weakness before this public assumption of the land in His name; the practical realisation of being beyond Jordan in power and of Gilgal, brought home to them by its contrast. It is taken possession of in connection with Israel's responsibility under the law.

Joshua now reads before all the people, not only the curses attached to the violation of the law, but all that made known the ways of God in His government of the people.

But, if such a position as this proclaims the rights of God and manifests the confidence of the people, it soon leads to conflict. The enemy will not consent to the invasion and the taking possession of all the territory he has usurped. But the wiles of the enemy are more to be feared than his strength; indeed it is only these that are to be feared: for in his strength he meets the Lord; in his wiles he deceives, or seeks to deceive, the sons of men. If we resist the devil, he flees; but to stand against his wiles, we need the whole armour of God. Christ met his wiles with scripture, in the path of simple obedience, and, when he manifested himself, the Lord said, "Get thee hence, Satan."

The inhabitants of Gibeon pretended to have come from far. The princes of Israel use their own wisdom instead of asking counsel of Jehovah. This time it is confidence, not in the strength, but in the wisdom of

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man. The princes of the congregation, accustomed to reflect and to guide, are more likely to fall into this snare. Bad as they are in their unbelief, the people, eager for the result, are often nearer the mind of God to whom the result is sure. The princes had some misgivings, so that they are inexcusable. Apparently there was much advantage in gaining allies in a place where they had so many enemies. The Gibeonites flattered them too, as the servants of Jehovah. Everything was calculated to set their minds at rest.

Satan can talk religiously as well as another; but he deceives only when we take the management into our own hands, instead of consulting the Lord. Communion with Him was needed to discern that these were people of the country, enemies who *dared* not be enemies: but to make peace with such is to deprive oneself of a victory, and of one's right to make good the judgment and the glory of God, in the unmingled possession of the land of blessing. Allies can only set aside that single-eyed dependence upon God, and that purity of moral relationship which exist between God and His people, when it is His power alone that sustains them. For allies were not Israel. Israel spares the enemy; and the name of Jehovah, which had been brought in, obliges His people to retain a perpetual snare in their midst.

Four centuries later, in the days of Saul, this produced its sorrowful fruits. To a spiritual mind the presence of the Gibeonites would always be an evil. Besides, what had Israel to do with allies? Was not Jehovah sufficient? May He give us always to trust in Him,

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to seek counsel of Him, to own none but Him, and to be always subject to Him! This will ensure victory over every enemy, and the land will be all our own.

Moreover, this peace with the Gibeonites only brought fresh attacks upon Israel. But now all is plain. Jehovah says to Joshua, "Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thy hand." This is all that conflict means for one who walks in the Spirit before God. There must be conflict, but conflict is only victory. It is the Lord who has delivered the enemy into our hands; none can stand before us.

All things are ours. The sun stands still, and the moon stays its course, witnessing to the power of God and to the interest He takes in blessing His people. We may be sure that, whithersoever the Spirit will go, there the wheels will go. (Ezek. i. 20.) Joshua defeated all his enemies, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. This time they were faithful, they made no peace. What had Canaanites to do in Jehovah's land? Has Satan any right to the land of promise? This is the light in which Joshua always beholds the land of Canaan. (Chap. x. 27.) But, after the victory, Israel returned to the camp of Gilgal. We have already explained what Gilgal means. But the return thither of the conquerors of the Canaanitish kings contains the instructive lesson that, whatever our victories and our conquests may be, we must always return to the place that becomes us before God in the annihilation of self; to the application of the knowledge we have of God (the resurrection of Christ having set us in the heavenly

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places), to the judging and the mortifying of the flesh, to spiritual circumcision, which is the death of the flesh by the power of resurrection. There is a time to act and a time to be still, waiting upon God that we may be fit for action. Activity, the power that attends us, success, everything, tends to draw us away from God, or at least to divide the attention of our fickle hearts.

But the camp is the starting-point for victory, and the return from triumph for true strength is always Gilgal. It is not there that the enemy attacks us if we are faithful. The attack will be on our side, whatever the manœuvres of our adversaries may be.

Let us observe also that, in spite of the people's and Joshua's failures, everything turned out well in the end. There were faults, and these faults received their chastisement, as in the case of Gibeon and of Ai. But, the walk of the people being faithful in the main, God made everything work together for good. Thus the peace with Gibeon led to victory over the kings who attacked that people. There was cause for humiliation and for chastisement in the details of their history; but, as a whole, the hand of God appears in it most manifestly.

It is seldom that every step of our way is taken in faith and dependence upon God. We do well to humble ourselves on account of this. But when the object is the Lord's object, He goes before us, and orders all things for the triumph of His people in this holy war, which is His own war. Only failures may bring their fruits for a long while.

Israel's victories bring fresh war upon them; but the

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confederation of their enemies only serves to deliver them all together into their hands. If God will not have peace, it is because He will have victory. A new principle is now set before us. God will in nowise allow the world's seat of power to become that of His people; for His people depend exclusively on Him. The natural consequence of taking Hazor would have been to make it the seat of government, and a centre of influence in the government of God, so that this city should be that for God which it had before been for the world; "for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms." But it was just the contrary. Hazor is totally destroyed. God will not leave a vestige of former power; He will make all things new. The centre and the source of power must be His, entirely and exclusively His: a very important lesson for His children, if they would preserve their spiritual integrity.

In a certain sense the conquest of the land seemed complete; that is to say, there was no outward strength left, either to stand before them or to form a kingdom. But Israel had still many enemies in this land, enemies who did not, indeed, molest them while they continued faithful, but who taught the people many things that afterwards helped on their ruin. They had divided the conquered land; they had rest from war. When all is finished, we may reckon up our victories, but not before; till then we ought rather to be occupied in gaining more.

We may remark here that, in the result of God's dealings, the fault committed previously to the attack upon Ai seems blotted out, and had even contributed to the

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development of His purposes. At the time it had kept them back, and was punished. But God applied Himself to Israel's moral restoration to the confidence of faith, and the grand object of His dealings was in no wise hindered. This is no excuse; but it is a sweet and strong consolation which leads so much the more into worship. The fault committed in the matter of the Gibeonites appears to me more serious. It did not delay their progress: but, being the act of Joshua and the princes, it set them for ever in a false position with respect to those whom they spared.

Chapter xi. closes the first division of the book, that is to say, the history of Joshua's victories (typically that of the Lord's power by the Spirit, giving His people possession of the promises).

Chapter xii. is only a summary of their conquests. The Holy Ghost not only gives us the victory over our enemies, but makes us understand and know the whole extent of the country, and defines the particular portion of each; giving us details of everything it contains; of God's perfect arrangements for the appropriation of the whole, and the distribution of each part of His people, so as to produce a well-ordered whole, and perfect in all its parts, according to the wisdom of God. But here we have to realize the distinction maintained in the New Testament between the gifts of God and the enjoyment of the gifts given. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "He hath made us sit together in heavenly places" by the same power which placed Christ there, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him above every name that

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is named. Alas! how many earthly things still remain unsubdued among Christians. But the Holy Ghost takes cognizance of this condition, in view of, and in connection with, that which rightfully belongs to them: it is this which enables us to understand the second division of this book.

Although there was still a considerable part of the land to be possessed, Joshua parcels out the whole amongst the tribes of Israel, according to the command of Jehovah, who declares that He will Himself drive out its inhabitants before them. But the people poorly responded to this promise. The cities of the Philistines were indeed taken, but their inhabitants were not exterminated; they were spared, and soon regained power. Here we may remark that, wherever there is faithfulness, there is rest. The effect of Joshua's work was, that "the land had rest from war;" so also with that of Caleb. (Chap. xiv. 15.) When the cities of the Levites were allotted them, we find the same thing again. (Chap. xxi. 43, 44.) It is not so in detail. The whole extent of country is given to Israel, and each tribe has his share; the portion, therefore, which fell to each tribe was given them in full right by Jehovah Himself. Their borders were marked out; for the Spirit of God takes notice of everything in distributing the spiritual inheritance, and gives to each according to the mind of God. There is nothing uncertain in God's arrangements. But we find that not one tribe drove out all the enemies of God from His inheritance, not one realized the possession of all that God had given him.

Judah and Joseph take possession of their lots. We

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know that they always remained chief amongst Israel, fulfilling thus the counsels of God as to royalty for Judah, and the birthright which fell by grace to Joseph. (Chap. xv.–xvii., see 1 Chron. v. 2.) The tabernacle of God was also set up in peace (chap. xviii.); but, once at rest, the tribes are very slow in taking possession of their portion—too frequently the history of God's people. Having found peace, they neglect His promises. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the Spirit of God did not fail to point out to the people in detail all that belonged to them.

The cities of refuge are appointed (chap. xx.); that is, the land being Jehovah's, provision is made that it may not be defiled, and for the return of every man to his inheritance, after he had fled from it for a time, because of killing some person unawares. We have already seen the force of this. Only we may remark here, that not only have we seen spiritual title to all at once before Jericho, the rights of Jehovah maintained in the case of the king of Ai and mount Ebal, as the ground of present possession; but provision for restoration to enjoyment of the inheritance in detail when temporarily lost, which, in figure, applies to the people in the last days.

The establishment of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan gave rise to difficulties and suspicions. Nevertheless these tribes were faithful at heart. Their position had done them harm, their self-seeking having somewhat marred the energy of their faith: still, faithfulness to Jehovah was found in them.

Finally, Joshua sets the people, in the way of warn-

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ing, under a curse, or under a blessing, according to their obedience or disobedience; and then recapitulates their history, telling them that their fathers had been idolaters, and that the people around them were so still.

But the people, not having yet lost the sense of the power of God who had blessed them, declare that they will serve Jehovah alone. They are thus placed under responsibility, and undertake to obey, as the condition of their possessing the land and enjoying the fruit of God's promise. They are left there, it is true, in peaceable possession of it all, but under the condition of obedience after having already allowed those, who should have been utterly destroyed, to remain in the land; and when, from the outset, they had not at all realized that which God had given them. What a picture of the assembly ever since the days of the apostles!

There is yet one remark to be made. When Christ shall return in glory, we shall inherit all things, Satan being bound. The assembly ought to realize now, by the Holy Ghost, the power of this glory. But there are things, properly called heavenly, which are ours, as being our dwelling-place, our standing, our calling; there are others which are subjected to us, and which are a sphere for the exercise of the power that we possess. Thus the limits of Israel's abode were less extensive than those of the territory to which they had a right. Jordan was the boundary of their abode, the Euphrates that of their possession. The heavenly things are ours; but the manifestation of the power of Christ over creation,

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and the deliverance of this creation, is granted to us. It will be delivered when Christ Himself shall exercise the power.

Thus the "powers of the world to come"* were deliverances from the yoke of the enemy. These were not things proper to us: nevertheless they were ours.

* So called, I doubt not, because they were samples of that power which will entirely subdue the enemy when Christ shall appear.

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JUDGES.

THE Book of Judges is the history of the failure of Israel. Joshua sets before us the energy of God acting in the midst of the people, though there may be failure. In Judges we see the miserable state of the nation, now become unfaithful; and, at the same time, the intervention of the God of mercy in the circumstances into which their unfaithfulness had brought them. These interventions correspond with what are called *revivals* in the history of the church of God.

In this book we no longer see blessing and power marking the establishment of the people of God. Neither does it contain the fulfilment of God's purposes, after the people had manifested their inability to retain the blessing they had received; nor the forms and government which, in spite of the evil and internal unfaithfulness of the people, could maintain their external unity, until God judged them in their leaders. God was still the only leader acknowledged in Israel; so that the people always bore themselves the penalty of their sin.

The misery into which their unfaithfulness brought them moving the compassion of God, His mighty grace raised up deliverers by His Spirit in the midst of the fallen and wretched people. "For his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." "And Jehovah raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those

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that spoiled them." "And when Jehovah raised them up judges, then Jehovah was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies, all the days of the judge; for it repented Jehovah because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." But Israel was unchanged. "And yet they would not hearken unto their judges." "And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way." This is the sorrowful history of the people of God; but it is also the history of the grace of God, and of His compassions towards His people.

Thus, in the beginning of the book, we see evil and failure, and also simple and blessed deliverances. But alas! the picture darkens more and more. There are grievous features even in the conduct of the judges, and the state of Israel becomes worse and worse; until weary of the results of their own unfaithfulness, in spite of the presence of the prophet, and the express word of God, they reject the kingship of the Almighty to adopt human forms of government, and establish themselves on the same footing as the world, when they had God for their king!

This unfaithfulness, indeed, was the reason why God left some of the nations in the midst of His people to prove them. The presence of these nations was in itself a proof of Israel's lack of energy and confidence in the power of God, who nevertheless would have preserved

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them from their subsequent disasters. But in the wisdom of His counsels, God who knew His people, left these nations in their midst, as a means of proving them. Israel will be fully blest only under Messiah, who by His might will bring in their blessing, and by His might will preserve it to them.

Alas! this history of Israel in Canaan is also that of the assembly. Set up in heavenly blessing on the earth, it has failed from the beginning in realizing that which was given to it; and evil developed itself in it as soon as the first and mighty instruments of blessing which had been granted it were removed. Things have gone from bad to worse. There have been revivals, but still the same principle of unbelief; and the decay of each revival has marked increasing progress in evil and unbelief in proportion to the good which has been thus forsaken. The revival never reaches to the extent of laying hold of what God is, what He revealed Himself as at first for His people, what the first power of revelation and action of the Spirit. When departed from, God is more and more lost. The part of His blessing afresh brought forward is neglected and abandoned, so that there is a more entire forgetfulness of Him, and nature and the world resume their place, but now not merely without, but to the exclusion of, God, and setting up of man and nature, by departing from the primitive source of blessing and strength.

Nevertheless God has always had His own people; and His faithfulness has never failed them, whether in secret, or manifesting openly, in His kindness, His grace towards His assembly in public power—a power that it

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ought always to have enjoyed. This sad succession of falls will have an end at the coming of Jesus, who will accomplish His purposes respecting the assembly in its heavenly glory; purposes, of which it should have always been the faithful witness here below.

The power and the presence of *God* did not forsake Israel at the time of Joshua's departure. It was always to be found wherever there was faith to make use of it. This is the first truth which this book presents. It is what Paul said to the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do."

This presence of God with them in blessing to faith makes itself known at one time by victory over most powerful enemies (chap. i. 1–7); at another by the obtaining of special blessing, "springs of water" (13–15), and in all the detail of their realization of the promises. The Philistines even were driven out. (Ver. 18.) But at the same time, the faith of Judah and Simeon, of Ephraim and Manasseh, and of all the tribes failed; and consequently their energy, and their sense of the value of God's presence, and of their own consecration to Him, failed also, together with their perception of the evil existing among their adversaries—a perception which would have rendered their presence in the midst of them insupportable.

What dishonour to God, what sin, to spare, to tolerate, such people! What unfaithfulness towards God was this indifference; and what an infallible source of evil and corruption in Israel! But they were insensible to all

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this. They were wanting in spiritual discernment as well as in faith; and the sources of evil and misery dwelt beside the people, even in the land, the land of God and of Israel.

Alas! if such was the condition of the people, and they were satisfied with it, chastening, as at Ai, was no longer in question. But the angel of Jehovah (the operative power of God in the midst of the people) quits Gilgal (that spiritual circumcision of heart, which precedes victory, and tempers the soul anew that we may overcome in conflict) and comes up to Bochim, to the place of weeping, in the midst of the people, declaring that He will no longer drive out the enemy whom Israel had spared.

God had been then at Gilgal! What a blessing amid those exercises and inward conflicts of heart, in which true practical circumcision is accomplished, in which the source and influence of sin are felt in order to judge it before God; so that, the flesh being judged, we may in conflict (and also in communion) enjoy the strength of God, who cannot grant it to the flesh and to sin.

This inward mortification is a work of no outward glory; it is unseen, or little and pitiful in the eyes of man; it makes us little in our own, but God and His grace great, and associates the heart with Him, giving the moral consciousness of His presence. Historically it did not appear that the strength of God was at Gilgal. To have manifested it would have destroyed the proper work of Gilgal, the judgment, in humbleness because of God, of everything in which flesh works. But, *when*

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forsaken, it was discovered that the angel of Jehovah had been there. It is exchanged for tears. God may be worshipped in Bochim: His relationship to the people was unaltered. He accepts these tears. But what a difference! The strength and the light of Jehovah's countenance are not there. Sorrowful position, although alleviated by grace! This change from Gilgal to Bochim is the key to the book; it is so alas! but too often to the condition of God's children.

The Holy Ghost, having laid these general foundations, goes on to the historical development of Israel's position.

All the days of Joshua and of the elders that outlived him, Israel walked before Jehovah. It is the history of the assembly. While the apostles were there, it was preserved; but Paul (Acts xx. 29) and Peter (2 Pet. ii.) alike warned the saints that unfaithfulness and rebellion would unhappily follow their departure. These evil principles were already there. The intermixture of unbelievers (the enemy's work) would become the means through which the evil would unfold itself and gain ground amongst them.

The Lord had spoken of this (Matt. xiii.), not indeed as to the assembly but as to the good seed which He had sown; and Jude develops its progress and results with solemn perspicuity and precision.

But when another generation arises in Israel, which knew not Jehovah, and had not seen all the great works of His hand; and when they serve the gods of the people whom Israel had spared, God no longer protects them. Unfaithful within, the Israelites fall into the

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hands of the enemy without. Then, as we have seen, in their affliction Jehovah, moved with compassion, raised up judges, who, acknowledging His name, brought back the manifestation of His power in their midst.

God, knowing what the people were, and what was their condition, had left within the borders of their land that which put obedience to the proof—the Philistines, the Sidonians, &c., that they might learn war, and experience the ways and the government of Jehovah.

Thus the wisdom and foreknowledge of God, who knows what is in man, turned the unfaithfulness of the people into blessing. Outward prosperity, without trial, would not have remedied unbelief, whilst it would have deprived them of those exercises and conflicts in which they might learn what God was, His ways and His relations to them, as well as what their own hearts were.

We go through the same experience, and for the same reasons.

I will now go over the principal subjects presented in the history of this book. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar were, in succession, the first instruments raised up by God to deliver His people.

First we have to remark the failure of the people, who begin to serve false gods; thereupon their *servitude*. In their distress they cry unto Jehovah. This is always the way in which deliverance comes. (Chap. iii. 9, 15; iv. 3.) In this last instance Jehovah departs from His usual ways. The nation had lost its strength and energy, even as to its internal affairs. This is the effect of repeated falls; the sense of God's power is lost.

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At the period of which we speak, a woman judged Israel. It was a sign of God's omnipotency, for she was a prophetess. But it was contrary to God's ordinary dealings, and a disgrace to men. Deborah calls Barak (for where the Spirit of God acts, He discerns and directs); she communicates to him the command of God. He obeys; but he lacks faith to proceed as one who has had direct instruction from God and consequently needs no other. These direct communications give the consciousness of God's presence, and that He interposes on behalf of His people. Barak will not go without Deborah. But this want of faith is not to his credit. Men will keep the place which answers to the measure of their faith; and God will again be glorified through the instrumentality of a woman. Barak has faith enough to obey if he has some one near who can lean immediately on God, but not enough to do so himself. This is too often the case. God does not reject him, but He does not honour him. In fact, it is by no means the same faith in God. And it is by faith that God is honoured.

We have, moreover, in this case, not the immediate destruction of the enemy, but the discipline of the people in war to recover them from the state of moral weakness into which they had fallen. They began with small things. A woman was the instrument; for fear does not honour God, and God cannot allow His glory to rest on such a condition as this. But little by little "the hand of the children of Israel prevailed against Jabin until they had destroyed him."

The usual effect of such a work of the Holy Ghost as

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this is to present the people as willingly offering themselves. (Chap. v. 2.) Nevertheless the Spirit of God has shewn us that unbelief amongst the people had caused many of them to stay behind; and thus they lost the manifestation and the experience of the power of God. The judgment of God amounts to a curse where there was an entire holding back, a refusing to be associated with the people in their weakness.

But again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and He delivered them into the hand of Midian. And the children of Israel cried again unto Jehovah. God reveals the cause of their distress to the consciences of the people. This was indeed an answer; but, for the moment, He left them as they were. He did not act in their midst by delivering them at once; but He acted for them in the instrument whom He had chosen to effect their deliverance. God glorified Himself in Gideon; but the concentration of this work in one man proves the people to be in a lower condition than before. Nevertheless, in these humiliating circumstances, God chooses means which display His glory in every way. Where He works, there is strength; and faith also, which acts according to that strength in its own sphere.

We will examine a little into the history of Gideon, and the features of the Spirit's work in this deliverance, as well as in the faith of him whom He raised up. It is evident that many thoughts had occurred to Gideon, many serious reflections, before the angel spoke to him. But it was the angel's visit that caused him to give form and expression to the thoughts with which his heart was

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occupied. Gideon suffered with the rest from the oppression of God's enemies; but it led him to think of God, instead of making up his mind to endure the bondage as a necessary evil. The angel says to him, "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."

That which pre-occupied the mind of Gideon is now manifested. It was not his own position, but the relation between Jehovah and Israel. "If Jehovah," said he, "be with *us*, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt? But now Jehovah hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

Faith, indeed, was the source of all these reasonings and exercises of mind. Jehovah had wrought all these wonders. He had brought the people up from Egypt. If Jehovah was with Israel, if such was His relation to His people, why where they in this sorrowful condition? (Oh, how applicable would this reasoning be to the assembly!)

Gideon acknowledges, too, that it is Jehovah who delivered them into the hands of the Midianites. How the thought of God raises the soul above the sufferings one is enduring! While thinking of Him one recognizes, in these very sufferings, the hand and the whole character of Him who sent them. It was that which lifted up this poor Israelite, labouring under the weight of oppression. "And Jehovah looked upon him and said, Go in *this thy might*, and thou shalt save Israel." The visit and the command of Jehovah imparted their

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form and their strength to that which before was only heart-exercise.

Nevertheless it was this heart-exercise which gave him strength; for it was the inward link of faith with all that Jehovah was for His oppressed people, in the consciousness of the relationship existing between them.

We will look now at the development of this faith, and see it employed for the deliverance of God's people. Gideon experiences at first the sense of his own littleness, whatever may be the relationship between Jehovah and the people. (Chap. vi. 15.) Jehovah's answer shews him the one simple means: "Surely I will be with thee." Precious condescension! Sweet and powerful encouragement to the soul! Gideon's faith was weak. The present state of the people tended, by its duration, to blot out the remembrance of the wonders which Jehovah had wrought when they came out of Egypt, and to weaken their consciousness of His presence. The angel of Jehovah condescends to tarry with him in order to strengthen his faith.

Gideon, who had addressed him with a secret consciousness that it was Jehovah, now knows indeed that he has seen the angel of Jehovah, of Elohim, face to face. It was a positive revelation, sufficient to annihilate him in himself, as was indeed the case; but also mightily to strengthen him in his walk amongst others, who had not known Jehovah in the same way. Although not with similar visions, yet it is always thus when God raises up a special instrument for the deliverance of His people.

Jehovah had made Himself known, and now He re-

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assures Gideon: "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die."

A man who is humbled by the presence of God receives strength from God, if that presence is in blessing. Gideon recognizes and lays hold of this for himself: Jehovah is with him in peace and in blessing. The word Shalom, translated "Peace be with thee," is the same as that used in the name of the altar.

When God acts powerfully on the heart, the first effect shews itself always in connection with Himself. Gideon's thoughts are occupied with Jehovah, they were so before this manifestation. But being taken up with Jehovah, it is by worship that he expresses his feelings,* when he receives an answer from Jehovah to all his thoughts.† He builds an altar to the God of peace.

* We observe a similar feeling in Eliezer. (Gen. xxiv. 27.) It is very interesting to notice the different circumstances in which altars have been built to Jehovah. I will name a few passages: Genesis viii. 20; xii. 7; compare xiii. 4; see xxi. 33; xxii. 9; xxvi. 25; xxxiii. 20; xxxv. 7. We may also remark Exodus xxiv. 4; Joshua viii. 30; and here Judges vi. It appears even that Gideon built two altars; the one for himself in worship, and the other by command as a testimony. (1 Samuel vii. 17; xiv. 35; 1 Kings xviii. 32. We may add 2 Samuel xxiv. 25; Ezra iii. 2.)

† It is instructive to observe here the difference between the exercises of heart which are the result of faith, and the answer of God to the wants and difficulties which are caused by those exercises. In verse 13 we have the expression of these exercises in a soul under the weight of the same oppression as his brethren, but who feels it thus because his faith in the Lord was real. Then we have the answer which produces peace, and, with peace, worship. It is the same, when, after having suffered death, the risen Jesus reveals Himself to His disciples with the same words that

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The relationship of peace is thus established between God and His servant; but all this is between Gideon and Jehovah.

Now comes his public service, which is also fulfilled by re-establishing, first of all, in the bosom of his own family, and in his own city, the relationship between God and His people. Israel must put away Baal before God can drive out the Midianites. How could He do so, while the blessing might be ascribed to Baal?

Gideon is therefore commanded to give a striking testimony, which calls the attention of the whole people to the necessity of casting out Baal, in order that God may intervene.

Faithfulness within precedes outward strength: evil

God uses here, and lays down the foundation of the church gathered together in worship. In Luke vii. we find the same experiences in the woman who was a sinner. She believed in the person of Jesus. His grace had made Him her all; but she did not know yet that one like her was pardoned and saved, and might go in peace. This assurance was the answer given to her faith. Now this answer is what the gospel proclaims to every believer. The Holy Ghost proclaims Jesus. This produces conviction of sin. The knowledge of God in Christ, and of ourselves, casts down (for sin is there, and we are in bondage, sold under sin); but it produces conflict, perhaps anguish. Often the soul struggles against sin, and cannot gain the mastery; it cannot get beyond a certain point (the greater number of the sermons from which it expects light go no farther); but the gospel proclaims God's own resources for bringing it out of this state. "Peace be unto thee," "thy sins are forgiven." "Thy faith" (for she has faith), says Christ to the poor sinful woman, "hath saved thee." This was what she knew not yet. (Compare Acts ii. 37, 38.)

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must be put away from Israel before the enemy can be driven out. Obedience first, and then strength: this is God's order.

When Satan's power in superstition (in whatever way it may be outwardly manifested) is despised, it is destroyed; supposing always that God is with him who pours contempt on it, and that he is in the paths of obedience.

Gideon overthrows Baal; and—What can this god do? said even he to whom the altar belonged. The power of God acted on their minds, for faith was there. But the opposition of the enemy did not cease on that account. There is nothing so despicable as a despised god. But if Satan cannot be a god amongst men, he will incite them to open hostility against those who overthrow his altars; but if we are standing on God's side, the only effect of this will be to give us victory, deliverance, and peace.

The Midianites come up against Israel. All is ready for the Lord's intervention. The Spirit of Jehovah comes upon Gideon. This is a new phasis in the history; not only faithfulness, but power. Gideon blows the trumpet, and those who shortly before would have slain him now follow in his train. He sends messengers to all his tribe. Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali come up also. The power of the Spirit, which sways the minds of men, is with the faith that acknowledges God, that acknowledges Him in His relationship to His people, and faithfully puts away the evil which is incompatible with that relationship.

God gives another proof of His great condescension,

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by granting a sign to strengthen the weak but real and sincere faith of Gideon; who feels, whilst repeating his request (ver. 39), that God might well chasten him for his lack of faith. Nevertheless the Lord grants his petition.

Thirty-two thousand men followed Gideon. But Jehovah will not have so many. He alone must be glorified in their deliverance. Their faith was indeed so weak, even while the Spirit of God was at work, that, when in the presence of the enemy, twenty-two thousand men were content to return at Gideon's invitation. The movement produced by the faith of another is quite a different thing from personal faith.

But ten thousand men are still too many. Jehovah's hand alone must be seen. Those only may remain who do not stop to quench their thirst at their ease, but who refresh themselves hastily, as opportunity offers; more occupied with the combat than with their own comforts by the way. This was what was needed for Israel—that Jehovah should have His place in their hearts and faith; and it suited the just judgment of God in Israel that they should, as to their place in the work, be left out of the glory of it.

Gideon now displays entire confidence in God. Previously, the weakness of his faith had made him look too much at himself, instead of simply looking to God. His deep sense of Israel's condition prevented his hesitating for a moment because the people were not with him; what could be done with this people? In the mistrust which arose from a disposition to look too much to himself, what he needed was the certainty that Jehovah was

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with him. But, having now the assurance that Jehovah will deliver Israel by his means, he trusts entirely to Him.

Jehovah throws terror and alarm into the midst of the enemy; and acquaints Gideon with this. It is affecting to see the care which God takes to impart confidence to His servant, suitably to the need which the state of things had created. Already the name of Gideon resounded with dread in the numerous army of the Midianites. Then, terror-stricken, they destroy each other. The confidence of the Midianites, founded only on Israel's want of power, melted away before the energy of faith; for the enemy's instruments have always a bad conscience. It is Jehovah who does everything. The trumpets and the lamps alone announce His presence, and that of His servant Gideon. The multitude of Israel pursue the enemy, profiting by the work of faith, although without faith themselves: the usual result of such a movement.

Nevertheless, they did not all unite with Gideon in pursuit of the Midianites. But, for the moment, Gideon despises the cowardice which disowns him through a remaining fear of the oppressor's power. On his return he chastises, in the righteous indignation of faith, those who at such a moment had shewn themselves favourable to the enemy, when the servants of God were "faint yet pursuing." (Chap. viii.)

While the work was yet to do, they were taken up with the work and passed on: there is time enough for vengeance when the work is done. Gideon has also the prudence to set himself aside, in order to allay the

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jealousy of those who felt their pride wounded, because Gideon had had more faith than themselves. They did not boast of their own importance, or request to be called, when Midian had power over the land of Israel. It would be wrong to contend with such persons. If you are satisfied with having done the work of God, they will be satisfied with the spoil they find in pursuing the enemy; they will make a victory of it to themselves. It must be allowed them; for in fact they have done something for the cause of God, although tardy in espousing it. They came when they were called, and willingly, as it appears; they followed Gideon's directions, and brought him back the heads of the princes. The secret of faith and of Jehovah was with Gideon. It was useless to speak of it to them. The people did not know their own weakness. Gideon must be strong on Jehovah's side *for* Israel, since Israel could not be so with him. But for that very reason they could not understand why they were not called before. It had to be left unexplained; a proof of the sad state of Israel. But the danger was removed, and the difficulty set aside, in that Gideon wisely contented himself with calming their minds, by not insisting upon his own importance, which arose from a faith of which they did not feel themselves incapable, and the difficulties of which they could not appreciate, since they possessed it not. We must be near God in order to feel what is wanting in His people's condition as to Him; for it is in Him we find that which enables us to understand both His strength and the exigencies of our relationship with Him.

During the lifetime of Gideon Israel dwelt in peace.

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Although the details of this deliverance have an especial interest, it appears to me to mark a lower condition of the people than at the period of the preceding ones. It then seemed quite a natural thing that some servant of Jehovah, trusting to His arm, should deliver the people from the yoke that oppressed them. Or else the people—awakened by the words of a prophetess—released themselves, and, by the help of God, obtained the victory over their enemies. But in this case even the sense of Jehovah's relationship to His people had to be restored. This is what God does with Gideon, as we have seen, and that with touching condescension and tenderness. But it was requisite to do it. Therefore God alone accomplished the deliverance of His people. The people must not be employed in it, lest they should attribute it to themselves; for the farther off we are from God, the more ready we are to ascribe to ourselves that which is due only to Him.

After Gideon's death we see the results of this distance from God in the internal struggles which took place between the children of Israel. They are ungrateful to the house of Gideon, and war breaks out amongst them through the leader whom they set up, and who, instead of fighting with the enemies of God, only seeks dominion over the people who are now at peace. (Chap. ix.)

The overthrow of the men of Shechem and of Abimelech is followed by temporary peace, after which the people fall again into their idolatrous iniquity, and Jehovah sells them into the hands of the nations whose gods they serve. Sorely distressed by their enemies,

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the children of Israel cry unto Jehovah who reproaches them for their past conduct, and sends them back to the gods they had been worshipping. Then the people put away the strange gods from among them. Jehovah is moved with compassion. (Chap. x.)

Israel, without a leader, have recourse to the captain of a troop of "vain men," and promise to obey him if he will put himself at their head. Jephthah consents. But although this was a deliverance, yet we see in it all how deeply Israel had fallen. Jephthah himself suffers cruelly from his rash vow; and, moreover, when the pride of the Ephraimites led them to complain that they had not been treated with due respect, the calmness and wisdom of one who knew Jehovah as Gideon did, were not found in Jephthah. What a difference between these days and those of Joshua! God multiplies His deliverances; but this has no effect on the unbelief of the people, and their condition continues to grow worse and worse. (Chap. xi., xii.)

After Jephthah, Israel again enjoys an interval of peace under the guidance of several judges whom God raises up. But they soon return to their former course of sin, and Jehovah delivers them into the hand of the Philistines. Samson's history gives us the commencement of Israel's relationship with these bitter enemies, which only ceased when David had subdued them. The Philistines at this period were at the height of their power. But the important thing here is the history of Samson. (Chap. xiii.—xvi.)

Samson, as a type, sets before us the principle of

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Nazariteship, entire separation to God, the source of strength in conflict with our enemies, looked at as enemies who seek to gain the upper hand amongst the people of God, within their own limits and in their own heart.

The Philistines were not a scourge, a chastisement sent from without; they dwelt in Israel's own territory, in the land of promise. Undoubtedly, before this, other nations whom the faithlessness of the people had left in the midst of Canaan had been a snare to them, leading them to intermarriage with idolaters, and to the worship of false gods; and Jehovah had given them up into the hands of their enemies. But now those who had been suffered to remain in the conquered land assume dominion over Israel.

Here, then, that which can give victory and peace to the heirs of promise is the strength imparted by separation from all that belongs to the natural man, and entire consecration to God, so far as it is realized. This Nazariteship is spiritual power; or rather that which characterizes it when the enemy is within the land. For Samson judged Israel during the dominion of the Philistines. (Chap. xv. 20.) Afterwards Samuel, Saul, and above all David entirely changed the state of things.

When the Canaanite, when the power of the enemy, reigns in the land, Nazariteship alone can give power to one who is faithful. It is a secret unknown to the men of the world. Christ exemplified it in its perfection. Evil reigned amongst the people. The walk of Christ was a walk apart, separate from evil. He was one of the people, but, like Levi (Deut. xxxiii. 9), He was not of

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them. He was a Nazarite. But we must distinguish with respect to this.

Morally Christ was as separate from sinners while on earth, as He is now. But, outwardly He was in their midst; and, as the witness and expression of grace, He was spiritually in their midst also. Since His resurrection He is completely separate from sinners. The world sees Him not, and will see Him no more save in judgment.

It is in this last position, and as having put on this character of entire separation from the world, that the assembly, that Christians, are in connection with Him. Such a High Priest became us. The assembly retains its strength, Christians retain their strength, so far only as they abide in this state of complete separation, which the world does not understand and in which it cannot participate. Human joy and sociability have no part in it; divine joy and the power of the Holy Ghost are there. The life of our adorable Saviour was a life of gravity, always grave and generally straitened (not in Himself, for His heart was a springing well of love, but because of the evil that pressed Him on every side): I speak of His life and of His own heart. With regard to others, His death opened the flood-gates, in order that the full tide of love might flow over poor sinners.

Nevertheless, whatever may have been the Lord's habitual separateness, He could say, with reference to His disciples, "These things I speak in the world that they might have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves." It was the best of wishes, divine joy instead of human joy. The day will come when these two joys shall be united, when

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He will again drink wine, though in a new way, with His people in the kingdom of His Father; and all will be His people. But at present this cannot be; evil reigns in the world. It reigned in Israel, where there ought to have been righteousness. It reigns in Christendom, where holiness and grace should be manifested in all their beauty.

The separation unto God, of which we have been speaking, is under these circumstances the only means of enjoying the strength of God. It is the essential position of the assembly. If it has failed in it, it has ceased to manifest the essential character of its Head, in connection with itself, "separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;" it is but a false witness, a proof among the Philistines that Dagon is stronger than God; it is a blind prisoner.

Nevertheless it is remarkable that, whenever the world draws away, by its allurements, that which God has separated from it unto Himself, this brings down the judgment of God upon the world, and leads to its ruin. Look at Sarah in the house of Pharaoh, and in this instance, Samson, blind and prisoner in the hands of the Philistines; and again also Sarah in the house of Abimelech, although God, on account of the integrity of his heart, did but chasten the latter.

The Nazarite then represents Christ, such as He was here below in fact and by necessity; and also such as He now is completely and in full right, seated on the right hand of God in heaven, hidden in God, where our life is hid with Him. The Nazarite represents the assembly or an individual Christian, so far as the one and

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the other are separated from the world and devoted to God, and keep the secret of this separation.

This is the assembly's position, the only one which God recognizes. The assembly, being united to Christ who is separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, cannot be His in any other manner. It may be unfaithful to it, but this is the standing given it with Christ. It can be recognized in no other.

Samson represents to us also the tendency of the assembly and of the Christian to fall away from this position, a tendency which does not always produce the same amount of evil fruit, but which causes the inward and practical neglect of Nazariteship, and soon leads to entire loss of strength, so that the assembly gives itself up to the world. God may still use it, may glorify Himself through the havoc it makes in the enemy's land (which ought to be its own); He may even preserve it from the sin to which the slippery path it treads would lead her. But the state of mind which brought it there tends to yet lower downfalls.

God makes use of Samson's marriage with a Philistine woman to punish that people. Still, in the freshness of his strength, his heart with Jehovah, and moved by the Holy Ghost, Samson acts in the might of this strength in the midst of the enemies he has raised up against him; and, in point of fact, he never marries this Philistine woman.

I have said that God used this circumstance. It is thus He may use this spiritual strength of the assembly, so long as in heart it cleaves to Him, although its walk may not be faithful or such as He can approve. For it

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is evident that Samson's marriage with a daughter of Timnath was a positive sin, a flagrant infringement of Jehovah's ordinances, which is in no wise justified by the blessing which the Lord bestowed upon him when wronged by the Philistines. It was not in his marriage he found blessing, but quite the contrary.

Accordingly Samson has not Israel with him in the conflicts occasioned by his marriage; the Spirit of God does not act upon the people as He did in the case of Gideon, of Jephthah, or Barak.

Moreover, when Nazariteship is in question, opposition must be expected from the people of God. A Nazarite is raised up in their midst, because they are no longer themselves thus separated unto God. And this being the case, they are without strength, and will allow the world to rule over them, provided that outward peace is left them; and they would not have any one act in faith, because this disquiets the world and incites it against them. "Knowest thou not," said Israel, "that the Philistines are rulers over us?" Even while acknowledging Samson as one of themselves, the Israelites desire to give him up to the Philistines in order to maintain peace.

But in the part of Samson's life now before us there are some details which require more attention.

His marriage was a sin. But the separation of God's people had no longer that measure of practical application which the mind of God had assigned it. The fact itself was inexcusable, because it had its origin in the will of Samson, and he had not sought counsel from God. But, owing to the influence of circumstances, he

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was not conscious at the time of the evil he was committing, and God allowed him to seek peace and friendship with the Canaanite world (that is to say, the world within the inclosure of God's people), instead of making war against them; so that, as to the Philistines, Samson had right on his side in the contentions which followed.

Before his marriage Samson had slain the lion, and had found honey in its carcase. He had strength from God while walking in his integrity. This is the "riddle," the secret of God's people. The lion has no strength against one who belongs to Christ. Christ has destroyed the strength of him that had the power of death. By the might of the Spirit of Christ our warfare is victory, and honey flows therefrom. But this is carried on in the secret of communion with the Lord. David maintained this place better in the simplicity of duty.

Samson did not keep himself from those connections with the world to which the condition of the people easily led. This is always a Christian's danger. But whatever may be their ignorance, if the children of God make any alliance with the world, and thus pursue a line of conduct opposed to their true character, they will assuredly find disappointment. They do not keep themselves apart for God; they do not keep their secret with God, a secret which is only known in communion with Himself. Their wisdom is lost, the world beguiles them, their relationship with the world becomes worse than before, and the world despises them, and goes on its own way, regardless of their indignation at its behaviour towards them.

What had Samson to do there? His own will (chap. xv.)

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is in exercise, and takes its share in the use of that strength which God had given him (like Moses when he slew the Egyptian). We always carry a little of the world with us when, being children of God, we have mingled with it. But God makes use of this to separate us forcibly and thoroughly from it, making union impossible by setting us in direct conflict with the world even in those very things which had formed our connection with it. We had better have remained apart. But it is necessary that God should thus deal with us, when this union with the world becomes an habitual and a tolerated thing in the church.* The most outrageous circumstances pass unnoticed. Think of a Nazarite married to a Philistine! God must break off such a union as this by causing enmities and hostilities to arise, since there is no intelligence of that moral nearness to God which separates from the world, and gives that quietness of spirit which, finding its strength in God, can overcome and drive away the enemy, when God leads into conflict by the plain revelation of His will.

But if we are linked with the world, it will always have dominion over us; we have no right to resist the claims of any relationship which we ourselves have formed. We may draw nigh to the world, because the flesh is in us. The world cannot really draw nigh to the

* In this union, when it takes place between the world and true Christians or those at least who profess the truth, the world always rules; when, on the contrary, it is with the hierarchy that the world is connected, it is then a superstitious hierarchy that rules, for this is necessary in order to restrain the will of man by religious bonds adapted to the flesh.

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children of God, because it has only its own fallen and sinful nature. The approximation is all on one side and always in evil, whatever the appearance may be. To bear testimony in the midst of the world is another thing.

We cannot therefore plead the secret of the Lord, the intimate relationship of God's people to Himself, and the feelings they produce; for the secret and the strength of the Lord are exclusively the right and the strength of His redeemed people. How could this be told to his Philistine wife? What influence would the exclusive privileges of God's people have over one who is not of their number? How can we speak of these privileges when we disown them by the very relationship in which we stand? We disown them by imparting this secret; for we then cease to be separated and consecrated to God, and to confide in Him as we can do in no other. This experience should have preserved Samson, for the future, from a similar step. But in many respects experience is useless in the things of God, because we need faith at the moment; for it is God Himself whom we need.

Nevertheless Samson here still retains his strength. The sovereign will of God is fulfilled in this matter, in spite of very serious faults which resulted from the general state of things in which Samson participated. Once in the battle-field, he exhibits the strength of Jehovah who was with him; and in answer to his cry Jehovah supplies him with water for his thirst. (Chap. xv.)

It is here that this general history of Samson ends.

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We have seen that the people of God, his brethren, were against him—the general rule in such a case. It is the history of the power of the Spirit of Christ exercised in Nazariteship, in separation from the world unto God; out in the midst of a condition entirely opposed to this separation; and in which he who is upheld by the power of this Spirit, finding himself again in his habitual sphere, is always in danger of being unfaithful; and so much the more so (unless he lives very near to God in the repose of obedience) from his consciousness of strength.

Christ exhibited the perfection of a heavenly walk under similar circumstances. We see that no one understood the source of His power, or His authority. He must have given up all hope of satisfying men with respect to the principles by which He was guided. They must have been like Him to comprehend Him, and then they would not have needed to be convinced. To walk before God and leave His justification with God was all that could be done. He silenced His enemies by the well-known principles of God and of all good conscience; but He could not reveal the secret between Him and the Father, the element of His life, and the spring of all His actions. If the truth came out, when Satan pushed things so far that nothing else could be said, His enemies treated Him as a blasphemer, and He openly denounced them as the children of Satan. We find this particularly in John's Gospel. But at that time Jesus held no longer the same relationship to the people. Indeed, from the beginning of this Gospel, they are treated as rejected, and the person of the Son of God is brought forward.

XV.

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From the commencement of His ministry, He maintained the place of an obedient servant, not entering on public service until called of God, after having taken the lowest place in John's baptism. This was the point at issue when He was tempted in the wilderness. The tempter endeavoured to make Him come out of His place as the obedient man, because He was the Son of God. But the strong man was bound there: to remain in obedience is the only way to bind the adversary. Christ ever walked in this perfect separation of the inner man, in communion with His Father, and entire dependence upon Him in obedience without a single moment of self-will. Therefore was He the most gracious and accessible of men: we observe in His ways a tenderness and a kindness never seen in man, yet we always feel that He was a stranger. Not that He came to be a stranger in His relationship with men; but that which lay deepest in His own heart, that which constituted His very nature, and consequently guided His walk by virtue of His communion with the Father, was entirely foreign to all that influences man.

This spirit of self-denial, entire renunciation of His own will, obedience, and dependence upon His Father, is seen throughout the life of Jesus. After John's baptism He was praying when He received the Holy Ghost. Before calling the apostles He spent the whole night in prayer. After the miracle of feeding the five thousand with five loaves He went up into a mountain apart to pray. If the request is made to sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom, it is not His to give but to them for whom it is prepared of His

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Father. In His agony of Gethsemane His expectation and dread of death is all laid before His Father; and the cup which His Father has given Him, shall He not drink it? The effect is that all is calm before men. He is the Nazarite, separated from men by His entire communion with His Father, and by the obedience of a Son who had no other will than to fulfil the good pleasure of His Father. It was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

But it was when man would not receive Him, and there was no longer any relationship whatever between man and God, that Jesus fully assumed His Nazarite character, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens. It is Christ in heaven who is the true Nazarite, and who, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, has sent Him forth upon His disciples, in order that, by the power of the Holy Ghost, they might maintain the same position on the earth, through communion with Him and with His Father; walking in the separateness of this communion, and capable therefore of using this power with a divine intelligence that enlightens and sustains the obedience for which they are set apart unto the glory of Christ, and for His service. "If ye abide in me," said He to His disciples, "and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." They were not of the world, even as He was not of the world. The assembly, which was formed of His disciples, should walk as separated from the world and set apart unto Himself in a heavenly life.

Christ is then the antitype of Samson's history, as

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to the principle it contains. But its detail proves that this principle of strength has been entrusted to those who were alas! but too capable of failing in communion and obedience, and thus of losing its enjoyment.

Samson sins again through his intercourse with "the daughter of a strange god;" he connects himself again with women of the Philistines, amongst whom his father's house and the tribe of Dan were placed. But he retains his strength until the influence of these connections becomes so great that he reveals the secret of his strength in God. His heart, far from God, places that confidence in a Philistine which should have existed only between his soul and God. (Chap. xvi.)

To possess and keep a secret proves intimacy with a friend. But the secret of God, the possession of His confidence, is the highest of all privileges. To betray it to a stranger, be he who he may, is to despise the precious position in which His grace has placed us; it is to lose it. What have the enemies of God to do with the secret of God? It was thus that Samson gave himself up to his enemies. All attempts were powerless against him so long as he maintained his Nazariteship. This separation once lost, although Samson was apparently as strong and his exterior as goodly as before, yet Jehovah was no longer with him. "I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. And he wist not that Jehovah was departed from him."

We can scarcely imagine a greater folly than that of confiding his secret to Delilah, after having so many times been seized by the Philistines at the moment she awoke him. And thus it is with the assembly: when it yields

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itself to the world, it loses all its wisdom, even that which is common to man. Poor Samson! his strength may be restored, but he has lost his sight for ever.

But who has ever hardened himself against the Lord, and prospered?

The Philistines ascribe their success to their false god. God remembers His own glory, and His poor servant humbled under the chastisement of his sin. The Philistines assemble to enjoy their victory and glorify their false gods. But Jehovah had his eye on all this. In his humiliation, the thought of the Lord had more power over the heart of Samson; his Nazariteship was regaining strength. He makes his touching appeal to God. Who would fear a blind and afflicted prisoner? but who amongst this world knows the secret of Jehovah? A slave and for ever deprived of sight, his condition affords an opportunity, which his strength had not been able to obtain, before his unfaithfulness deprived him of it. But he is blind and enslaved, and he must perish himself in the judgment which he brings upon the impiety of his enemies. He had identified himself with the world by hearkening to it, and he must share the judgment which falls upon the world.

If the unfaithfulness of the assembly has given the world power over it, the world has on the other hand assailed the rights of God by corrupting the assembly, and therefore brings down judgment upon itself at the moment of its greatest triumph: a judgment which, if it puts an end to the existence, as well as to the misery of the Nazarite, destroys at the same time in one common ruin the whole glory of the world.

XVI.

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In the details of prophecy this applies to the closing history of the Jewish people. Only there the remnant is preserved, to be established on a new base for the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

The chapters that follow (xvii.—xxi.) are not comprised in the historical order of this book. They lift the veil to disclose some incidents of the inner life of this people whom the patience of God bore with so long, touched with the afflictions of His people in the sufferings occasioned by their sins. Had they been obedient when Jehovah was their King, their prosperity had been secure. Self-willed as they were, the absence of restraint—when they had no king—gave room to all kinds of license. The last event, related in this book, shews to what a height disorder had risen in Israel and how they fell away immediately from God. But it affords a very important lesson. If the state of God's people collectively gives rise to iniquities which require discipline, the whole people are involved in the chastisement that follows; the effect of which is to make them take their condition to heart. That condition had prevented the repression of iniquity, or its immediate punishment when committed. But the people are set in the presence of God, who judges the whole matter, and all the people must have to do with it.

Israel at first did not even take counsel with Jehovah to learn how the sin should be dealt with. They acted from natural indignation (which was nevertheless quite righteous). Jehovah allowed all this in order that the people might learn where they were. The

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evil which required chastening had so blunted their spiritual state that they had not the thought of waiting in the first place on Jehovah to know what was to be done. Their course of action is determined before they consult Him, for they were far from Him. They merely ask who is to go up first. Jehovah points out Judah, but Judah is defeated. Twice beaten when they expected an easy victory, the people humbled and in tears have recourse again to Jehovah, and enquire if they shall go up. Jehovah then gives them the victory. Gibeah well deserved this discipline; but, to execute it, Israel itself needed discipline, and God allowed all to take part in it in order to make it take effect upon all.

But what a state were they all in, when the whole tribe of Benjamin joined the men of Gibeah, when guilty of such enormities! And observe, that Phinehas was still high priest, although he had already grown to manhood in the wilderness. How patiently God dealt with this people, delivering them when they had so quickly fallen into sin and into such depths of sin! What does God not see in this world and even in His people? It is important to note this bringing to light of that inward state which, in the general history, is not done. It sheds a much fuller light on the ways of God.



XVII.—XXI.

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RUTH.

The Book of Ruth tells us also of the days of the judges, when there was no king in Israel; but it shews us the fair side of those days, in the operations of the grace of God, who (blessed be His name!) never failed to work in the midst of the evil, as also in the steady progress of events towards the fulfilment of His promises in the Messiah, whatever may have been the simultaneous progress of the general evil.

Ruth, a stranger seeking shelter by faith under the wings of the God of Israel, is received in grace, and the genealogy of David, king over Israel according to grace, is linked with her. It is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Himself after the flesh.

This book appears to me to set before us in type the reception in grace of the remnant of Israel in the last days, their Redeemer (the kinsman, who has the right of redemption) having taken their cause in hand.

Eli-Melech (which signifies God the King) being dead, Naomi (my delight, my pleasure) becomes a widow, and eventually loses her children also. She typifies the Jewish nation, who, having lost her God, is like a widow and has no heir. Yet there shall be a remnant, destitute of all right to the promises (and therefore prefigured historically by a stranger), who will be received in grace (similarly to the Gentiles and the assembly*)—who will

* Compare Micah v. 3, last part.

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faithfully and heartily identify itself with desolate Israel; for Ruth clave to her and to her God. (See chap. i. 16.) God will own this remnant, which, poor and afflicted itself, will in heart obey the commands given to the people.

Naomi, who in her destitution is a type of the nation, acknowledges her condition; she calls herself Mara (bitterness).

He who was nearest of kin, who would willingly have redeemed the inheritance, refuses to do so, if Ruth must be taken with it. The law was never able (nor the assembly either) to re-establish Israel in their inheritance, nor to raise up in grace the name of the dead.

Boaz (in him is strength), upon whom the remnant had no direct claim (and who typifies Christ risen, in whom are the sure mercies of David), undertakes to raise up the name of the dead, and to re-establish the heritage of Israel. Acting in grace and in kindness, and encouraging the patient humble faith of the remnant, the meek of the earth, he shews himself faithful to fulfil the purposes and the will of God with respect to this poor desolate family. Nothing can be more touching and exquisite than the details given here. The character of Ruth, this poor woman of the Gentiles, has great beauty.

"Naomi took the child that was born to her, and laid it in her bosom;" and they said, "There is a son born to Naomi." In fact the heir of the promises will be born unto Israel as a nation, although the fulfilment of the promise affects the remnant only,

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which, fully identifying itself with the interests of God's people, has sought neither the rich nor the poor, but, in faith and obedience, has kept the testimony of God amongst the people in the path appointed by Him.

Thus, if on one side the Book of Judges shews us the falling away of the people of Israel, and their failure under responsibility, even when God was their helper, on the other side this touching and precious book sets before us, as the dawn of better things, grace acting in the midst of difficulties, securing the fulfilment of promise, and embellishing this scene of misery and sin by lovely and beautiful instances of faith, precious fruits of grace, whether in weakness and devotedness, or in strength and kindness, and always in accordance with the perfect will of God, and assuring by this touching history, as a type, the full restoration of Israel to blessing according to promise. It is a refreshing and lovely picture in the midst of the hard-mindedness and sorrows of Israel.

In the succeeding books we shall see prophecy, and the history of God's dealings, developing the body of events which tended to the fulfilment of His designs, the first principles, the elements, of which are laid down in that which is shewn us in this. For Ruth furnishes a kind of intermediate link between the fall of Israel under God's immediate government, and the future fulfilment of His purposes.

Prophecy, which unfolds these purposes and gives moral proof of this fall, begins with Samuel: we learn

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this from the lips of Jesus, who is Himself the object of prophecy.

Eli, the last judge and priest, departs; his family is to be cut off; the ark of the covenant is taken by the Philistines; and Samuel, consecrated to God in a new and extraordinary manner, comes in with the special testimony of the Lord.

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I SAMUEL.

We have seen that the Book of Ruth occupies, in its purport, an intermediate place between the end of the period in which Israel was governed by God Himself who interposed from time to time by means of judges, and the setting up of the king whom He selected for them. This period, alas! came to an end through the people's failure, and their inability to make a right use by faith, of their privileges.

The Books of Samuel contain the account of the cessation of Israel's original relationship with God, the sovereign interference of God in prophecy, and the setting up of the king whom God Himself had prepared, with the circumstances which preceded this event. It is not merely that Israel failed under the government of God: they rejected it.

Placed under the priesthood, they drew nigh to God in the enjoyment of privileges which were granted them as a people acknowledged by Jehovah. We shall see the ark—which, as it was the nearest and most immediate, so was it the most precious link between Jehovah Elohim and the people—fall into the hands of the enemy. What could a priest do, when that which gave his priesthood all its importance was in the enemy's hands, and when the place where he drew near to Jehovah (the throne of God in the midst of Israel, the place of propitiation by which in mercy Israel's relationship with

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God, through the sprinkled blood, was maintained) was no more there?

It was no longer mere unfaithfulness in the circumstances in which God had placed them. The circumstances themselves were entirely changed through God's judgment upon Israel. The outward link of God's connection with the people was broken; the ark of the covenant, centre and basis of their relationship with Him, had been given up by the wrath of God into the hands of their enemies. Priesthood was the natural and normal means of maintaining the relationship between God and the people: how could it now be used for this purpose?

Nevertheless God, acting in sovereignty, could put Himself in communication with His people, by virtue of His grace and immutable faithfulness, according to which His connection with His people existed still on His side, even when all acknowledged relationship between Him and them was broken off by their unfaithfulness. And this He did by raising up a prophet. By his means God still communicated *in a direct way* with His people, even when they had not maintained their relationship with Him in their normal condition. The office of the priest was connected with the integrity of these relations; the people needed him in their infirmities. Still under the priesthood the people themselves drew nigh to God through the medium of the priest, according to the relationship which God had established and which He recognized. But the prophet acted on the part of God outside this relationship, or rather above it, when the people were no longer faithful.

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The setting up of a king went much farther. It was a new order of relationship which involved most important principles. The relationship of God with the people was no longer immediate. An authority was set over Israel. God expected faithfulness from the king. The people's destiny depended upon the conduct of the one who was responsible before Jehovah for the maintenance of this faithfulness.

It was God's purpose to establish this principle for the glory of Christ. I speak of His kingdom over the Jews and over the nations, over the whole world. This kingdom has been prefigured in David and in Solomon. To ask for a king, rejecting God's own immediate government, was folly and rebellion in the people. How often are our follies and our faults the opportunity for the display of the grace and wisdom of God and for the fulfilment of His counsels hidden from the world until then! Our sins and faults alone have conduced to the glorious accomplishment of these counsels in Christ.

These are the important subjects treated of in the Books of Samuel, so far at least as the establishment of the kingdom. Its glorious condition and its fall are related in the two Books of Kings.

It is the fall of Israel which puts an end to their first relationship with God. The ark is taken; the priest dies. Prophecy introduces the king—a king despised and rejected, man having set up another, yet a king whom God establishes according to the might of His power. Such are the great principles unfolded in the Books of Samuel.

History shews us here, as everywhere, that there is but One who has remained faithful—an humbling result

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for us of the trial to which God has subjected us, but one well adapted to keep us humble.

If we have spoken of the fall of the priesthood, we must not infer from it that priesthood ceased to exist. It was always necessary to a people full of weakness (as it is to ourselves on earth); it interposed in the things of God to maintain individual relationship to Him in them, but it ceased to form the basis of relationship between the whole people and God. The people were no longer capable of enjoying this relationship through this means alone; and the priesthood itself could suffice no longer, having so deeply failed in its standing. We shall do well to dwell a little on this, which is the turning-point of the truths we are considering.

In Israel's primitive state, and in their constitution generally, as established in the land given to them, priesthood was the basis of their relationship with God; it was that which characterized and maintained it. (See Heb. vii. 11.) The high priest was their head and representative before God, as a nation of worshippers; and in this character (I speak here neither of redemption from Egypt nor of conquests, but of a people before God, and in relationship with Him), on the great day of atonement he confessed their sins over the scape-goat. It was not merely intercession. He stood there as head and representative of the people, who were summed up in him before Jehovah. The people were acknowledged, although faulty. They presented themselves in the person of the high priest, that they might be in connection with a God, who, after all, veiled Himself from their eyes. The people presented everything to the

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priest; the high priest stood before God. This relationship did not imply innocence. An innocent man should have stood himself before God. "Adam, where art thou?" This question brings out his fall.

Still the people were not driven away, though the veil was between them and God; the high priest, who sympathized with the infirmities of the people, being one with them, maintained the relationship with God. They were a very imperfect people, it is true; yet by this means they stood themselves in connection with the Holy One. But Israel was not able to maintain this position; not only was there sin (the high priest could remedy that), but they sinned *against* Jehovah, they turned away from Him, and that even in their leaders. The priesthood itself, which should have maintained the relationship, wrought for its destruction by dishonouring God and repelling the people from His worship, instead of attracting them to it.

I pass over the preparatory circumstances. God then sets up a king, whose duty it was to preserve order and to secure God's connection with the people by governing them and by his own faithfulness to God. This is what Christ will accomplish for them in the ages to come; He is the anointed. When the king is established, the priest walks before him. (1 Sam. ii. 35.) It is a new institution, the only one capable of maintaining the relationship of the people with God. Priesthood is no longer here an immediate relationship. It provides indeed, in its own functions, for the wants of the people. The king watches over it, and secures order and blessing.

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Now the assembly's position is altogether different. The saint now approaches God directly. Together with the priesthood, which is exercised for the saints on earth, to maintain them in their walk here and in the enjoyment of their privileges, it is *united* to the anointed; the veil exists no longer. We sit in the heavenly places in Christ, made accepted in the Beloved. The favour of God rests upon us, members of the body of Christ, as upon Christ Himself. That which has unveiled the holiness of God has disclosed all the sin of man, and *has taken it away.**

Thus in Christ, members of His body, we are perfect before God, and perfectly accepted. The priest seeks neither to give us this position, nor to maintain relationship with God as to those who are not in this position. The work of Christ has placed us in it. How intercede then for perfection? Can intercession make the person and the work of Christ more perfect in the sight of God? Certainly not. But we are in Him, of His flesh and of His bones. In what manner then is this priesthood exercised for us? In maintaining mercy-needing creatures in their walk, and so in the realization of their relationship with God.† The Christian indeed enters into a still clearer manifestation of God and more absolute relationship with God, that of being in the

* I refer here to that of His believing people.

† There is a shade of difference between the priesthood and the advocacy of Christ. The priesthood is in Christ appearing in the presence of God for us; but this as to our place before God is perfection. It does not therefore refer to sin in its daily exercise, but mercy and grace to help in time of need. We enter boldly

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light as God is in the light. *We are seated in the heavenly places, made accepted in the Beloved, loved as He is loved, the righteousness of God in Him. He is our life; He has given us the glory that was given Him.* Now the Holy Ghost, who came down from heaven after that Jesus was glorified, has introduced us consciously into the unveiled presence of God. Nevertheless we, though without excuse in doing it, fail and pick up defilement here below. Through the advocacy of Him who is in the presence of God for us our feet are washed by the Spirit and the word, and we are rendered capable of maintaining a communion (of which darkness knows nothing) with God in that light. Hereafter, in the presence of Jesus the King, priesthood will no doubt sustain the connection of the people with God, whilst He will bear the weight of government and of blessing for the people in every sense.

We find then in the beginning of this book priesthood existing before God in the original form we have mentioned. Eli, pious himself, and fearing God, maintained no order in the priestly family. But the priesthood, instead of binding the people to God, morally separated them. Hophni and Phinehas were at Shiloh. In the family of Elkanah, Hannah, chosen of Jehovah for blessing, was in trial; the desires of her natural heart were not satisfied, and the adversary tormented her by means of the prosperous Peninnah. But He, whose

into the holiest. Advocacy refers to our sinning because the question where it is spoken of (1 John ii. 2) is communion, and this is wholly interrupted by sin.

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strength is perfected in weakness, having made manifest (as ever in such a case) the powerlessness of nature, gives blessing according to His own will, against all hope, in order that that which was of Him should be evidently wrought by His own power. Hannah has a son according to her petition, a son devoted to the Lord. His family was of the tribe of Levi. (1 Chron. vi.)

In the beautiful song of chapter ii. Hannah recognizes this great principle of sovereign grace, and of the power of God; that He brings down the proud and those who trust in the flesh, and exalts the weak and impotent. "For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's; and he hath set the world upon them." This was what Israel, poor and fallen, and a feeble remnant waiting for Jehovah, needed to learn; that is, that everything hung upon God and God alone, who did not seek for power in man, but manifests it in His own dealings by destroying all His enemies, and who will at length "give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of His anointed." It is the history of God's interposition in favour of poor fallen Israel; and that, by the manifestation of His power in giving strength to His king, His Christ. It is a prophecy of the ways of God, of the great principles of His government with respect to the position of Israel, from the moment of its utterance until the establishment of the millennial kingdom in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Immediately after this testimony from God upon which faith might rest, the inward state of the people is revealed, and the iniquity of the priesthood, which should have been the instrument for cleansing this

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iniquity of the people, but which, on the contrary, brought down judgment upon them. "Ye make Jehovah's people to transgress," said Eli. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against Jehovah, who shall intreat for him?" Such was the state of things according to Eli himself. "Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because Jehovah would slay them. And the child, Samuel, grew on, and was in favour both with Jehovah, and also with men," happy in sharing (however feeble the copy) the testimony borne to Jesus Himself.

As to the sons of Eli, they are an example of that which but too often happens. How frequently alas! do we see that, when the judgment of God is on the point of breaking forth, people are unconscious of it (their moral perception being darkened by the evil). The eyes of God are elsewhere, as well as the spiritual discernment which He gives to His own, as was the case here with Samuel. Nevertheless God warns Eli by means of a man of God. His judgment on the priestly family and on the priesthood is pronounced before Jehovah reveals Himself to Samuel.

This judgment announces the change in the order of divine government, which was to take place through the setting up of a king, an anointed one (a Christ), and through the consequent position of the priesthood, as we have already remarked. (Ver. 35.) "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk *before mine*

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*anointed** for ever." Such I apprehend will be millennial order.

In chapter iii. God reveals himself to Samuel; and he is known to be a prophet of Jehovah from Dan even to Beersheba.

Eli, judged for having loved his sons more than Jehovah, comforts our hearts nevertheless by his submission. If he failed in the energy of faithfulness, he was yet true in heart to Jehovah, and his personal piety is the more conspicuous in the devotedness to God's glory which he manifests in these circumstances, finding his death in the Ichabod of His people.

Sad and affecting history of the effect of God's righteous judgment upon one whose heart was set upon His glory in His people, but who had not had firmness enough to prevent the people, and even his own sons, from dishonouring Jehovah Himself in the priestly service!

Here begins the display of the means which God employs in His sovereignty to maintain His relationship with His people, when the ordinary relations He had established are interrupted.

In chapter iv. the enemies of God and of His people display their strength; the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel.

We shall do well to pause a moment here; for the Philistines are of considerable importance, on account of the part they take in this history, as the power of

* Joshua, on the contrary, went in and out under the direction of Eleazar, who inquired of God.

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the enemy. They appear to me to represent the power of the enemy acting within the circle of God's people. They were in the territory of the Israelites—within the land, and even on this side of the Jordan. They were not, like the Egyptians or Assyrians, enemies from without. Habitually hostile to Israel, to those who by God's appointment should have possessed the land of promise—so much the more dangerous from being always at hand, and claiming possession of the country, the Philistines set before us in type the power of the enemy acting from within. I do not mean the flesh, but the enemy within the pale of the professing church, acting of course through instruments, the oppressor of God's true people to whom the promises belong.

Israel, corrupt in all their ways, and daring in their ways with God, because they had forgotten His majesty and His holiness, seek to identify Jehovah* with them in their unfaithful condition, as He had been in their original state, instead of coming before Him to learn why He had forsaken His people. God will neither acknowledge nor succour them. On the contrary, the ark of the covenant, the sign and the seat of His relationship with the people, is taken. His throne is no longer in the midst of the people; His tabernacle is empty; all ordered relationship is interrupted. Where can they offer sacrifice? where draw nigh to Jehovah their God! Eli, the priest, dies; and his pious daughter-

* Observe the contrast between this case and that of Achan, although there was sin in the latter. The sin was confessed and judged in detail, although the people were chastised.

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in-law, overwhelmed by these disastrous tidings, pronounces the funeral oration of the unhappy people in the name she bestows on that which could no longer be her joy. The fruit of her womb bears but this impress of her people's calamity; it is only Ichabod in her sight.

What a blessing to have had through grace the song of Hannah already given by the Spirit to sustain the faith and hope of the people! All outward connection is broken; but God upholds His own majesty; and if unfaithful Israel had not been able to withstand the worshippers of idols, the God whom Israel had forsaken vindicates His glory, and proves, even in the heart of their temple, that those idols are but vanity.

The Philistines are obliged to acknowledge the power of the God of Israel, whom Israel could not glorify. His judgments suggested a means to their natural conscience which, while proving that the influence of the almighty power of God is felt even by creatures devoid of intelligence, causing them to act against their strongest instincts, manifests also that it was indeed Jehovah, the Omnipotent God, who had inflicted the chastisement under which they were suffering.

God maintains His majesty even in the midst of Israel. He is no longer among them securing their promised blessings. His ark, exposed through their unfaithfulness to the unworthy treatment of the Philistines and of the inquisitive, becomes (as the token of God's presence) the occasion of judgment inflicted on the temerity of those who dared to look within it, forgetful of His divine majesty who made it His throne and kept His testimony therein.

IV.

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But how often the absence of God causes His value to be felt, whose presence had not been appreciated!

Israel, still deprived of Jehovah's presence and glory, laments after Him. Let us remark here that God could not remain among the Philistines. Unfaithfulness might subject His people to their enemies, although God was there. But, left (so to say) to Himself, His presence judged the false gods. Association was impossible; the Philistines desire Him not. You cannot glory in a victory over One who when captured is your destroyer. The Philistines get rid of Him. Never can the children of Satan endure the presence of the true God.

Moreover the heart of God is not alienated from His people. He finds His way back to the people of His choice in a sovereign manner, which proves Him to be the God of all creation. But, as we have seen, He asserts His majesty. More than fifty thousand men pay the penalty of their impious temerity. God returns: but still it needs that He open a way for Himself after His own purposes and dealings, according to which He re-establishes His relationship with the people. Thus Samuel appears again on the scene when, the ark having abode in Kirjath-jearim twenty years (chap. vii.), Israel laments after Jehovah. The ark is not put back in its place, nor is the original order restored.

Samuel begins to act, by his testimony, upon the conscience of the people, and to put away that which weakened them by dishonouring God. He tells them that, if they will turn to Jehovah with all their heart, they must put away the strange gods, and serve Jehovah

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alone. A mingled worship was intolerable. Then would Jehovah deliver them. The prophet Samuel is now the meeting-point between the people and God. God now acknowledges him alone.

The ark is not found again in its place until the king chosen of God is established on the throne; it is only placed entirely in God's order when the son of David rules in peace and in strength at Jerusalem.* It is consulted once (1 Sam. xiv. 18, 19), but its presence is without effect and without power. It exists but in connection with those in whom faith and integrity were no longer found, so that nothing resulted from it. It the rather proved that God was elsewhere, or at least that He wrought elsewhere.

But we will pursue the history. At Samuel's call the strange gods are put away. The people gather around him, that he may pray for them. They offer no sacrifice; they draw water and pour it out upon the ground in token of repentance (see 2 Sam. xiv. 14); they fast and confess their sin. Samuel judges them there.

But if Israel assembles, even for humiliation, the enemy at once bestirs himself in opposition; he will tolerate no act which places the people of God in a position which recognizes Him as God.

The Israelites are alarmed, and have recourse to Samuel's intercession. Samuel offers sacrifices,† tokens

* Compare Psalms lxxviii. 60, 61; cxxxii. The ark is in connection with Sion, the seat of kingly grace. Solomon only, as the man of peace, could build the house.

† That is to say, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. This is remarkable. It was not sacrifice for sin, but sacrifice which

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of entire surrender of self to the Lord, and of the people's communion with Him; but it is not before the ark. He intreats Jehovah, his prayer is heard, and the Philistines are smitten before Israel. And it was not an exceptional case, although they lost nothing of their formidable character, or of their hatred for Israel. Samuel brings down God's blessing upon the people, and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

The cities of Israel were restored. There was peace between Israel and the Amorites. Samuel judged Israel at Ramah and built an altar there. All this is an exceptional and extraordinary position for Israel, in which they depended entirely on Samuel, who, while living himself as a patriarch, as though there were no tabernacle, becomes, through his own relationship with God, by faith, the support and upholder of the people, who in fact had no other.

But faith is not transmitted by succession. Samuel could not make prophets of his sons. They were no better as judges than Eli's sons had been as priests, and the people had no faith themselves, to lean immediately upon God. They ask to be made like unto the nations.

"Make us now a king," said they to Samuel. Where was Jehovah? For Israel nowhere. But it was evil in the eyes of Samuel, and he prayed unto Jehovah. While acknowledging that the people had, as usual, rejected Him, God commands Samuel to hearken unto

recognized the relationship existing between the people and God. Christ only, as we have seen elsewhere, is the true burnt-offering.

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their voice. Samuel warns them according to God's testimony, and sets before them all the inexpediency and consequences of such a step; but the people will not hearken unto him. God brings to the prophet, through providential circumstances, the man whom He had chosen to satisfy the carnal wishes of the people. In all this He judges the people and their king. ("He gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath.") But He remembers His people. He does not forsake them. He acts by Saul on their behalf, while shewing them their unfaithfulness, and afterwards in cutting off the disobedient king. Beauty and height of stature distinguished the son of Kish. But in the signs that Samuel gave him, when he had anointed him, there was a meaning which should have carried his thoughts beyond himself.

How often there is a meaning, a language, perfectly intelligible to one who has ears to hear, but which escapes us, because our gross and hardened heart has no spiritual intelligence or discernment! And yet all our future hangs upon it. God has shewn our incapacity for the blessing it involved. Nevertheless the means were not wanting.

Although the significance of this circumstance was less evident than that of the other signs, yet Rachel's sepulchre should have reminded Saul, the son and heir according to the flesh of the one who was born there, that the son of the mother's sorrow was the son of the father's right hand. (Gen. xxxv. 18.)

Now God had not abandoned Israel; faith was still there; men were going up to God. There was some in

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Israel who remembered *the God of Bethel*, who had revealed Himself to Jacob when he fled,* and who in His faithfulness had brought him back in peace; and God gave Saul favour in their eyes. The servants of the God of Bethel salute him and strengthen him on his way. But the hill of God was possessed by the garrison of the Philistines—another circumstance which, by its significance, should have gone to the heart of a faithful Israelite who desired the glory of God and the good of His people. But the sign which accompanied it made it much more forcible; for the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Saul in this place, and he was turned into another man, called therefore to "do as occasion served him, for God was with him." (Chap. x. 7.)†

It often happens, that faith sets forth clearly what should be done, while the heart, waxen fat and unfaithful, does not see it at all.

And what do these signs mean? There are those in Israel who remember the God of Bethel, and who seek Him—upright and prepared hearts, who know Him as the resource of faith. But the hill of God, the public seat of His strength, is in the enemy's hands. Still, if this be so, the Spirit of God is upon the man who takes

* The God who had said to him in the day of his trouble, when driven out from before his enemy, that He would not forsake Him.

† Accordingly it was the Spirit of prophecy, the Spirit which acted in blessing, which indicated the presence of God, and that to which Saul should have recourse, even though (yea, because) the hill of God, the public seat of His authority in Israel, was in the hands of the enemies of the true people of God. This scene pictured the whole state of Israel.

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cognizance of it, and it is at this very hill that the Spirit comes upon him. The name of God is also significative here. It is *God* abstractedly—God the Creator: God Himself is in question. The Spirit of Jehovah comes upon Saul, because He resumes there the course of His relations with Israel.

But Samuel is still the only one whom God recognizes as the link between Himself and the people. It is when Saul has had to do with Samuel, that he is another man. He must wait for Samuel, that he may know what to do, and that blessing may rest upon him. He must thus acknowledge that blessing is connected with the prophet, and not act without him; he must wait for him with perfect patience (seven days), a patience which, submitting to God's testimony, will not seek for blessing apart from His ways.

Here also we see in the Philistines the enemies who put faith to the proof. We have often enemies over whom we gain an easy victory, and on whose account we are considered spiritual, yet they are not such as (on God's part, and it may also be said on their own part) put faith to the proof. With these patience must have her perfect work. And the Philistines held this place with respect to Saul. It was all well that the people should be delivered from their other enemies; but they were not the ones which were a snare to them, and which manifested the power of the enemy in the very midst of Israel and of the promises.

Do spiritual powers rule over us in the assembly, in the place where the promises of God should be fulfilled? And what power do we see to overthrow the power of

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evil and spiritual wickedness within the borders of the professing church?

It was from the Philistines that Saul should have delivered the people of God. (See chap. ix. 16.) The hill of God was in the Philistines' hands. (See also chap. xiv. 52.) If Saul had waited for Samuel, he would have declared unto him all that he should do. Now we shall see that, two years later, Saul is put to the proof as to this in the presence of the Philistines; and whatever may have been the delay, the thing had not been altered; all the intermediate success should have increased his faith and strengthened him in obedience.

Samuel calls the people together at Mizpeh. There he sets before them their foolishness in rejecting the God of their salvation. But he proceeds to the choice of a king, according to the command of God. God meets the wishes of the people. If the flesh could have glorified God, nothing was wanting to induce them to trust in Him. God adapts Himself to them in outward things; and further, as we know, had the people followed Jehovah, Jehovah would not have forsaken them. (Chap. xii. 20—25.)

And now that God has set up a king, those who will not own him are "men of Belial." The people however scarcely see God in it at all: they only recognize Him in those things which the flesh can perceive, such as the beauty of the king and the success of his arms, that is to say, the things in which God suits Himself to nature, and in which He grants blessing, in order that He may be known and trusted. In this they rejoice, but they go no farther. Faith is not of nature.

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As yet all goes well with Saul; he does not take vengeance on those who oppose him. Before his faith is tried, his natural character would gain him favour with men. And now, in those things which have given rise to the carnal movement that led the people to desire a king, all apparently prospers to their wish. The Ammonites are so thoroughly defeated, that two of them are not left together. Here also Saul acts with prudence and generosity. He does not allow the people's desire for vengeance to be carried out. He owns the Lord in the blessing granted to the people. In truth God was with them, granting to the flesh all the means and helps necessary for walking with Him, had the thing been possible. Samuel is there on God's part, and supports by his authority the king whom God has set up. At Samuel's invitation the people assemble at Gilgal (a place memorable for the blessing of the people and their association with Jehovah, the flesh being judged on entering the land), to renew the kingdom there, and again to recognize a throne whose authority had just been confirmed by successful efforts for the deliverance of God's people. Peace-offerings and great rejoicing make the ceremony more imposing.

Samuel (chap. xii.) receives the people's testimony to his fidelity. He sets before them the ways of God towards them, their ingratitude and foolishness in having asked for a king and rejected God. Nevertheless, while giving a sign from God which added the weight of God's own testimony to his words, he declares to the people that, if henceforth they would obey Jehovah, both the king and the people should continue to follow Jehovah

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(that is, they would walk under His blessing and guidance); but if not, Jehovah would be against them. For Jehovah would not forsake them, and he himself (Samuel) would assuredly not cease to pray for them, and would teach them the good and the right way: that is to say, he places the people, as to their public conduct, in the position they had chosen, and sets them under their own responsibility before Jehovah; but at the same time, full of love to them as the people of God, their rejection of himself does not for a moment suggest the thought to him of giving up his intercession or his testimony for their welfare. Beautiful picture of a heart near the Lord, which, in forgetfulness of self, can love His people as its own! To fail in this would have been to sin against the Lord. (Compare 2 Cor. xii. 15.)

Here then is Saul established in his place, and his authority confirmed by the blessing of God. Samuel retires, confining himself to his prophetic office, and Saul is now called to prove himself faithful and obedient in his present position, surrounded by all the advantages which the blessing of God and the solemn act of His prophet could confer upon him.

Let us now recapitulate the history we have been examining.

Israel, unfaithful, no longer maintain their relationship with God under priesthood. The ark is taken, the priest dies, and Ichabod is written on the condition of the people. God raises up a prophet, who becomes the means of communication between Himself and the people; but, threatened by the Ammonites, the people at length demand a king. God grants their request, tes-

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tifying at the same time His displeasure, since He Himself was their King. The Spirit of prophecy continues nevertheless to be the channel of divine communication to the people. Signs, which indicate the state of the people, are given to Saul, the elected and anointed king: first of all, some faithful ones who own the God of Bethel, that is to say, the faithful God of Jacob, who had promised not to leave him till He had performed all that He had promised him; and, next, the hill of God —the seat of authority among the people—in possession of the Philistines, the power of the enemy in the land of promise.

The Spirit of prophecy comes upon Saul, shewing him where God was amid these circumstances; and Samuel tells him to wait for him at Gilgal. Meantime, as we have seen, he is strengthened by the blessing of God upon his undertakings.

Saul reigns two years. He then selects three thousand men: two thousand are with him, and one with Jonathan. Jonathan, a man of faith, acts with energy against the enemies of God's people, and smites the Philistines; but the energy of faith, acting (as it always does) in the very stronghold of the enemy, naturally provokes their hostility. The Philistines hear of it; Saul is roused to action, and calls together, not Israel, but the "Hebrews."

Let us remark here that there is faith in Jonathan. The flesh, placed in the position of leader to God's people, follows indeed the impulse given by faith, but does not possess it; and the word *Hebrews*, the name by which a Philistine would have called the people, indicates that Saul relied on the gathering of the nation

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as a constituted body, and understood no better than a Philistine would have done the relation between a chosen people and God. And this is the position set before us in the history of Saul. It is not premeditated opposition to God, but the flesh set in a place of testimony and used in accomplishing God's work. We see in it a person linked with the interests of God's true people, doing the work of God according to the people's idea of their need—a true idea as to their actual need; but he is one who seeks his resources in the energy of man, an energy to which God does not refuse His aid when there is obedience to His will, for He loves His people; but which in principle, in moral and inward motive, can never of itself go beyond the flesh from which it springs. In the midst of all this faith can act, and act sincerely, and this is Jonathan's case. God will bless this faith, and He always does so, because it owns Him; and in this instance (and it is His gift) because it sincerely seeks the good of God's people.

All this is, in principle, a kind of picture of the professing church, which in this point of view anticipates the true reign of Christ, and in this position even fails in her faithfulness to God. True faith, in the midst of such a system, never rises so high as the glory of the coming One, the true rejected David, but it loves Him and cleaves to Him. If the church is merely professing, she persecutes Christ; but that in her which acts by faith loves and owns Him, even when He is hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

Jonathan having thus in faith attacked the Philistines, Saul, who ostensibly leads the people before God, is put

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to the proof. Will he shew himself competent? Will he remember the true principle on which the blessing of the people rests? Will he act as a royal priest, or will he acknowledge the prophet to be the true link of faith between the people and God—a link the importance and necessity of which he ought to have recognized, since he owed to it his present place and power, and it had proved to him its own mission and prophetic authority by establishing his? When the critical moment arrives, Saul fails.

It is worth while to retrace here the tokens of the unbelief of the flesh.

The Philistines are smitten. The nation, active and energetic, hear of it; nothing could be more natural. Saul has but the same resource—no call upon God, no cry to Jehovah, the God of Israel; Samuel does not occur to his faith, although he remembers what Samuel had told him. If the Philistines have heard, the *Hebrews* must hear also. Israel fears; God gives no answer to unbelief when the trial of faith is His object. Saul calls the people after him to Gilgal, but they were soon scattered from him at the report of the Philistines having gathered together. Saul is at Gilgal, and Samuel comes again into his mind. It was no longer as when the kingdom had been renewed. The circumstances naturally suggested Samuel as a resource. Saul tarries seven days for him according to his word. He waits for him long enough to satisfy the exigence of conscience; then, as the people once brought the ark into the camp, he offers the burnt-offering. But, if he had had confidence in God, he would have understood that, whatever

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might be the result, he should wait for Him; that it was useless to do anything without Him, and that he ran no risk in waiting for Him. A faithful God could not fail him. He had thought of Samuel, so that he was without excuse; he remembered that the guidance and blessing of God were found with the prophet. But he looks at circumstances; the people are scattered and Saul seeks to bring God in by an act of devotion without faith. It was the decisive moment; God would have confirmed his kingdom over Israel, would have established his dynasty. But now he had made choice of another.

Observe here that it is not through being defeated by the Philistines that Saul loses the throne. The fault was between himself and God. The Philistines do not attack him. It is enough for Satan if he succeeds in frightening us away from the pure and simple path of faith. Samuel departs after having made known to Saul the mind of God. The Philistines pillage the land, which is defenceless. The people moreover had neither sword nor spear.

What a picture of the state of God's people! How often we find that those who profess to be the children of God, to be of the truth, and heirs of the promises, are unarmed before the enemies who despoil them!

But faith in God is always blest; and if God has shewn the effects of unbelief, He also shews its folly, since wherever faith is found, there all His strength is displayed; and then it is the enemy who is defenceless. Jonathan makes up his mind to attack the Philistines in the energy which he derives from faith in God; and if

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unbelief is manifest in Saul, the beauty of faith is exhibited in his son.

The difficulties are not lessened. The Philistines are in garrison, and their camp situated in a place of unusually difficult access, a narrow pathway up perpendicular rocks being the only means of approach. The Philistines were there in great number, and well armed. But it is hard for faith to endure the oppression of God's people by the enemy, and the dishonour thus done to God Himself. Jonathan endures it not. Where does he seek for strength? His thoughts are simple. The Philistines are uncircumcised; they have not the help of the God of Israel. "There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few;" and this is the thought of Jonathan's faith, that fair flower which God caused to blossom in the wilderness of Israel at this sorrowful moment. He does not think about himself. Jehovah, says he, has delivered them up to *Israel*. He trusts in God, and in His unfailing faithfulness towards His people: his heart rests in this,* and he does not imagine for an instant that God is not with His people, whatever their condition may be. This characterizes faith. It not only acknowledges that God is great, but it recognizes the indissoluble bond (indissoluble because it is of God) between God and His people. The consequence is, that faith forgets circumstances, or rather nullifies them. God is with His people. He is not with their enemies. All the rest is but an opportunity of proving the real

* See the same proofs of faith in David, when he went out against Goliath.

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dependence of faith. Thus, there is no boasting in Jonathan; his *expectation* is from God. He goes out and meets the Philistines. He is there a witness for God. If they are bold enough to come down, he will wait for them and not create difficulties for himself, but he will not turn away from those which meet him in his path. The indolent and at the same time foolish and imprudent confidence of the enemy is but a sign to Jonathan that Jehovah has delivered them up. Had they come down, they would have lost their advantage; in bidding him come up, they set aside the insurmountable difficulty of access to the camp. Happy in having a faithful companion in his work of faith, Jonathan seeks no other assistance. He does not talk of the *Hebrews;* but he says "Jehovah has delivered them up into the hand of Israel." He climbs the rock with his armour-bearer. And in truth Jehovah was with him; the Philistines fall before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer slays after him. But while honouring the arm which faith had strengthened, God manifests *Himself.* The dread of God took hold of the Philistines, and everything trembles before the man whom faith (God's precious gift) had led into action.

Faith acts of itself. Saul is obliged to number the people to find out who is absent. Alas! we are entering into the sad history of unbelief. Saul endeavours to obtain some directions from the ark, whilst elsewhere God was triumphing over the enemy without Israel. The tumult of their defeat continues to increase; and unbelief, which never knows what to do, tells then the priest to withdraw his hand. The

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king and the priest were not the link between God and the people. There was neither the people's faith in God without a king, nor the king whom God Himself had given.

Here again, instead of Israel (whom Jonathan alone recognized), we find those whom even the Spirit of God calls *Hebrews*,* who, although they were "of the fountain of Jacob," are among the Philistines, content to be at ease among the enemies of God.

Now that the victory is gained, all are glad to share the triumph and pursue the Philistines.

And poor Saul, what does he do? Never can unbelief—however good its intentions in joining the work of faith—do anything except spoil it. Saul speaks of avenging himself on *his* enemies. Jehovah is not in his thoughts; he thinks of himself, and hinders the pursuit by his carnal and selfish zeal. May God preserve us from the guidance and help of unbelief in the work of faith! God Himself can succour us through every means; but when man mixes himself up with the work, he does but spoil it, even when seeking to bring in strength.

Saul, at the moment of such blessing, is zealous to maintain the idea of honouring Jehovah's ordinances, as

* This is the more remarkable, because the Spirit calls those who were with Saul and Jonathan Israelites. This gives special force to the word "Hebrews," wherever it is found. God does not refuse the name of Israelite to the most timorous of the people (chap. xiii. 6), but He refuses it to those who join the Philistines. *The idea was lost of the connection between the people and God.* It was a nation like any other.

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he sought to do previously in asking His counsel at the ark, making much of His name, as though the victory had been due to him, and it was only some hidden sin which prevented his obtaining an answer from God. He had nearly put Jonathan to death, through whom God had wrought. He would discover the sin by bringing in God, who acts indeed, but only to make manifest the folly of the poor king.

Observe that faith in full energy can thankfully avail itself of the refreshment which God sets before it in its toilsome course, whilst the carnal zeal of that which is but an imitation of faith, and which never acts with God, makes a duty of refusing it. All that Saul can do, when he takes the lead, is to prevent their reaping the entire fruit of the victory. His intervention could only spoil the work of others; he has no faith to perform one himself.

Nevertheless God has pity on Israel, and keeps their enemies in check by means of Saul; for, although unbelieving, he had not yet turned his hatred against God's elect. He was not yet forsaken of Jehovah.

But this painful and solemn moment is at hand. Meanwhile he strengthens himself. There was constant war with the Philistines; but Saul, warlike as he was, could not overcome them, as David or even Samuel did. He sought carnal means amongst his fellows to attain his object.

Observe here with what frightful rapidity, and how even at once, the enemy gains the upper hand when we are not walking in the ways of God. (Comp. vii. 12, 14, and xiii. 16, 23.)

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Observe also that all the forms of piety and of Jewish religion are with Saul; "Jehovah's priest in Shiloh (chap. xiv. 3), wearing an ephod," and the ark. (Ver. 18.) He consults with the priest. He prevents their eating flesh with blood. He builds an altar. The priest consults God; and, God giving no answer, Saul is ready to slay Jonathan as guilty, because he had eaten in spite of the oath.

Observe, at the same time, that it is the first altar Saul had built; that the priest is of the family which God had condemned. He builds his altar when rejected, and after the outward blessing which God had given and which he attributes to himself, although he had only spoilt it.

On the other hand Jonathan's faith acts without taking counsel of flesh and blood: as the people said (chap. xiv. 45), he wrought *with God*. The people did not know that he was absent. Happy Jonathan! faith had led him so far in advance that he did not even hear the senseless curse which his father invoked on whoever tasted food. The folly of another's unbelief did not reach him. He was at liberty, as he went along, to avail himself of the kindness of his God with joy and thanksgiving, and he pursued his course refreshed and encouraged—happy walk of simplicity which acts with God!

The consideration of these two chapters is very instructive, as setting before us the contrast between the walk of faith and that of the flesh, in the position which the latter takes, by virtue of its profession, in the work of God. It was the first time that Saul had faced the enemy on whose account God raised him up.

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Nevertheless Saul is put to a final proof. Jehovah, by the mouth of Samuel, sends him to smite Amalek, and utterly destroy them and all that belonged to them. They were the cruel and determined enemies of God's people. (Deut. xxx. 17, 19.) They had been chief among the nations, their name and their pride were everywhere known (Numb. xxiv. 7, 20); but it was a nation doomed of God.

God now entrusts Saul with the fulfilment of Deuteronomy xxv. 19. In this case all Israel accompanied him without fear. These were not the enemies from within who were daily wearing away their strength and courage. The victory is complete. The only question now is that of faithfulness to God, and of preferring His glory to self-interest. But Saul fears the people. The Spirit of God says "*Saul and the people;*" Saul says "*the people;*" and that it was *for God* they spared. But our excuses, even when true, only condemn us. Saul, not having faith, not looking to God, fears the people more than God. What a slave is the unbeliever! If not the slave of the enemy, he is that of the people whom he appears to govern. Saul, unfaithful to God in the midst of the people, and surrounded by blessings from Jehovah, is at length deprived of the kingdom.

No humiliation, no brokenness of heart—he confesses his sin, hoping to avoid its punishment; but, unable to escape it, he entreats Samuel to honour him in spite of it. Samuel does so and then forsakes him. Everything changes now, and David appears on the scene. It is well to remark, that the connected history of Saul's reign closes with the end of chapter xiv.

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Chapter xv. is given as a separate history on account of the importance of its contents—the definite rejection of Saul, a rejection which introduces David.

In chapter xvi. Samuel is sent of Jehovah to anoint this His chosen one. All glorying in the flesh and its birthright are here set aside; and the youngest, despised and forgotten of all, who kept the sheep, is chosen of God; "for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth." Samuel, taught of God, hesitates not in his decision, and can accept none of the seven who are at home. "Are here all thy children?" At length he anoints David, brought in from the field.

But God does not set David at once in the height of power, as He did in the case of Saul. He must make his way by grace and faith through all kinds of difficulties; and, although filled with the Holy Spirit, he must act in the presence of a power devoid of the Spirit, and which God has not yet set aside. He must be subject and be humbled, he must feel his entire dependence on God, that God is sufficient in all circumstances; and his faith must be developed by trial in which God is felt to be all. Beautiful type of One who, without sin, journeyed through far more painful circumstances! and not only a type, but at the same time a vessel prepared by God for the Holy Spirit, who could fill him with sentiments which, while describing so touchingly the sufferings of Christ Himself and His sympathy with His people, exhibit, to those who were to tread in weakness the same path as Himself, their resource in God. For one cannot doubt that the trials of David gave rise to the greater part of those beautiful psalms, which,

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depicting the circumstances, the trials, and the complaints of the remnant of Israel in the last days, as well as of Christ Himself (who, in Spirit, has identified Himself with them, and has undertaken their cause), have thus furnished so many other burdened souls with the expression and the relief of their sorrows; and although their interpretation of these psalms may have been incorrect, yet their hearts were not mistaken.*

We will return to our history.

The Spirit of Jehovah came upon David and forsook Saul, who, at the same time, is troubled by an evil spirit. The providence of God brings in David by means of one of Saul's servants who knew him, and presents him to Saul. Saul loves him, and keeps him in his presence; he becomes his armour-bearer, and he plays on a harp when the evil spirit troubles Saul. David, in God's sight, is the anointed king, but he must suffer before he reigns, however great his energy may be.

The Philistines, that type of the enemy's power, present themselves again with their champion at their head, against whom no one dares to fight. David had returned home, and was living in the simplicity of his usual life.

Although that which precedes gives the general idea of the position in which he had been placed, it appears

* This unintelligent use of the Psalms has however tended to keep pious souls down below their privileges as Christians. A child's place with the Father is never found in any of the Psalms, nor the spiritual feelings generated by the consciousness of the relationship. The word may be used as a comparison, but the relationship is never recognized, and could not be.

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that David had not remained long with the king. (Chap. xvii. 15.) His father sends him to see his brothers, who are in Saul's army. There he sees the Philistine who defied the armies of Israel. Jonathan does not appear here. There is but one who can destroy this champion, who centres in his own person all the energy of evil. David's faith sees no difficulty in it because he sees God, and in the enemy an enemy of God without strength. He was but one of the "*uncircumcised;*" the rest matters little. In the performance of his ordinary duties David had already met with difficulties too great for a full-grown man; yet, although a mere youth, he had overcome them by a very simple reason—"Jehovah delivered." He had not boasted of this (it was the fulfilment of his duty); but he had learnt in it the strength and faithfulness of Jehovah. And this experience is now repeated. Man's armour is rejected; faith knows it not. God will perform the work by the most simple means.

David declares wherein his strength consists. "I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts." He then identifies himself with the people of God. "All the earth shall know that there is a God in *Israel.*" Remark how the simplicity of faith rises to the consciousness of power and its effects in the hands of God. (Chap. xvii. 49.) So ever when God leads the heart.

The stone which sinks into the forehead of Goliath deprives him of strength and of life. David cuts off the head of Goliath with his own sword, like Him who by death destroyed him that had the power of death.

The whole army of Israel profits by David's triumph. Saul, who had forgotten him, will not suffer him to go

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away. Alas! the flesh, and even the flesh in rebellion, can love Jehovah's elect on account of his kindness and the relief he ministers; but it knows him not. When he is doing Jehovah's work, he is as much a stranger to Saul as if they had never met.

But when Christ makes Himself known, the remnant (which Jonathan represented) loves Him as his own soul, and this beloved one becomes the object of his whole affection. This does not however, in its bearing, go beyond the personal reign of Christ. Jonathan represents the remnant which has loved Him in humiliation. As to this word, it is so always; there is a remnant who love Christ, and desire His kingdom, although it will put an end to the economy in which they stand. Of the assembly, properly so called, there is nothing here. It is a remnant who desire the coming of Christ. Saul, who sought his own glory and endeavoured to uphold his house by carnal means, seeks the death of him who is to come and establish the kingdom. So the Jews with Christ.

The faith of David had rather a different character from that of Jonathan, although both conquered the Philistines. Jonathan is not deterred by difficulties; he sees the God of Israel and does the work of God which Saul neglects. It is the true and energetic faith of God's people. But David, the king—secretly so indeed, but chosen and anointed—meets face to face the great enemy of his people in all his might, the mere sight of whom dismayed the people who fled before him.

That which distinguishes the faith of Jonathan most touchingly is his attachment to one who (to judge after

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the manner of men, as Saul did) eclipses his glory. But Jonathan is absorbed by his affection for the one whom God has chosen. He sees in him the true head of Israel —worthy to be so—who, however despised at the present moment, must prosper and reign as of God. It was also David's qualities which gained his affection. It was a personal attachment. He could appreciate David, and he forgot his own interests in thinking of him. The voice and the words of David sink deep into his heart, and bind him to the king whom God has chosen, while unknown and in spite of everything. Saul, the professed head of the people, jealous of any one who might displace either himself or his descendants, is at enmity with David and forsaken of God; he is the instrument of the enemy against Jehovah's anointed. At length he falls by the more direct and open power of the enemy of God's people. Sorrowful end of that which had been a vessel of blessing and an instrument in the work of God, although but in a carnal way.

God causes David's true glory to outshine the official importance of Saul. The victories of the former are sung in such a manner as to excite the king's jealousy.

We will now briefly trace the features of David's faith in these new circumstances. Never does he lift his hand against Saul; he serves him obediently, he does his duty, and patiently bears the jealousy and malice which pursue him.

Poor Saul! troubled by the evil spirit, David plays on the harp to soothe him, and Saul seeks to slay him. David escapes. Saul fears him; for the God by whom he is himself forsaken is with David. He employs him

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at a distance from himself, but where he is more than ever in the view of the people. God always carries out His purposes in spite of all the carnal precautions of man. David is prudent. He has the wisdom of God who is with him in all his ways. Energetic and unpretending, always successful, he is beloved by all Israel and Judah, before whom he goes in and out with all the strength and superiority of faith.

Saul seeks to turn all this to his own account; apparently he honours David, but he only does so in order to expose him to the enemy and get rid of him. David abides in his lowliness, and Merab is given to another. Michal affords Saul a more specious opportunity. As he was only required to destroy the power of the enemies of God's people, David accepts Saul's proposal and succeeds. Saul perceives more and more that Jehovah is with David, and becomes still more afraid of him: sad development of a sad state of soul! Yet Saul was not deficient in fine points of natural character, which manifested themselves at times in better feelings. But God was not in them. (Chap. xix.) Jonathan's intercession has power over his father, and for a time all is well. But Saul, being forsaken of God, cannot bear that He should be with David. War breaks out; and David, God's own instrument in what He does for His people, defeats the Philistines, and drives them away.

It will be observed here, that it is the Philistines who are there, through whom the power of faith is in question. It is with them that the battle of God and of faith is fought, that David always succeeded, and that Saul failed.

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Saul is again troubled; and David, who seeks to refresh him, narrowly avoids being slain. He makes his escape and goes away to Samuel.

Remark here how the grief, which egotism and self-love produce, makes room for the action of the evil spirit on the soul. The power reappears here, which, hidden as it was, still governed the fate of Israel. David recognizes it, and, when he can no longer remain with Saul, he does not seek in anywise to magnify himself by rising up against the outward form which God had inwardly judged but not destroyed. Instead of opposing it, he contents himself with acknowledging that manifestation of the power of God which had placed Saul in his royal position, and from which he had himself received the testimony and the communication of the strength and of the will of God; he takes refuge with Samuel. He is pursued thither by Saul and by his messengers, who, with their master, are *subjected* to this same power—a power which does not influence their hearts or guide their conduct, a power of which Saul had forfeited the blessing. What a picture of a useless, ruined vessel! sometimes prostrate under the energy of Satan, sometimes prophesying in that of God, from whom his heart is far away, by whom he is forsaken. His outward conduct is not disorderly; he does no harm except when Jehovah's anointed excites his jealousy and his hatred.

David is now driven away from the presence of Saul, and becomes a wanderer in the earth. It is no longer entire submission to Saul, whilst himself the vessel of the energy of God. Driven away by Saul, David had

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returned to the source of God's testimony; and Saul had again dared to seek his life, even when he was with Samuel. He has completely thrown off the last restraint, and forgotten all that should have reminded him of God, and stayed his hand. Seeking his own glory, and taking advantage of his acquired position, the presence of Samuel has no longer any hold upon his conscience. It is even no longer "Honour me before the elders of my people;" he does not value the prophet at all; he comes under, in spite of himself, an influence which he has despised. David is thus shielded from his malice. He could not now return to Saul. It would have been to unite himself with the despisal of God's testimony. For, what can be done when a man prophesies, and yet runs counter to the power which he cannot deny? David takes flight. But Saul's state is again tested by this state of things. Jonathan can scarcely credit his father's ill-will. But, before putting it to the proof, his devotion to David is very plainly manifested. His faith and his heart acknowledge that which the blinded Saul cannot receive. (Chap. xx. 13—17.)

Even when David is driven away, Jonathan's faith is not shaken; his heart is not separated from the one whom his soul loved, when, radiant with youth and the glory of his victory over Goliath, David replied to Saul with a modesty that heightened its lustre. He loves him when dishonoured and a fugitive. He acknowledges him as God's elect, and links the hopes of his house with the glory of his beloved.

Jonathan does not follow David, and he falls with Saul.

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Whatever opinion we may entertain with respect to the typical meaning of this part of his history, we see in him that whatever is allied to the carnal system, which is outwardly connected with the interests of the people and name of God, falls, as regards this world, with the system that perishes entirely.

David, informed by Jonathan of Saul's state of mind, departs; and Jonathan returns into the city.

The elect king is now rejected. He repairs to the priest, who gives him the hallowed bread, according to the sovereign grace of God, who rises above the ordinances that are connected with blessing when that blessing is rejected—when He Himself is rejected in His chosen one, and in the power of His testimony. When this is the case, He sets faith above ordinances in His sovereign grace. Since God Himself and His testimony are rejected, the shewbread was considered common. God in fact was ordering all anew.

It was precisely the case of the Lord Jesus. The person of the rejected One is above all the carnal ordinances, which have lost their signification where He is. Christ submitted indeed to all the ordinances and authorities; but the rejection of God's testimony in Him caused it to be perceived by degrees that He was One greater than the ordinances—One who set them aside, and replaced them by the manifestation of the effectual and eternal grace of God. It was much more important to give David food than to keep that which had grown old. God cared more for him than for the bread of the tabernacle.

David then takes the sword of Goliath. It was by

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the power of death that the Lord destroyed all his strength who had the power of death. Death is the best weapon in the arsenal of God, when it is wielded by the power of life.

David, his mind full of Saul's enmity, seeks refuge among the Philistines. What business had he there? This time God drives him thence without chastisement, but abundantly proving to him at the same time that he was out of place there. We escape from the wisdom which leads us into the midst of God's enemies, by the shame of that folly which causes us to be driven out again.

David now takes his place fully with the excellent of the earth. (Heb. xi. 38.) There the prophet joins him; he is guided in a direct manner by the plain testimony of God, and soon after he is joined by the priest also; so that, rejected as he is, all that belonged to the testimony and the dealings of God gathers around him. He was the king—the prophet was there, the priest was there also. The outward forms were elsewhere. Saul, on the contrary, as he had shewn his contempt for Samuel by pursuing David even into his presence, without pity as without fear of God, and without remorse, rids himself of the priests by the hand of a stranger, an Edomite, a merciless enemy of the people, when the consciences of the latter would have withheld his hand. It was on this occasion that the priest is brought by God to David, in like manner as we find the prophet there after Saul had manifested his contempt of him. Thus a hostile king, he is a despiser of the prophet, an enemy of the priest of God.

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What a sad history of the gradual but progressive fall of one who, having the form of good, has not faith in God, and whom God has forsaken! How sure are the ways of God, whatever appearances may be!

David, despised as he may be, is the king and saviour of the people; he puts the Philistines to flight with great slaughter. He finds nothing but treachery *in Israel*, of which Saul makes use in the hope of seizing David. But as the wisdom of the prophet is with David, so has he also God's answer by the ephod of the priest which is with him.

Let us observe in passing, that Saul has greatly aggrandized himself to outward view. He is no longer with his six hundred men who followed him trembling; he can speak of his captains of thousands and captains of hundreds; he can bestow fields and vineyards; he has his Doeg, the head over his herdsmen. Before God, inwardly, he makes frightful progress in evil; he is not only forsaken of God, but he breaks through all the restraints of conscience, and of the testimony and ordinances of God. For the prophet Samuel and the priests ought to have been a restraint to one who professed to be identified with the interests of God's people.

Outward progress in prosperity, joined to actual progress in evil inwardly, is a very solemn thing. It is at once a snare to the flesh and a trial to faith. David, on the contrary, is apparently—and in fact, as to circumstances—driven out from the people. He has neither home nor refuge. But the testimony of God, in the person of the prophet Gad, and communion with God by the priest's ephod, are his portion in his exile. Cast

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out by man, he is where the resources of God are realized according to the need of His people.

Remark also that David himself also acts as priest, to obtain the expression of God's mind. He takes the ephod to seek counsel of God; he eats the shewbread, a remarkable type of Christ teaching us that, when all is ruined, blessing is made over to those who by faith walk in obedience, understanding the duty of the believer who discerns the moral place of faith, what it owes to God, and how it may rely on Him.

Remark, also, that that which here distinguishes David is not shining deeds, the fruit of the power of faith, but the instinct and intelligence of that which is suitable to his position, a moral discernment of that which is pleasing to God, and of the line of conduct which His servant should pursue as the vessel of His spiritual energy, while the power which belongs to him is in the hands of another. It is the walk of one who has apprehended that which is suitable to this difficult position, in all the circumstances it brings him into; who respects that which God respects, and does the work of God without fear when God calls him: a remarkable type of Jesus in all this, an example for us.

Besides this spiritual perception, these moral suitabilities, the greater part of this history sets before us the way in which God makes everything tend towards the accomplishment of His purposes (in spite of all the motives and intentions of men) in order to place David, through patience and the energy of faith, in the position He had prepared for him.

Nevertheless David needs the intervention and the

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safeguard of God. Having quitted Keilah (chap. xxiii.), in consequence of God's warning, he goes into the wilderness. There he is surrounded by Saul's men. But at the moment when Saul would have taken him, the Philistines invade the land, and Saul is obliged to return.

"And David went up and dwelt in the strongholds of En-gedi." Saul pursues him thither, after following the Philistines, more occupied with his jealousy of the king whom God had chosen than with the enemies of his people. But this expedition is not to his honour. An opportunity to kill his persecutor presents itself to David; but the fear of God rules him, and even Saul's heart is touched for the moment by a preservation which proved that David respected him in a way he had not imagined. He sees clearly what the result will be, and engages David to protect his posterity; but David does not return to Saul. The relationship was broken.

At length Samuel dies. This forms an epoch, because he who was the true link between the people and God was gone. Israel acknowledged him when dead, although they had despised him while living.

And now David's position changes, and Abigail is brought in. Jonathan never separated from the system in which he stood, never united himself to David, although loving him, and never shared his sufferings. But Abigail identifies herself with him; existing relationships do not prevent her acknowledging David; and she is united to him after her husband's death. Jonathan prefigures the remnant in the character of the remnant of Israel who acknowledge the future king, and

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adhere to him, but go no farther—it is the kingdom. Jonathan does not suffer with David, and does not reign with him. He remains with Saul, and, as to that position, his career ends with Saul. Abigail, and even the malcontents who joined David, shared his sufferings. Abigail separates herself completely from the spirit of her husband; and it is on account of her faith and wisdom that David spares Nabal's life. God judges the latter, and then Abigail becomes the wife of David.

Historically David had nearly failed in his high standing. In fact it is on account of the faithful remnant, the Abigail of the foolish nation, that Israel itself has been spared; and the Lord's connection with the assembly is in the character of pure grace, not in that of the avenger (as hereafter with Israel). At this time it is that David, during his rejection, surrounds himself with those who will be the companions and the retinue of his glory in the kingdom. But he also takes a wife.

Abigail speaks of Saul as *a man*. Jehovah, she says, will make a sure house to David. This is the intelligence of faith.* It is the truth of God's counsels

* In fact, when the priesthood had been judged, nothing remained for faith, which apprehended the mind of God, except the prophet Samuel and the king given by God, David. Abigail understands this. The assembly should think as God Himself thinks, in spite of existing circumstances. Abigail thinks nothing of Saul. Samuel is dead; David is now everything to her. "*The law and the prophets* were until John. Since that time the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it." Where were the high priests and all their company? Nevertheless the Lord submitted to them as to an ordinance, as David did to Saul.

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(2 Sam. vii. 11), and in its fulness, as to this. She was forming for herself, without knowing it, the position of the assembly in the future she was preparing for herself.*

* She takes a much more humble place than Jonathan did, and one which, even at the time, acknowledged David much more fully. It is not a friend like Jonathan; it is a submissive soul which, in spirit, gives David his place according to God, taking her own place before him. It is exactly that which distinguishes the spirit of the assembly—of the true Christian.

In Jonathan we see the remnant under the Jewish aspect. But Abigail enters into the spirit of God's purposes respecting David, although he was now in distress; and David, who, while thoroughly submissive, can act according to the faith that owns him, hears her voice, and accepts her person.

Let us mark the features of Abigail's faith. All rests upon her appreciation of David (it is this which forms a Christian's judgment—in every respect he appreciates Christ); his title as owned of God; his personal perfection, and that which belonged to him according to the counsels of God. She thinks of him according to all the good which God has spoken of him; she sees him fighting God's battles, where others only see a rebel against Saul; and all this from her heart. She judges Nabal, and looks upon him as already judged of God on account of this, for with her everything is judged according to its connection with David (ver. 26); a judgment which God accomplishes ten days later, although Nabal was at peace in his own house, and David an exile and outcast. Nevertheless the relation of Abigail to Nabal is recognized until God executes judgment. She judges Saul. He is but *a man*, because, to her faith, David is king. All her desire is that David may remember her. Jonathan says, when he goes out to David, "I shall be next unto thee;" and David abides in the wood, while Jonathan returns to his house. In the order of things which God had judged (a judgment that faith recognized) he remains with his family and shares its ruin. This is important

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Alas! Saul is unchanged; instigated by the Ziphites, he seeks David anew, but it is only to fall again, and more publicly, into David's hands. Observe that David now appeals more directly to the Lord to judge between him and Saul. The separation is more complete. Saul was incorrigible. This appeal to God was becoming. It is not becoming, it is not according to the way of the Spirit, to accustom ourselves to evil. "Righteous Father," said the Lord at length, "the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me."

That which characterized David in everything is, that he put himself entirely into Jehovah's hands; it is the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms.

But David, after all, is only a man; and immediately after this testimony that God was with him (a testimony that even Saul acknowledged), his faith fails, and he passes over into the midst of the enemies of God's people. God, no doubt, makes use of this means to remove David from peril. But at the same time, he is tried and chastened, and is exposed to the dreadful necessity of appearing ready to fight against Israel. There is but One whose perfection and wisdom were His safeguard in every trial.

We may remark that it was immediately after an evident interposition of God (chap. xxvi. 12) that

to a Christian. For instance, he respects, in so far as based on God's authority, official Christianity, which, in the world, is the religion of God while God bears with it, and does not stand up against it. As to faith and personal walk, this Christianity is nothing at all: just as Saul was only *a man* to Abigail's faith.

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David's faith fails. It is the same with Elijah. (1 Kings xix.) One would say that, in our hearts, faith exhausts itself by an unusual effort. Faith may carry us through the crisis; but the heart, which was the vessel of faith, is terrified by it; whilst in Jesus we find an equability of perfection altogether divine.

David removes to a distance from the royal city. In the land of the Philistines he gains their king's favour, not by faith, but by a prudence inconsistent with truth. It is an unhappy position; nevertheless, God does not forsake him. He chastises him, and in a painful manner, but He spares and preserves him. We have seen similar ways of the Lord in the case of the fugitive Jacob.

Achish, who knows David, wishes to employ him in his service, and David cannot refuse; for when he who possesses the energy which the Spirit of God imparts by faith has placed himself in a false position through unfaithfulness, he has no power against the one under whose authority he has placed himself; and if he does not use the energy with which he is endowed in favour of his protector, he very naturally excites his jealousy. He would have avoided all this by going to Ziklag, but he could not. God in His mercy preserved David, but he was now in a sad and false position.

Saul, as well as Israel at present, was in a still worse, having succour neither from God nor from the enemy. Saul is forsaken of God. Samuel is dead; so that Israel is no longer in connection with God through him.

David, who at least made head against the Philistines, was, through Saul's own doings, in their midst. The

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outward zeal of the king had put down all those who had the spirit of witchcraft. He seeks direction from God, but obtains no answer. He has now neither conscience nor faith. The case is urgent; and he throws himself, not into outward service to God, as formerly (he has the sad and solemn conviction that it belongs to him no more), but into those things which he had condemned and cut off as evil when he maintained a religious character—things which he still knew were evil. But the Philistines were there, and his heart greatly trembles. He seeks out a woman who had a familiar spirit. God meets him here. Samuel ascends, but in such a manner as to terrify the woman. She recognizes the presence of a power superior to her enchantments. Samuel declares to Saul, without reserve and without any sympathy (for this was no longer possible), the solemn judgment of God.

In chapter xxix. God, in His loving-kindness, brings David out of his difficulty by means of the jealousy of the lords of the Philistines. Nevertheless, to maintain his credit with Achish, David falls still lower, it seems to me, and protests that he is quite ready to fight against the enemies of the Philistine king, that is to say, against the people of God. This appears to me the most wretched part of David's life, at any rate, before he was king. God makes him sensible of it; for while he is there, the Amalekites strip him of everything and burn Ziklag, and his followers are ready to stone him.

All this is grievous; but the grace of God raises him up again, and the effect of this chastisement is to bring him back to God, for he was ever true to Him in heart. David encouraged himself in Jehovah his God, and en-

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quires of Him what he shall do. What patience, what kindness in God! What care He takes of His people, even while they are turning away from Him!

David is truly brought back to God, and rescued from his false position, and he walks and acts with God. God was, unknown to him, preparing a very different position for him, and was purifying and preparing him for it. How dreadful would it have been, had David been with the Philistines, and taken part in the defeat of God's people, and in the death of him whose life he had often spared so touchingly! How far the child of God may go astray when he puts himself under the protection of unbelievers, instead of relying on the help of God in all the difficulties which beset the path of faith! It is through these very difficulties that every grace is developed.

And observe the danger the believer is in—if his faith be not simple, but fails ever so little—of being thrown into the arms of God's enemies through the persecution of professors. Nature grows weary, and seeks comfort afar from the narrow path which leads through the briars. This happens whenever the people of God, following their own will, confide their interests to those who seek nothing but their own advantage in a less difficult position, which is neither that of God nor that of faith. And the more glorious a work there is for faith, the more nature grows weary, if faith becomes weak. Ziklag is taken during David's absence, but he pursues the spoilers, and recovers all the booty.

David, upright and generous, found, in the difficulty which arose from the selfishness of his people, an oppor-

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tunity to institute that which was conformable to the will of God; and instead of seeking to enrich himself through his share of the spoil, he uses it to maintain kindly relations with the elders of his people, and to prove to them that Jehovah is still with him.

Chapter xxxi. recounts the solemn death of Saul and of Jonathan also, closing, with the total discomfiture of Israel, this touching history. The whole account of Saul and his family, as raised up to withstand the Philistines, is ended: Saul and his sons fall into their hands; they are beheaded, their armour sent in triumph to the house of their idols, and their bodies hung upon the walls of Beth-shan. Sad end, as that of the flesh will ever be in the battle of Jehovah!

Let us briefly retrace the history of David. Simplicity of faith keeps him in the place of duty, and contented there, without desire to leave it, because the approbation of God suffices him. Consequently he can there reckon upon the help of God, as thoroughly secured to him; he acts in the strength of God. The lion and the bear fall under his youthful hand. Why not, if God was with him? He follows Saul with equal simplicity, and then returns to the care of his sheep with the same satisfaction. There, in secret, he had understood by faith that Jehovah was with Israel; he had understood the nature and force of this relationship. He sees, in the condition of Israel, something which does not answer to this; but, as for himself, his faith rests upon the faithfulness of God. An uncircumcised Philistine falls like the lion. He serves Saul as musician with the same simplicity as before; and, whether with him, or when Saul sends him

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out as captain of a thousand, gives proof of his valour. He obeys the king's commands.

At length the king drives him away; but he is still in the place of faith. There is little now of military achievement, but there is the discernment of that which became him, when the spiritual power was in him, but the outward divine authority was in other hands. It was the same position as that of Jesus in Israel. David does not fail in this position, its difficulties only the better bringing out all the beauty of God's grace and the fruits of the Spirit's work, while very peculiarly developing spiritual affections and intimate relationship with God, his only refuge. It is especially this which gave rise to the Psalms. Faith suffices to bring him through all the difficulties of his position, in which it displays all its beauty and all its grace. The nobleness of character which faith imparts to man, and which is the reflection of God's character, produces in the most hardened hearts, even in those who, having forsaken God, are forsaken of Him (a state in which sin, selfishness, and despair, combine to harden), feelings of natural affection, the remorse of a nature which awakens under the influence of something superior to its malice, something which sheds its light (painful, because momentary and powerless) upon the darkness which encompasses the unhappy sinner who rejects God. It is because faith dwells so near God as to be above evil, that it withdraws nature itself from the power of evil, although nature has no power of self-mastery. But God is with faith; and faith respects that which God respects, and invests one who bears something from God with

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the honour due to that which belongs to God, and which recalls God to the heart with all the affection that faith entertains for Him, and all that pertains to Him. This is always seen in Jesus, and wherever His Spirit is; and it is this that gives such beauty, such elevation, to faith, which ennobles itself with the nobility of God, by recognizing that which is noble in His sight, and on account of its relationship to Him, in spite of the iniquity or abasement of those who are invested with it. Faith acts on God's behalf, and reveals Him in the midst of circumstances, instead of being governed by them. Its superiority over that which surrounds it is evident. What repose to witness this amid the mire of this poor world!

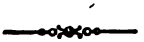
But, although faith—in the place it gives us in this world—suffices for all that we meet with in it, yet alas! communion with God is not perfect in us. Instead of doing our duty whatever it be without weariness, because God is with us, and when we have slain the lion, being ready to slay the bear, and, through this, more ready still to slay Goliath—instead of faith being strengthened by victory, nature grows weary of the conflict; we lose the normal position of faith, we debase and dishonour ourselves. What a difference between David, who, by the fruit of grace, draws tears from the heart of Saul, re-opening (at least for the moment) the channel of his affections, and David, unable to raise his hand against the Philistines whom he had so often defeated, and boasting himself ready to fight against Israel and the king whose life he had spared!

My brethren, let us abide in the place of faith, appa-

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rently a more difficult one, yet the place where God is found, and where grace—the only precious thing in this world—flourishes, and binds the heart to God by a thousand links of affection and gratitude, as to One who has known us, and who has stooped to meet our need and the desires of our hearts. Faith gives energy, faith gives patience; and it is often thus that the most precious affections are developed—affections which, if the energy of faith makes us servants on earth, render heaven itself happy, because He who is the object of faith is there, and fills it in the presence of the Father.

Nature makes us impatient with circumstances, because we do not sufficiently realize God, and draws us into situations where it is impossible to glorify Him. On the other hand, it is well to observe, that it is when man had thoroughly failed, when even David's faith had been found wanting, and—departing from Israel—he had thrown himself among the Philistines, it was then that God gave him the kingdom. Grace is above all failure: God must glorify Himself in His people.



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II SAMUEL.

THE Second Book of Samuel sets before us the definitive establishment of David in the kingdom, and afterwards the miseries of his house, when prosperity had opened the door to self-will.

The path of faith, and its difficulties, is that in which we walk with God, and in which we celebrate the triumph which His presence secures to us. A state of prosperity makes it evident how little man is able to enjoy it without its becoming a snare to him. Prosperity not being the path of faith, that is to say, of strength, the evil of the heart comes out in the walk. Compare 2 Samuel xxii. (the psalm by which David closes the path of difficulty) with chapter xxiii., which contains his last words, after his experience of the enjoyment of the prosperity and glory in which faith had placed him.

Nevertheless piety, and pious, and hence generous, sentiments, were genuine in David. He did not pretend to feel for Saul's misfortunes, and then seize upon the kingdom without regret as soon as Saul had ceased to exist. David's heart was really melted when he heard of Saul's death. Woe to the hard-hearted man who, impelled by the hope of reward, thought to be the bearer of good tidings in announcing it to him. Whatever Saul's misfortunes, he was the king of Israel to David. Whatever his faults, he was an unfortunate king. David had been beloved by him, and had dwelt in his house,

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where the king's affliction manifested itself, and commanded the respect of all around him. And if Saul had unjustly persecuted David, at this moment it was readily forgotten. Now that he has fallen, David will only remember that which can do him honour; and, above all, that it is Jehovah's anointed, and Jehovah's people, who have fallen before their enemies.

David causes the man to be put to death who, deluded by selfishness, accused himself of lacking all fear of Jehovah, all good and generous feeling. For David fears God; and Jehovah's anointed is precious in his sight. He then pours out his heart before God in the touching accents of a grief which, in solemn and affecting language, recalls whatever would exalt Saul, and expresses the tender and affectionate recollections which his heart suggests. Beautiful exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit of God! David is in no wise discouraged, for his faith is in action. If this misfortune grieves him, it gives him also the opportunity of guarding against a similar calamity. He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, by which weapon Saul was slain. David, still humble, goes on well. He asks Jehovah if he should go up to Judah, and to which place; and Jehovah directs him. David testifies also to the men of Jabesh-gilead his satisfaction at their conduct with respect to Saul.

Nevertheless war has not yet ceased; if not against enemies from without, it is carried on against those from within. That which was linked with Saul's fleshly importance cannot support David. All is however now changed, for Ishbosheth was not Jehovah's anointed,

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and to make him king was in fact to rebel against God. David makes war upon him by his captains.

Alas! the history of this period plunges us into the ways of man. It is no longer merely David walking in the path of faith. It is Joab, a clever, ambitious, bloody-minded, and heartless man. It is Abner, a man morally superior to Joab, but who fights on fleshly principles as a party man against the king whom God has chosen. Abner is related to Ishbosheth as Joab is to David. When his pride has been wounded, he throws himself into David's interests, and Joab kills him as much from jealousy as to avenge his brother's death. And wherein is the prowess and valour of the chiefs of Benjamin and Judah now manifested in this "field of strong men?" In slaying each other. The Philistines were forgotten. But the family of Saul were entirely in the wrong. It was nature which, with its pretended rights, would not submit to God and to His will.

As David now begins to do, so will Christ, the King of Judah, bring all around into subjection to Himself after He has taken the throne.

It is well however to observe that David does not appear in all this. Joab is the actor; and it appears to me, from the details given, that evil had already begun. I do not see that David had sought counsel of Jehovah; and Joab had certainly not done so, for he was nothing more than an ungodly man, who understood that it was more prudent to honour God, and not to depart too far from Him merely to gratify one's passions; but this did not preserve him from being at length ensnared in his own calculations. And, after all,

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it is not the energy of Joab which puts the kingdom into David's hands; but the wounded pride of Abner, the chief of Ishbosheth's party, who ends by reaping from men that which he had sown. But all this is very sad.

By providential means God accomplishes His purposes, and David is successful. Generally also, in his combats at this period, and in his exaltation, he typifies the Lord Jesus. And I doubt not that the establishment of Christ's kingdom will be accomplished in detail after His appearing; the prophecies of Zechariah and Micah v. prove this; but, as a history, we are, as I have said, in the midst of men. In the matter of Ishbosheth's death David maintains his integrity; and with respect to Abner's assassination he manifests the sentiments which become a man of God. Nevertheless chapter iii. 39 exhibits the weakness of man as the instrument of God's government. David appeals to the God of judgment.

The election of one in whom God's counsels are accomplished must necessarily take place before his establishment in the place which Jehovah had appointed. It is still more evident that this election precedes the rest of the chosen one, and this is true as to Christ Himself; only He came down into it in grace.

David, the king of Judah in Hebron for seven years and a half, becomes the king of all Israel upon Ishbosheth's death. And now David is no longer the man of faith who, himself the head of the armies of Israel walking in dependence upon God, guided the enterprises which the circumstances of Israel required of faith; but

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he is a king who can exalt whom he will. The man very soon appears, the energetic man, but not the man of God. "Whosoever getteth up to the gutter," said the king, "shall be rewarded, he shall be chief and captain." (Ver. 8.) Joab goes up, and he has natural claims upon David.*

Nevertheless in the main David is guided by God, and he takes the city which God had chosen for His throne upon the earth. It was on this account he could say of those who had it in possession, "they are hated of David's soul;" for in fact they who possess the true seat of God's power, the place which He loves, and who, trusting to their natural strength, resist and scoff at the king whom God has chosen, are more hateful than any people, and are hated by those who have the Spirit of the Lord who establishes His throne upon the earth.

It is well to remark here, that David is a type of Christ in rejection, and of Christ making war in power for the establishment of the millennium; as Solomon is of Christ reigning in millennial peace. David's wars with the Philistines are subsequent to the taking of Jerusalem, and to the entire subjugation of Israel to David. It is not David, neither is it Christ reigning over the earth, who takes Jerusalem. Christ will descend from heaven for the destruction of Antichrist;

* Joab was evidently clever and enterprising: but it is remarkable that he is not named among those who distinguished themselves by brilliant exploits, when individual faith had to fight for God's glory. When it is a question of being chief and captain, a place which David had held till then, Joab immediately comes forward.

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but He destroys the enemies of Israel by means of His own people, after having established His throne in Zion. (Compare Zech. ix. and x.) I do not enlarge upon this; I merely point out the grand features which the word supplies on this subject.

David establishes himself in Zion; he is acknowledged by some friendly Gentiles; he is conscious too that it was God who made him king. But the natural heart soon shews itself. Strengthened in his kingdom by Jehovah, he does what he likes, he follows his own will. (Compare Deut. xvii. 17.)

Nevertheless the consolidation of his power does not overthrow the hopes of his former enemies;* it excites their jealousy. They neither know the arm of his strength, nor the purpose of Jehovah who exalted him. They rush on to destruction. And now, with the danger that awakens him, we find again the man of God, the type of the Lord Jesus, inquiring of Jehovah, and obedient to His word. He gains signal victories under the express guidance of God, whose strength goes before him and puts his enemies to flight. Accordingly he gives God the glory.

Although God has established a king in power, who is at the same time the victorious leader of His people, yet the bonds of the covenant are not yet restored. The ark is still in the place where individual piety had sheltered it when God was obliged to be the guardian of His own

* It is evident, from many Old Testament prophecies, that it will be the same when Christ returns to the earth. And yet at that period, if man exalts himself, it will be but for sudden destruction.

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glory. David would bring it to the place where his throne is now established. He desires that the Jehovah of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim, should be honoured, and that He should be at the same time the glory of the king of Israel's throne. They are bound together in his mind. Now the kingdom of Melchisedec was not yet in exercise, not even in type. For Melchisedec is king of Salem (that is, king of peace). God was still maintaining His own glory. He could bless David, the elected and anointed king; but that order of things which united all together under the king's authority was not yet in force. It was to be set up later under Solomon.

Israel should have acknowledged God's order. But even while seeking to honour God, David thinks of himself, and there is definitively but a faulty imitation of that which the Philistine priests had done when acted upon by the terror of Jehovah. The result was unhappy. What man had done, man seeks to sustain; but in doing this he touches the glory of Jehovah and falls before His majesty. Jehovah vindicates His glory. He dwells not yet in the midst of His people.

At once pained and alarmed—pained because his heart truly sought Jehovah's glory, although he did not understand its height, and had forgotten the majesty of Him whom his heart desired to have nearer to him—David leaves the ark in the house of Obed-edom; and there Jehovah shews that it is His nature to bless, whenever His majesty is not so forgotten that men deal with Him as they think proper. If we detract from His glory, He maintains it; as also He manifests what He

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is by the blessing He bestows. The heart and affections of David are restored; he causes the ark to be carried from Obed-edom's house, and places it in the tabernacle he had pitched for it. Here we only see David, and we see him clothed with the ephod. He is the head of his people, when he re-establishes the relationship* between them and his God, and it is with joy, with offerings, and songs of triumph. It is he also who blesses the people, being in all this a remarkable type of Jesus, and of that which He will perform in Israel in the last days.

All this however was not building the temple, which was a work reserved for the Prince of Peace. It was the king, by faith head of the people, acting up to a certain point for faith as priest, on the principle of Melchisedec, although the order and the blessing belonging to that title were not yet established. The king offers sacrifices, he blesses the people. As their sole head, he had united all Israel, he had beaten his enemies.

But after all it was a transitional period. The ark of the covenant abode still in a tent; David had triumphed, but the peace he enjoyed was but transitory. The establishment of the ark on the hill of Zion formed however an epoch; for mount Zion was the seat of royal grace, where the king who had suffered—and as having suffered—had established his throne in power and

* I say "relationship," because, in fact, the ark of the covenant was the outward link, the sign of the formal relationship between God and Israel. This gives much importance to the circumstance we are considering. The loss of the ark had been, on the contrary, the Ichabod of the people.

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grace with respect to Israel. This is the key to Revelation xiv.—a book in which the Lamb is always (as it appears to me) the Messiah who has suffered, but who is seated on the throne of God while waiting for the manifestation of His glory; seated there in this character, although as such He had accomplished things far otherwise important (for salvation and the assembly are far more excellent than the kingdom); but it is evidently the *kingdom* that we have to do with here. I doubt not that the hundred and forty-four thousand who are with the Lamb on mount Zion are those who have suffered for Messiah's sake in the spirit of His own sufferings in the midst of Israel. They are with Him in His kingly position in Zion, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth. They are morally near enough to heaven to learn its song, which none other on earth can learn. They are the firstfruits of the earth. They are not in heaven.

This explains Hebrews xii. 22 also; in which we find Zion in contrast with Sinai, where the people had been placed under their own responsibility, the law having the sanction which the terror of Jehovah's presence gave it. But in the passage referred to, Zion is clearly distinguished from the heavenly Jerusalem.*

I doubt not that at the end a similar relation will exist

* The construction of the sentence (Heb. xii. 22) makes it more easy to distinguish the different parts of which it is composed. The word "and" separates them: Zion—the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem—the angels, the general assembly —the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven —God the judge of all, &c.

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between Christ and the remnant of His people who have waited for Him. It is a period during which Jesus is fully triumphant, and acts in power and as a king but does not yet rule in peace; and during which He forms, developes, and establishes, the relationship of His people with Himself on the earth in His triumphs and in His kingdom according to the rights of which He will subject His enemies to Himself. The Psalms also open this part of Christ's reign to us prophetically and in type. (See Psalm cx.) After having seated David's Lord at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the Spirit says, "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning [the morning of His glory, the dawn of day]; thou shalt have the dew of thy youth [of the young men who follow Him]." The whole of this psalm unfolds the same idea, the warlike kingdom of Christ, having Zion chosen of God for its seat, and the place whence His power shall go forth during the triumphant wars of the Messiah.

Let us pursue this latter point.

After having described the ruin of Israel, Psalm lxxviii. shews us Jehovah awaking; but it sets aside all rights of inheritance, and testimony to His former dealings with Israel; for (1 Chron. v.) the birthright was Joseph's. "He CHOSE the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. He CHOSE David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds," &c. This psalm mentions indeed His sanctuary, but the mountain on which it was built is never represented as the

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object of God's election. This psalm reaches farther than our present history; but it applies election to David and to Zion.

Psalm cxxxii. sets before us precisely the sentiments with which the Spirit inspired David when he placed the ark upon mount Zion. It is but a tabernacle, but it is that of the mighty God of Jacob on the earth. And Jehovah has chosen Zion. There the horn of David shall bud.

Observe here, that Jehovah's answer goes each time beyond the request and the desire of David—a beautiful testimony to the rich goodness of God. Jehovah's rest is in the midst of his people. He will enjoy this rest here in the midst of His own, although He establishes His glory in the temple; and it is there that every one speaks of it. In the wilderness this glory had not had a place of rest. Israel was on a journey, and Jehovah, who dwelt among the people, went before them to search out a resting place for them. (Numb. x. 33.) Neither was it the case at Shiloh, when His rest among them depended on their faithfulness. "He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered his strength into the enemy's hand." (Psalm lxxviii. 61, 62.) Election and grace alone—by means of "one chosen out of the people"—(Psalm lxxxix. 19)—establish the rest of God among His people.

There is yet a remark to make on the subject of Psalm cxxxii. We have seen that God maintains His majesty in His government, and does not allow any one to touch His ark. He gives David time to learn that God is a God of blessing and of grace; but, however

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good the intentions of His people may be, it is necessary that truth, that what He is, should be clearly demonstrated in His public dealings. If it were otherwise, if His government were not stable, all would go to ruin; the levity of man would constantly lead him into the paths of self-will. It is true that God is full of patience, and that after having formed the relationship between His people and Himself, He continues to act according to this relationship as long as possible, although forced to chasten at the same time; but judgment comes at length.

In the case we are considering God had broken this relationship as originally established by His sitting between the cherubim; He had delivered His strength into captivity, His glory into the enemy's hand. David, as victor, restores to Him His place, but on a new principle, that of grace and power. Nevertheless, in examining Psalm cxxxii., we discover much deeper sentiments, a heart which desires to have God glorified among His people in a much more developed and much more intimate manner than was indicated by that which the outward pomp and train represented in which Israel could take part; sentiments to which God responded in a very different way than by the death of Uzzah. This psalm, it is true, was written after the touching communications which are revealed in 2 Samuel vii., as verses 11, 12 prove. It teaches us however in what spirit David went to fetch the ark, the ardent desire of his heart to find a habitation for Jehovah,*

* We may compare Exodus xv. in the English Version, though the translation is questionable. But see Exodus xxix. 46.

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which, as we have seen, Christ will accomplish.' Now it appears to me, that it was the consciousness of this desire that led to David's failure. Alas for man! In the consciousness of it he seeks to put it into execution, and he a little forgets the supreme glory of God, the sin which had caused God's departure from His people, and the majesty proper to Him. When God acts according to the requirements of His glory, and smites the man who lent David his assistance in accomplishing the desire of his heart, David is displeased. The death of Uzzah was the result of David's conduct, and he is angry with Jehovah when this result takes place. This was truly the flesh. God made David sensible of that which was becoming to the service of the God of Israel (see 1 Chron. xv. 12, 13),* and He restored His soul by shewing him that He was the true source of blessing, and that the leaving the ark aside was leaving blessing aside too.

Moreover the position of David, zealously maintaining a sense of Jehovah's glory in the midst of his exaltation, as portrayed in the psalm, is of the highest moral beauty and has a very peculiar aspect in reference to the divine economies. The place which Solomon occupies at the dedication of the temple presents, no doubt, a more striking picture. The Melchisedec priesthood is there in its simplicity and its fulness, but this was the fruit of the accomplishment of blessing; and the moral condition of those who took part in it was much less the result of deep exercise of heart, and of

* This is not mentioned in Samuel; because it is David as the type of the Lord, whom the Spirit sets before us here.

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the close communion with God which is its consequence; it was, therefore, much less connected with the intelligent expectation of Christ. Solomon enjoyed the present realization of the glory upon which, in its true accomplishment in Christ, David relied by faith; Solomon does not go to a higher source than David's faith, and the responsibility of the people which flowed from it. The temple is the scene of this. David rises higher. He lays hold of God's purpose, as to the seat of Jehovah's kingdom, and at a time when this required faith, he becomes, as far as possible, the royal priest, and consequently ascends to God Himself, who is the source of this priesthood. Taught of God, he has understood the election of Zion, the seat of Christ's kingly glory; and in this sense his moral position, when dancing before the ark as an obscure man, and to his shame before the world, appears to be a much higher one than that of Solomon upon his brazen scaffold.

The ark is also the sign of the re-establishment of God's power in the midst of His people by this moral link; but this re-establishment takes place by what was in type the victory and the energy of Christ who prevails over His enemies, as will be the case, and not merely in the enjoyment of the glory.

In all this part of the history David (though as to himself with individual failure) is more personally a type of Christ. It is while difficulty exists before the reign of peace, when power will have removed every obstacle to the full enjoyment of it, that he restores the people's connection with God, and blesses and feeds them as Melchisedec. Blessing flows from his person in the

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presence of all that still opposes it, and in spite of every difficulty. The position which David still takes is that of servant, the immediate servant of God, by grace. He is not a priest *upon his throne;* but the king makes himself a priest, and this while still performing service.

Samuel, as given to Jehovah, was clothed with a linen ephod. It was the priestly garment, and he was not a priest after the order of Aaron. He served in the tabernacle by grace and by the Spirit as one chosen and set apart for God. He was in his right place, but on God's part it was in grace, when the gloomy night of Ichabod already threatened the people with its darkness. Here it is the king who, taking this place, puts on the priestly ephod; not the garments which God had given the priests for glory and for beauty, but those which distinguished the priest considered as the type of Christ as priest,* and which belonged to the essence of his functions; and in fact he took the place rather of a Levite, that is, of one set apart to serve before the ark, before Jehovah. The leading idea connected with the ephod is that he who wears it presents himself to God. But, even though making request, Melchisedec rather presents himself to the people; although he is before God for the people, as king and priest upon his throne.

Having offered his sacrifices, the king blesses the

* For the high priest, after the strange fire offered on the day of their consecration, it seems, never wore the garments of glory and beauty in the most holy place. He only went in in white garments on the day of atonement.

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people. There were yet the Philistines, the Syrians, and other nations, to be subdued; but the connection of the people with God was established and maintained in security by the king in Zion, although the ark on which this connection rested was still within curtains. Blessing was also secured through the king himself, who had brought the sign of the covenant and the elect king together in the place which God had chosen, and who was still the servant for this. The ephod did not pertain to Melchisedec; but, in honouring Jehovah who had preserved the people, he who wore it maintained as priest the blessing of the people before God. Michal, who in the spirit of Saul her father only dreamt of earthly glory, cannot participate in this. Abasement before Jehovah was incomprehensible to her. She neither understood nor tasted His glory or the joy of knowing Him as the heart's sole master. That which belongs to Saul can have no share in David's kingdom, nor can it suffer with a despised and rejected one. In short we have a king devoted to Jehovah and to the people, who secures and communicates blessing to the latter; and not as yet a king characterized above all by the enjoyment of established blessing, which is Solomon's condition.

Now the first of these two conditions appears to me to represent Christ, such as He has always been in principle and in right, and especially such as He will be after the destruction of Antichrist, and before the destruction of those enemies who will still oppose themselves to the establishment of His kingdom in peace. His people, all Israel, will be united under

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Him. The rod of His strength will go out of Zion, and He will rule in the midst of His enemies (Psalm cx.); but it will not yet be the fulfilment of Psalm lxxii. or of Zechariah vi. 12, 13. Compare also Psalm ii., in which Christ is looked upon as the Son of God born upon earth, and in which His universal rights to the possession of the earth, which flow from this, are set forth, acknowledged by God and proclaimed to the kings of the earth.

In Psalm cx. Christ is seated at the right hand of God, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool.

In Psalm viii. He is the Son of man, and all things are put under Him.

Under Solomon all Israel rejoices in all the good things which Jehovah had bestowed upon Solomon, as well as upon David. Here David in his own person provides that which is necessary to feed the people, and deals to every one a "good piece."* He returns to bless his house, for David has his own house to which

* Psalm ii. shews us the King set upon the holy hill of Zion, the Son of God begotten in time (a truth apart from His relationship as Son, one with the Father before the world was; a doctrine taught in John i., Hebrews i., Colossians i., and elsewhere), owned as such by Jehovah, and the kings of the earth charged to submit to Him. Psalm viii. speaks of Him as the Son of man, to whom *all things* are subjected according to the eternal purposes of God. In Psalm cx. He who had been despised and rejected, being seated at the right hand of God, is to rule in the midst of His enemies.

Compare Psalms xxiv., cii. In the first, He is acknowledged as Jehovah of hosts, the King of glory, after having conquered His enemies: in the second, as the Creator Himself.

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he returns after having blessed Israel; it is something nearer to him than Israel. Michal, we have seen, could not really belong to it. David finds it a joyful thing to humble himself before Jehovah, and he reproves her. How overwhelming was the reply he made her!

Ardently desiring Jehovah's glory, David is troubled at dwelling in a house of cedar, while Jehovah dwelt within curtains. He wishes to build Him a house—a good desire, yet one which God could not grant. The work of building the temple belonged to the prince of peace. David represented Christ as suffering and conquering, and consequently, not as enjoying the earthly kingdom by undisputed right, and opening to all nations the gates of the temple in which the Lord of righteousness was to be worshipped. He returns then, so to say, into his own personal position, in which God blessed him in a very peculiar manner. David was more than a type; he was truly the stock of that family from which Christ Himself should spring. This is taught in the beautiful seventh chapter. An elect vessel to maintain the cause of Jehovah's people in suffering, and to re-establish among them the glory of the Lord's name (ver. 8, 9), Jehovah had been with him; and David, most especially honoured in this, was also in his faithfulness a vessel of promise of the future peace and prosperity destined for Israel in the counsels of God. But these were yet future things. The perpetuity of the kingdom over Israel is established in his family, which God will chasten if needful but not cut off. His son shall build the house. Already, at the time of the Exodus, the man in whom was the Spirit, desired to

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prepare a habitation for Jehovah. (Ex. xv. 2.)* But the Messiah was needed for this. Till then Israel was a wanderer, and God with him.

The following are the chief subjects of the revelation made to David, and of his reply:—the sovereign call of God; that which God had done for David; the certainty of future rest for Israel; the establishment, on God's part, of David's house; his son shall be the Son of God, shall build the house; the throne of his Son shall be established for ever.

David's first thought—and it is always so when the Spirit of God works—was not to rejoice but to bless God. These are the striking features of the prayer of thankfulness: he is in peace and freedom before God; he goes in and sits before Him; he acknowledges at the same time his own nothingness, and how unworthy he was of all that God had already done. Yet this was but a small thing in the sight of God, who had declared to him the future glories of his house. It was God, and not the manner of man. What could he say more? God knew him; there lay his confidence and his joy. He acknowledged that God did it in truth and "of his own heart." It was grace to make His servant know it. The effect of all this was to make David recognize the excellency of Jehovah. There was none beside Him, and none upon the earth therefore to be compared to His elect people, whom He went to redeem for a people to Himself, and whom He had now confirmed to Him-

* The translation is very questionable; it was however God's thought. See Exodus xxix. 46.

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self, that Israel might be His people for ever, and that He Himself might be their God. The highest kind of prayer is that which does not spring from a sense of need, but from the desires and the intelligence which the revelation of God's purposes produces—purposes which He will fulfil in love to His people and for the glory of Christ. Finally he asks that his house may be the place of God's own blessing. In a word, he desires that the purposes of God, which had awakened all his affections, may be accomplished by Jehovah Himself, who had revealed them unto His servant.

Being entirely delivered from the insurrections of the people,* David exercises his power in bringing his enemies into subjection. The Philistines, who dwelt within the land of Israel, are subjugated. *Metheg-ammah* signifies "bridle of the capital." David held the key of power. Moab is subdued and made tributary. At length the outward enemies, the Syrians, also, are either conquered or submit themselves. The Edomites become David's servants, and Jehovah preserves David whithersoever he goes.

In all this we have again the man of faith and the type of the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, who is victorious over the enemies of Israel, and puts Israel in possession of the promised land (Gen. xv. 18) as far as the Euphrates. He dedicates the spoil to Jehovah, He reigns over all Israel, and executes judgment and justice unto all his people. The companions of his pilgrimage

* Compare Psalm xviii. 43, where the righteous suffering Christ (under the figure of David) is the source of all blessings for Israel from Egypt to the end.

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participate in the glory of his kingdom, a type in all this of the kingdom of Christ.

He acts in grace also towards the humble remnant of Saul's house; and if Mephibosheth is not associated with the glory of his kingdom, he enjoys the privilege of the king's table, who shews him kindness, although Mephibosheth belongs to the family of his enemy and persecutor, but at the same time to that little remnant which favoured the king whom God had chosen (being, on that account, hated itself by those in power). He enjoys also the whole of his family's inheritance.

This touching and beautiful testimony to David's kindness and faithfulness through grace, appears to me to give us a picture of Christ's relations to the remnant of Israel, or at least that of the spirit of these relations. It was "the kindness of God" which sought out the family of Saul, the enemy of David's crown—and which rests upon the representative of Jonathan, whose history we have read, and who typifies those that will attach themselves to Christ in prospect of the kingdom, to which their thoughts are limited. The remnant enjoys the effect of the establishment of the kingdom, but does not rank among those that surround the throne after having shared the sufferings of the despised and rejected king.

Chapter x., the details of which we pass over, sets before us the general principle of the king's rule in Zion. When grace is despised by those to whom it is manifested, the king's judgment follows. Opposition and rebellion only serve to establish his authority in the very place where resistance is attempted. It is useless to strive against the power of God's chosen king.

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The history of David and the wife of Uriah follows. David is no longer acting by faith in God's service. When the time comes at which kings go forth to war, he stays at home at his ease, and sends others in his place to fight Jehovah's battles. At ease and in indolence he falls readily into sin, as was the case when he sought for rest among the Philistines. He was no longer standing by faith.

The nearer David was to God, the more ineffectual were his attempts to conceal his sin. Given up to himself for the time in chastisement, he adds a second transgression to the first; he completes it, and enjoys its fruit, now that the removal of every obstacle gives a semblance of lawfulness to his course. What a sad history! What unworthiness! He forgets his position as king, and a king from God. Was it reigning in righteousness to take advantage of his royal power to oppress Uriah? He makes himself a slave to the wretched Joab by rendering him accessory to his crime. How degrading! How much happier was he, when, though hunted like a partridge in the mountains, he had a living faith and a good conscience! But who can shun the eye of God? Accordingly God, who knows and loves him, fails not to visit his sin.

This was a very great sin: David committed it in secret; God punishes it in the sight of all Israel. If David knew not how to glorify God, nor—while reigning in His name—to maintain a true testimony as to the nature of God's kingdom; if he had on the contrary falsified its character, God Himself will know how, in the sight of all men, to retrace its features

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through the chastisement He will send upon the man who has thus dishonoured Him, and who had taken away the only witness to His government which God had set up before men.

This history shews us how far sin can blind the heart, even while the moral judgment continues sound; it shews also the power of the faithful word of God. God manifests at the same time the sovereignty of His grace; for although He chastened David by the child's death, it is another son of Bathsheba who was the elect of God, who became king and the head of the royal family, the man of peace and blessing, the beloved of Jehovah. David submits himself under the hand of God; his heart bows under it in the depth of its affections. He understands it better than his servants do, although more guilty than they. He acts becomingly according to spiritual intelligence. There was confidence in God and intimacy with Him; and therefore David can lay open the tenderest part of his heart to God, the part in which God had wounded him; but when the will of God is manifest, he submits entirely.

We see here the evident work of the Spirit. It is the same Spirit who wrought in Jesus at Gethsemane, although both the occasion and the extent of the suffering were not only different, but far otherwise important; but the heart is opened to God completely and the submission complete when God's will is known.

The sin of David has been extremely great; but we can plainly see in him the precious work of the Spirit. Confounded by the simple faithfulness of Uriah, he cannot escape the hand of God! David is pardoned, for he

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confesses his sin; but as to His government, God shewed Himself to be inflexible, and while sparing the king—for he deserved death—He announces to him that the sword shall never depart out of his house. We have seen a similar case in Jacob's unfaithfulness. David's punishment also answers to his sins (compare ver. 10, 12 with the history of Absalom). As to David's affections, the chastisement was in the death of his child, a chastisement which he deeply felt; and the public government of God was manifested in that which was done, according to His word, before all Israel and before the sun.

It is possible that the children of Ammon deserved severe judgment, and that this period was the time of their judgment; they were the insolent enemies of the king whom God had set up, and who had given proof of his kind feeling towards them. But as to his personal condition, I know not whether David would have treated his enemies in this manner when he was walking in the narrow path of faith. As a type, this judgment brings to mind the righteous judgment of the Messiah, and the dreadful consequences of having despised and insulted Him even in His glory. We learn from it also, that when a people are ripe for judgment, God will bring it upon them, even although others may seek to act in grace.

When David had shewn that he had forgotten God, and had failed in his entire dependence upon Him, the evils in his house soon broke out. He had added to the number of his wives. The root of bitterness buds and brings forth bitter fruits.

Although in the main David's heart was upright

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before God and deeply acknowledged Him, yet, when once out of that path of humble dependence which is produced by faith and the sense of God's presence, he embittered the remainder of his days through following his own will in the midst of his blessings. There is sin in his house, wrath on account of the sin, vacillation through partiality for Absalom. Joab appears on the scene, as is the case every time that these matters of intrigue and wickedness recur in the history. This is all that need be said of the sorrowful story of Amnon and Absalom.

David's partiality for Absalom had yet other and more painful results, and heavy chastisements. It is painful to see the conqueror of Goliath driven from his home and his throne by his beloved son, and that under God's hand. For if God had not allowed it, who could have driven God's elect from the royal seat in which Jehovah had placed him? The sword was in his house; the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword. How just is Jehovah! But whom He loves He chastens. Accordingly, whilst all this is a manifestation of the righteous rule of God, it is to David an occasion of deep heart-exercise, and of a more real and more intimate knowledge of God; for his heart was truly and eternally bound to God, so that all his sorrows bore fruit, although they were occasioned by his faults.

In this respect also, although the cause of his grief was so widely different from that of the Lord's grief, he becomes the type of Christ in suffering, and the vessel of the expression of His sympathy for His people. This is even so much more the case, because with a faithful

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heart, and in a certain sense with perfect integrity towards God, the king's faults and transgressions gave rise to those confessions and to that humiliation which the Spirit of Christ will produce in the remnant of Israel; so that on the one hand he speaks of his integrity, while on the other he confesses his faults. Now this is what Christ causes His people to say, and what He says for them.

Nevertheless we must remember it is not David himself, as a godly man, who speaks in the Psalms; it is by the inspiration of the Spirit he utters them; and it is a very precious thing for us that, in circumstances where faith might fail and the heart be discouraged, the word supplies us with language suitable to faith, and to faith in one who has perhaps been unfaithful: a precious testimony that, even in this condition, God does not cast us off, and that Christ sympathizes with us, since He furnishes us with expressions and sentiments adapted to such a condition.

The Psalms supply this, and in especial suitability to the remnant of Israel in the last days. They are characterized by integrity of heart and confession of sin. The Spirit of Christ gives the sentiments and assures of His sympathy. Psalm xvi. gives us very strikingly this position of Christ. His goodness extends not to God. It is not His divine place, "equal with God," which He is taking. He calls Jehovah His Lord; but of the saints on earth He says, "in whom is all my delight." By His baptism, which was the expression of this, He connected Himself, not with Israel in their sin, but with the first movement of the Spirit responding in the remnant to the

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condemnation of the people as such. This is the principle of the Psalms—the upright and faithful man in the midst of the perverse nation, the object of the counsels and purposes of God. The book opens with this distinction drawn by God; it next presents us with the King in Zion according to the decree of God, rejected by the nation and hated by the heathen who oppress the people. All this developes itself through a variety of circumstances, and all the relationships of the remnant are there depicted, as well as all affections of the heart. All connected with it is gone over by the hand and the pen of God, and according to the Spirit and the sympathies of Christ.

Chapter xx. ends this part of David's history, and his history in general. He is re-established on his throne, and has overcome the efforts of his enemies and the rebellion of his own people. The order of his court and officers is restored in peace. Sundry details are added by the Spirit of God.

And, first of all, the government of God, who forgets nothing, and with whom everything has its results, is recalled to David and to his people by means of the Gibeonites. It is no longer necessary for the establishment of God's economy that David should pursue the house of Saul. There is a righteous judgment, a moral principle of God, which is above all economies.

Saul in his formal and fleshly zeal, although it was for God, had not acted in the fear of God. It is this which especially distinguishes a godly zeal from a zeal for the outward interests of His kingdom. Saul forgets the oaths which Israel made to the Gibeonites. God re-

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members it, and does not despise the poor Gibeonites. David also recognizes its obligation; after having enquired of Jehovah on account of the thrice repeated chastening upon Israel, he submits to the demand of the Gibeonites. The whole house of Saul perishes, except the little remnant attached to David. With respect to the latter, the circumstances of Rizpah's touching and faithful affection awaken in David's heart the remembrance of brighter moments in poor Saul's career, and he pays the last honours to his memory. After this God was entreated for the land.

If with a sling and a stone faith can overthrow its enemies, the flesh is at fault before their attacks. David, when king, as we have clearly seen, gave himself up more to his lusts and to his own will than David suffering.

Nevertheless it is beautiful to see that, where faith has acted amid the people's ruin, it has stirred up many other instruments, who—animated and encouraged by its success—act fearlessly with the same power as that which wrought the first deliverance. It is well however to observe, that to conquer valiant foes, when all Israel was flushed with success and strengthened the hands of the mighty men, is a very different thing from the faith which reckons upon God, when strength and success are on the enemy's side and the people are fleeing before him. The latter was David's case with Goliath; the former, that of the men who slew the other giants.

The songs that follow contain instruction of deep interest. In chapter xxii. David comes forth from his sufferings and his affliction with a song of triumph and

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of praise. He had learnt what God was in his sufferings. He celebrates all that God had been for him, all that he had found Him to be in his necessities and dangers, the effect of God's power on his behalf, and the glorious and blessed result of this power. All this is given in a song, the expressions of which will only be fully accomplished in Christ Himself.

In chapter xxiii. he celebrates his prosperity. But what a difference! He declares, it is true, what Christ will be when He reigns; and he does so in language of most attractive beauty, a beauty which ravishes the mind and transports it into the reign of Christ, that blessed "world to come of which we speak." But then this sorrowful thought presents itself—"my house is not so with God."

In the first of these two songs there is something more of profound interest. David speaks as a prophet; and, as he had done in so many other instances, he personifies the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus in connection with Israel. This song then sets before us the sufferings of Christ (as the representative of Israel, and often speaking of the nation as though it were Himself, sufferings which obtained also other deliverance of far surpassing excellence), as the cause of the deliverance out of Egypt and of all Israel's blessings, until the establishment of Messiah's glory in the age to come. He surrounds the agony of Christ with the whole history of Israel in salvation and in blessing from Pithom and Raamses unto the destruction of the violent man at the end of days, and the submission of the nations to Messiah's sceptre; and he gives a voice to their distress in Egypt.

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In chapter xxiii. the covenant is, "all his salvation and all his desire," although at that time "he made it not to grow." Judgment must be executed ere the full blessing he expected could be brought in; and these thorns of iniquity must be "utterly burned in the same place." This will take place at the coming of Christ.

If God honours and glorifies David, He does not forget those whom the energy of David's faith had brought around him. The Holy Ghost enumerates the mighty men of David, and recounts their deeds of valour and devotedness—deeds which obtain a name and a place for them when God writes up the people. (Psalm lxxxvii.) Joab is not among them.

Chapter xxiv. leads us into a subject which requires particular notice. The wrath of God is kindled again against Israel. It is not in the mind of the Spirit to inform us on what occasion this took place, but to lay open God's dealings both in government and grace. In the preceding chapter God "writeth up" the mighty men who prefigure the companions of the true David in glory. Here it is His grace in staying His anger and bringing in His blessing.

God punishes the pride and rebellion of Israel by leaving them to the consequences of the impulse of David's natural heart. Joab's habitual cleverness and good sense made him perceive its folly. The flesh, when it is in another, is easily discerned. Joab felt that it was not worth while to despise God when nothing was to be gained by it; for in this way the flesh fears God. But the thing was of Jehovah, and Satan gains his point.

What in truth can man's good sense avail in opposi-

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tion to the will of God in chastening, and to Satan's malice? It is an awful thing to be given up to his power. Nine months of sin on David's part, and of patience on God's part, shew us the fatal influence of the enemy; but the sin accomplished only awakens David's conscience. The enjoyment of the fruit of our sin undeceives us. It is the pursuit of it which allures our hearts. When Satan has succeeded in inducing the children of God to commit the evil to which he tempts them, he cares no longer to conceal from them its emptiness and folly. Happily, where there is life, conscience resumes its power in such a case.

Nevertheless chastening must follow sin which has been carried out in spite of so much long-suffering. But God, who reaches His servant's conscience, brings into play the sincere affections of His heart, in order to bring about His own sovereign purpose. David exhibits that never failing token of a heart that knows the Lord —confidence in God above all, and at whatever cost. "Let me fall into the hand of Jehovah." (Sweet and precious thought of what the Lord is unto His people! and well He knows how to fill the heart with the certainty that He deserves its confidence.) Even while chastening, God is more loving, more faithful, more worthy of confidence than any other. The plague breaks out; but in the midst of judgment Jehovah remembers mercy, and commands the destroying angel, when he had reached Jerusalem, to stay his hand. It is Jerusalem, the city of His affections, that attracts His attention. God chooses it for the place where His altar shall be built, and His grace shewn forth—His ap-

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pointed mercy-seat. It is there that His wrath, justly kindled against Israel, ceases; and sin gives occasion to the establishment of the place and of the work in which He and His people shall meet, according to that grace which has put away the sin. This characterizes the cross of Christ; this will stay the plague in Israel, and introduce the reign of the *true* Prince of Peace. David stands in the breach to deliver His people; and at his own cost (ver. 17), and according to the counsels of God, he offers the sacrifice of appeasement.

The thoughts on the First Book of Chronicles will contain a fuller examination into this latter part of David's history.



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I KINGS.

THE Books of Kings shew us the kingly power established in all its glory, its fall, and God's testimony in the midst of the ruin, with details concerning Judah after the rejection of Israel, until Lo-ammi had been pronounced upon the whole nation. In a word, it is the trial of kingly power placed in the hands of men, not absolute as in Nebuchadnezzar, but kingly power having the law for its rule; as there had been a trial of the people set in relationship with God by means of priesthood. Out of Christ nothing stands.

Although the kingly power had been placed under the responsibility of its faithfulness to Jehovah; and although it had to be smitten and punished whenever it failed in this, it was yet at this time established by the counsels and the will of God. It was neither a David, type of Christ in his patience, who, through difficulties, obstacles, and sufferings, made himself a way to the throne; nor a king who, although exalted to the throne and always victorious, had to be a man of war to the end of his life; a type in this, I doubt not, of what Christ will be in the midst of the Jews at His return, when He will commence the coming age by subjecting the Gentiles to Himself, having been already delivered from the strivings of the people. (Psalm xviii. 43, 44.) It was the king according to the promises and the counsels of God, the king established in peace, head over God's people to rule them

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in righteousness, son of David according to the promise, and type of that true Son of David, who shall be a priest upon His throne, who shall build the temple of Jehovah, and between whom and Jehovah there shall be the counsel of peace. (Zech. vi. 13.)

Let us examine a little the position of this kingly power according to the word; for responsibility and election met in it, as well as the foreshadowing of the kingdom of Christ.

In chapter vii. of the Second Book of Samuel we have seen the promise of a son whom God would raise up to David, and who should reign after him, to whom God would be a father, and who should be His son, who should build the temple of Jehovah, and the throne of whose kingdom God would establish for ever. This was the promise: a promise which, as David himself understood, will be fully accomplished only in the person of Christ. (1 Chron. xvii. 17.) Here is the responsibility: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men" (2 Sam. vii. 14); which David well understood also. (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.)

The book which we are considering shews us that this responsibility was fully declared to Solomon. (Chap. ix. 4—9.)

Psalm lxxxix. 28—37 sets the two things also before us very plainly, namely, the certainty of God's counsels, His fixed purpose, and the exercise of His government in view of man's responsibility.

In the Book of Chronicles we have only what relates to the promises (1 Chron. xvii. 11—14), for

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reasons of which we will speak when we examine that book.

From all these passages, we perceive that the royalty of David's family was established according to the counsels of God and the election of grace; that the perpetuity of this royalty, dependent on the faithfulness of God, was consequently infallible; but that at the same time the family of David, in the person of Solomon, was in fact placed upon the throne at that time under the condition of obedience and faithfulness to Jehovah. If himself or his posterity were to fail in faithfulness, God's judgment would be executed; a judgment which nevertheless would not prevent God's fulfilling that which His grace had assured to David.

The Books of Kings contain the history of the establishment of the kingdom in Israel under this responsibility, that of its fall, of the longsuffering of God, of God's testimony amid the ruin which flowed from the unfaithfulness of the first king, and finally that of the execution of the judgment, a longer delay of which would but have falsified God's own character, and the testimony that should be given to the holiness of that character. Such delay would have borne a false testimony with respect to that which God is.

We shall see that, after Solomon's reign, the greater part of the narrative refers to the testimony given by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the midst of Israel, and in general to that kingdom which had entirely departed from God. Little is said of Judah before the complete ruin of Israel. After this the ruin of Judah brought on by the iniquity of their kings,

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is not long delayed, although there were moments of restoration.

Before David's death the iniquity and ambition of a son whom he "had not displeased at any time" led to the solemn proclamation of Solomon, to whom God had destined, and David promised, the throne. In this circumstance Joab, long restrained by prudence in David's lifetime, shews himself as he is. He makes himself necessary to Adonijah, as he had been to David. Abiathar, long under the sentence of God, takes the same course. Solomon, the elect of God, who held his rights from God, did not suit them. But after all, man's prudence fails before the judgment of God. God arranges events in such a manner as sooner or later to exhibit the most prudent in their true light. Apparently all goes on well. The elder and beloved son of the king, the captain of the host whom David himself could not resist, and the priest who had always accompanied David, are there, as well as all the king's sons, excepting the elect of God; but the thought of God, or His will, had no place there. The companions of David, who had truly served with him for the glory of God, were not there either.

The prophet of God, the witness to His will, is employed in the fulfilment of that will, and Solomon is proclaimed king, and inaugurated before the eyes of David himself.

David's faith, if it had not energy enough to give each one his place in judgment, had at least full intelligence of what was proper. He communicates his judgment to Solomon, who is to execute it according to

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his word.* Solomon at first shews clemency to Adonijah; but the still restless will of the latter, who desired the deceased king's wife, awakens the righteous judgment destined for those who had failed in integrity, and who had risen up against God's anointed. It is the first character attached to the king reigning in glory. He executes righteous judgment in the earth. There is no escaping the vigilance of this judgment. This is seen in the case of Shimei.

We find at the same time the fulfilment of the word, given to Samuel, namely, the humiliation of the priest. Solomon, Jehovah's anointed, sends Abiathar away, and puts Zadok in his place.

But there is another element in the history of the king of glory, in which he oversteps the limits of the king of Israel's legitimate position; he allies himself with the Gentiles, and marries Pharaoh's daughter. Neither the house of Solomon, nor that of Jehovah, was yet built; but the daughter of Pharaoh, whom the king espouses in grace, dwells in the place where the suffering and victorious king had provisionally placed the ark of the covenant, which secures blessing to the

* It is to David also, and not to Solomon, that God communicated the plan of the temple. Solomon, in glory, performs these things, and possesses the requisite discernment for executing justice and judgment; but it is in David that intelligence displays itself. In fact if Christ, reigning in glory, exercises just judgment, He is already wisdom; and, indeed, it is in His connection with the assembly in the present time of grace, that the communication of the purposes of God, and the intelligence of His ways, are found.

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people, and which, when placed in the temple, will form the source of blessing for Israel. This ark was not a covenant made with Pharaoh's daughter; but she dwelt where the symbol of the covenant was hidden, and she was placed under the safeguard, and sheltered by the power, of Him who had made this covenant, and who could not break it, whatever might be the unfaithfulness of a people who ought always to have enjoyed its benefits.

I doubt not, that hereafter a remnant of the Jews will find themselves through sovereign grace in the same position* (before the glory of the kingdom, and of the house of God, is established) under shelter of the covenant attached to the city of David, the seat of royal grace, but the provisional seat in anticipation of the full and entire result of the king's power. But we confine ourselves here to recognizing the principle of the bringing in of the Gentiles, manifested in the reception of Pharaoh's daughter as Solomon's bride.

It is well to remark, that the passage we are considering does not introduce the light and intelligence of the heavenly places, but only, in connection with the kingdom, the principle through which the position of those who enjoy that grace is established. And therefore, while admitting the Gentiles, the principle applies to this Jewish remnant of the latter days, who are intelligent and faithful according to their intelligence, a remnant which will be admitted according to the same principles of grace.

* Consider here Revelation xiv. 1, and Hebrews xii. 22.

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The people in general do not enter into this thought. The kingdom itself even, and the blessing of the kingdom, are not established on that footing. All doubtless will be founded on the new covenant, and that by the presence of the Mediator of this covenant. Still even then the connection of the people with God, as an earthly people, will not be established on the efficacy of a faith which enters into the enjoyment of the grace of the covenant while the mediator of it is hidden, and which anticipates the public establishment of it as made with Judah and Israel, but on the positive enjoyment of its results, when the king shall have settled everything by his power. The brazen altar was not in the sanctuary but in the court, marking indeed a rejected one lifted up from the earth (and on this the future blessings of Israel depend), but not gone into heaven and hidden save to faith there. It is by that the people will approach God. It is the earth which is the scene of the development of their religious affections, and the knowledge of God manifested on the earth. The efficacy of the cross, as the means of approaching God on the earth, will be known to them. Without it they could not approach Him. They will mourn when they shall *see* Him whom they have pierced, but see Him as manifested down to those below. Blessing, pardon, new life, will be brought them down here. They will not enter into the power of these things as hidden within the veil. Being established on the earth, it would not even be suitable for them to do so.

To return to our history: if the ark is on Mount Zion, there are two ways of approaching God—before

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the ark, and at the altar which in fact is confounded with the high places. Until the temple is built, the people are on the high places, earthly and carnal even when approaching the true God.* God bears with it. Solomon himself goes thither, and God hears him there. The temple is not built. If it had been, it ought to have been the only centre of service and worship. That God bears with a thing, until power shall act, is quite another thing from sanctioning it after power has acted. We must remember that, if Solomon went to Gibeon, it is because the tabernacle and the brazen altar were there; and it was there that, according to the law, the priests performed their functions. (1 Chron. xvi. 36—40.) The ark of the covenant was not there. David had placed it in a tent in the city of David. These latter points are more developed in the Chronicles (and I refer the reader to that which will be said in the examination of that book); but the passage we are considering would hardly have been understood without some anticipation of what is found there.

As to the responsibility of the moment, the state of the people in this respect appears to me to be set before

* The position of Solomon is morally worthy of attention. He loves Jehovah; he walks in the statutes of David; but he does not cleave to the ark which David had placed in Zion; he offers sacrifices in the high places. How often Christians, who do not walk outwardly in sin, do not seek in Christ the secret of His will according to the revelation He has made of Himself while hidden! For us the temple is not built. We may draw nigh to the ark—Christ rejected and gone up on high; or to the brazen altar and the high places, for this altar is confounded with them.

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us as a sorrowful state; and Solomon himself is but on a level with the existing state of things—a state borne with indeed by God in grace, but not after His heart. The king thought neither of the ark nor of the hidden blessing of the covenant, as that from which all his thoughts and actions should spring,* and as the only means of his connection with Jehovah. He loved Jehovah. It was given him to accomplish all that was requisite for the manifestation of His glory; but his heart rose not to the height of that faith which reckoned upon the secret of God's love, when the glory was not manifested, and which discerned it through all the existing things, even while God still bore with them. It was this which formed the strength of David personally. The ark of the covenant in the city of David was the symbol of this, and for the time its expression.

Solomon walked no doubt in the statutes of David, and he loved Jehovah; but he approached Him without rising above the level of the people. Only our chapter says that he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. This continued until Hezekiah. The lustre of a great blessing often keeps out of sight something which God bears with, as we have said, but which produces disastrous effects when the energy which gave rise to the blessing has disappeared. Better to be little and despised at the ark, than to possess the glory of the kingdom and to worship on high places.

Moreover, although loving Jehovah, if we are not

* He drew nigh to it, under the influence of granted blessings, to render thanks to God. (Ver. 15.)

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by faith in the secret of the covenant at the ark, we shall always let in something which is not according to integrity even in our own path. Before we are in the glory, we are never on a level with the position we hold, while we have only this position to sustain us. (We must look *above* our path to be able to walk *in* it.) A Jew, who had the secret of Jehovah and who waited for the Messiah, was pious and faithful according to the law. A Jew, who had only the law, assuredly did not keep it. A Christian, who has heaven before him and a Saviour in glory as the object of his affections, will walk well upon the earth; he who has only the earthly path for his rule will fail in the intelligence and motives needed to walk in it; he will become a prey to worldliness, and his christian walk in the world will be more or less on a level with the world in which he walks. The eyes upward on Jesus will keep the heart and the steps in a path conformable to Jesus, and which consequently will glorify Him and make Him known in the world. Seeing what we are, we must have a motive above our path to be able to walk in it. This does not prevent our needing also for our path the fear of the Lord to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, knowing that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Solomon goes to Gibeon to offer burnt-offerings there. Jehovah appears to him there in a dream. Solomon is conscious that he needs the help of Jehovah to fulfil the duties before him; and, through the grace of God, he manifests a state of heart with respect to this, which is pleasing to Jehovah. The sense of the difficulty of

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performing the duties of his position, towards a people who belong to Jehovah, makes him feel his own littleness; and the desire of not failing in the task entrusted to him of God is uppermost in his heart, and leads him to ask for the wisdom requisite to accomplish it. The genuineness of this sentiment is so much the more evident from its being in a dream that he replies to God. God adds glory and riches to the fulfilment of this prayer. The sense of God's goodness and the joy of his heart bring him before the ark of His covenant who had thus revealed Himself to him beyond his expectation. God's answer places the king immediately under the condition of obedience. The wisdom he had asked for is manifested in the judgment he gives, and the people acknowledge that it comes from God.

Strict justice in vengeance had cut off the wicked at the beginning; *now* it is the justice which maintains order and blessing among the people of Jehovah. Thus will it be also with Jesus.

Chapter iv. contains an enumeration of the officers who served Solomon, and upheld the glory of his throne; and then, the manner in which the whole country provided for the maintenance of his household, Judah and Israel being multiplied and full of joy. The king's authority extends as far as the Euphrates. Peace reigns all around. The wisdom and understanding which God had given him surpassed all that was known in the world; so that from the ends of the earth they came to hear the wisdom of his lips.

His proverbs, his songs, and his knowledge, bore testimony to the excellent spirit with which God had

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endowed the king. His throne is established, and the glory of the son of David abounds. The Gentiles now, the king of Tyre, emblematic of the world and its desirable things, are at Solomon's disposal, and apply themselves joyfully to the fulfilment of the king of Israel's projects, and to his service in building the house of Jehovah.

The house may be looked at in two ways—as a type of the Father's house, and as in fact the habitation of God on the earth when Jesus reigns. In the latter aspect I only look for the grand thoughts and character of the government revealed in it. In the former, as a typical house, two circumstances give it its character. It is, first of all, God's house, His dwelling; and then there are chambers all around it.* God surrounded Himself with dwellings, in the very place where He had fixed His habitation.

As the dwelling-place of God at that time in the midst of His people, the presence of God in the temple depended on the faithfulness of Solomon.

That which characterized the house in general is that nothing except gold was to be seen in it. All was bright with the glory of the divine righteousness that distinguished the throne of God which was placed there. But it is not transparent as glass. Beauty and holiness are not what characterize the earthly throne, but righteousness and judgment. Nor are there seraphim.

In the Revelation we have the seraphic character

* It is to this, I doubt not, that the Lord alludes, when He says, "In my Father's house are many dwellings"—at any rate, to the fact that other priests besides the high priest dwell there.

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added to the cherubim, and the gold is transparent as glass. Emblems, as we have seen, of judicial power, the cherubim had a new position (those belonging to the ark remained the same); each of these new cherubim touched the wall of the house on one side, and on the other the wing of the other cherub. Their wings extended from one side of the house to the other. They looked not towards the ark, but outwards.* At this

* The word in Hebrew is 'towards the house,' which is used as a preposition for inwards; but here, being at the bottom of the most holy place, 'towards the house' was outwards.

I anticipate the Chronicles here a little. This circumstance of their looking outwards, which is not brought in here by the Holy Ghost, refers to the aspect of this history given in the Chronicles, that is, to the glorious reign of the Son of David. Here, the typical character of the heavenly house and glory being the object, the veil is not seen, nor the circumstance as to the cherubim which gave its character to the governmental blessing of the earth. Both are in Chronicles. Here, while the veil is not mentioned, in its place are folding doors. I make this allusion to that which is written in the Chronicles, in order to give a general idea of the whole, and to link the two accounts together.

I will give here something more definite, as to the contents of chapters vi. and vii. of the book that occupies us.

There are three parts in this description: the temple itself; the different houses of cedar; and, lastly, the brazen vessels.

1. The temple. The idea which it presents has been already pointed out. It is the dwelling-place, the house of God: there are chambers all around; but it is the house of God. Within, all is gold. Nothing is said about the veil. Dwelling, not drawing near, is the idea. But there are folding doors which open.

2. After this comes the royal connection of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter with the world without, but with a view to

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time, righteousness reigning and being established, these symbols of God's power can look outwards in blessing, instead of having their eyes fixed on the covenant alone. During the time that there was nothing but the covenant, they gazed upon it; but when God has established His throne in righteousness, He can

the glory and elevation of this position. It is not the dwelling-place of God, but the royal position of the king, the judge, and of his bride. It is Christ in His glorious administration. All is solidity, magnificence. and grandeur, within and without.

3. Then comes the manifestation, according to the power of the Spirit of God, and in a glorious manner, of all that belonged to His reign here below. All was of brass, the pillars and the sea. Nothing is said of the altar, because drawing near to God is not the question; but the manifestation of God in Christ who reigns in sight of the world—divine righteousness in respect of man's responsibility, not of approach to God Himself.

Thus we behold the dwelling-place of God where all is gold, the glory of divine righteousness; the house as the dwelling of the king, and the porch of judgment; the house of his bride. It is the sovereign glory of Christ in manifestation according to the dispensation of glory; and then the development, in this world, by the power of the Spirit, of what Christ is, of what God Himself is. There is no mention of silver—the type of the immutable stedfastness of God's purposes and ways in the wilderness. It is gold, the house of cedar, brass.

In the description given by the Book of Chronicles there is an altar and a veil, because there the positive administration of the things and circumstances of the true Solomon's reign is much more the question; the state of things which will in fact exist upon earth, rather than the abstract idea, and the type of that which is manifested of God Himself, as well as of the king's glory; and this, whether in the dwelling-place of God, or on the earth, as the sphere where He will unfold that which He is according to the Spirit.

VI.

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turn towards the world to bless it according to that righteousness.

It is rather, to my mind, the house of Solomon that prefigures the church, as such, in connection with Christ; the temple, the Father's house on high, where we are brought to dwell: "we are his house;" as the house of the forest of Lebanon prefigures His glory among the Gentiles. The porch of judgment characterizes this glorious reign. The glory was not all on the outside. The inner court was equally beautiful. The glory was not hidden either. The outer court, as well as the inner, exhibited His royal glory who built the whole.

It was the same thing also towards the great outer court. Thus even the great court, as well as the inner court of the house of Jehovah, was built with costly stones and with cedar. The house itself had its peculiar glory. Everything manifested the glory, the riches, and the power of the great king. With respect to this outward glory, Pharaoh's daughter had a house similar to the king's. This outward glory of the walls, of the courts of Jehovah, of the king's house, and of all the others, exhibits the connection between these things in Christ in the day of His manifested glory.

The vessels of Jehovah's house were made on a much larger scale than those of the tabernacle; but they were the same, although greater in number. The only new things were the pillars, Jachin and Boaz; that is to say, "He will establish," and, "in Him is strength" (names which make the meaning of these pillars evident). I doubt not that the passage in Revelation iii. 12 alludes to these pillars.

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We find here also the union of Jews and Gentiles recognized; and the latter employed in the work for the temple of Jehovah.

The ark is not altered. It was put in the temple, which was but a house for its reception, as the seat of His presence who dwelt between the cherubim. As to the token of God's presence, and of the establishment of His throne on the earth, the ark had entered into its rest, as well as Jehovah whose seat it was. (Compare Psalm cxxxii. 8.)

The circumstances which revealed the character of this rest were remarkable. The staves, with which the priests had borne the ark, were now the memorial of their journeys with God, who, in His faithfulness, had led and preserved them, and brought them into the rest which He had prepared for them. But that which, in the passage through the wilderness, had been the token of their means of grace was no longer in it: nothing but the law remained there. Aaron's rod and the pot of manna would not have been in harmony with the glorious reign and the rest of Canaan. The law was there; it was the basis of the administration of the kingdom, and the rule of that righteousness which was to be exercised in it.

The ark of the covenant once set in its place of rest, Jehovah comes and seals it with His presence, and fills the house with His glory. As the rod, the emblem of the priestly grace which had led the people, and the manna, which had fed them in the wilderness, were no longer there, so did the priesthood no longer exercise its ministry on account of the presence of the glory. For

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the moment Solomon fully assumes the character of priest. It is he who stands before Jehovah, as well as between Jehovah and the people—a remarkable type, as to his position, of what Christ as king will be for Israel in the day of His glory. He has built a house for Jehovah to dwell in—a fixed habitation—that He may dwell in it for ever.

Remark here also that all refers to the deliverance out of Egypt, to Horeb, to the law, and not to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. It was doubtless, up to a certain point (and fully so, typically), the fulfilment of the promises made to them; but Solomon does not refer to them as to his present position. This is seen in verse 56.

In examining the blessing pronounced by the king (which, like almost all that is termed blessing, consisted of thanksgiving), and his prayer, we shall again find the same principles that we pointed out at first—the fulfilment of the promises made to David as present blessing (ver. 20—24); but the enjoyment of this blessing granted under condition of obedience. (Ver. 23—25.) The prayer sets the people under the terms of a righteous government, abounding indeed in kindness and forgiveness, yet one which will not hold the guilty to be innocent; and it presents God as the people's resource, when the consequences of their sin fall upon them according to the principles laid down by Moses in Deuteronomy and elsewhere. Moreover, while confessing that the heaven of heavens could not contain Jehovah, the king entreats Him to grant every prayer that should be addressed to Him in this house—a petition which was granted (chap. ix. 3), so that the house was established

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as the throne of the God of heaven upon earth—the place in which He revealed Himself, and in which He had put His name.

This fact has a very wide bearing. It was the establishment of Jehovah's government upon the earth in the midst of His people—a government entrusted to a man, the son of David; so that it is said that Solomon sat upon the throne of Jehovah.

This enables us to understand the importance of the events which took place under Nebuchadnezzar, by whom this throne was cast down, according to the judgment pronounced by God Himself. The house was not elect; but, built under God's own direction, it was hallowed by Himself, that His name might dwell there for ever. The close of chapter viii. gives a very lively figure of Israel's millennial blessing.

The answer which God gives establishes the house as the place in which He has set His name for ever. His eyes and His heart shall be there perpetually; but, at the same time, for the enjoyment of the granted blessing, the dynasty of Solomon, the people of Israel, and even the house itself, are subjected to the condition of faithfulness to Jehovah on the part of Solomon and his children. If he, or his posterity, should turn away to serve other gods, Israel should be cut off; and the house should become a testimony of the judgment of God to every one that passed by. We see here to what an extent the fate of Israel hung upon their king.

The king of Tyre also was dependent on the king of Israel; and the queen of Sheba comes from the far south to delight herself in the wisdom of the head of

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God's people, and to be filled with wonder at the sight of his glory, and to praise Jehovah who had raised him so high, and who had blessed the people in giving him to be their king. She also came with gifts; for the king's renown had spread into distant lands. Nevertheless, although it was a true report that she had heard, the sight of his glory went far beyond all that had been said of it.

Till now we have had the beautiful picture of God's blessing resting upon the son of David, whose only desire it had been to possess wisdom from God, that he might know how to govern His people. Jehovah had in addition given him riches, magnificence, and glory. The reverse of this picture, painful to the heart, serves nevertheless to instruct us in the righteous dealings of God.

In the event, foreseen by God, of Israel's having a king, he was forbidden to multiply his wives or his riches, and to go down into Egypt to multiply horses. (Deut. xvii. 16, 17.) Now with whatever blessings we may be surrounded, we can never forsake the law of God with impunity, nor the walk appointed in the word for His children. God had bestowed the abundance of riches and honour on Solomon, who had only asked for wisdom; but the study of the law, which was prescribed to the king (Deut. xvii. 19, 20), should have prevented his using the means he did in acquiring his riches. These chapters teach us that he did precisely that which the law forbade his doing. He multiplied silver and gold, he multiplied the number of his wives, and had a great number of horses brought from Egypt.

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God's promise was fulfilled. Solomon was rich and glorious above all the kings of his day; but the means he used to enrich himself shewed a heart at a distance from God, and led to his ruin according to the just judgment and sure word of God.

How perfect His ways, how sure His testimony! Holiness becometh His house. His judgments are unchangeable.

Solomon enjoys the sure promises of God. He sins in the means by which he seeks to satisfy his own lusts; and although the result was the accomplishment of the promise, yet he bears the consequences of so doing. Outwardly only the fulfilment of the promise was seen; in fact there was something else. Without sending for horses from Egypt, and gold from Ophir, Solomon would have been rich and glorious, for God had promised it. By doing this he enriched himself, but he departs from God and from His word. Having given himself up to his desires after riches and glory, he had multiplied the number of his wives, and in his old age they turned away his heart. This neglect of the word, which at first appeared to have no bad effect (for he grew rich, as though it had been but the fulfilment of God's promise), soon led to a departure more serious in its nature and in its consequences, to influence more powerful and more immediately opposed to the commands of God's word, and at last to flagrant disobedience of its most positive and essential requirements. The slippery path of sin is always trodden with accelerated steps, because the first sin tends to weaken in the soul the authority and power of that which alone can prevent our committing still greater

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sins—that is, the word of God, as well as the consciousness of His presence, which imparts to the word all its practical power over us.

God brings chastening and trouble upon Solomon during his life, and takes from his family the rule over the greater part of the tribes, declaring that He will afflict the posterity of David, but not for ever.

According to the king's lamentation (Eccles. ii. 19), he to whom Solomon left all the fruit of his labour was not wise. His folly brought the consequences upon him which, in God's counsels, were attached to his father's sin. Under the guidance of Jeroboam ten tribes shook off the authority of the house of David. Looked at with an eye to its responsibility, the house of David has entirely and for ever lost its glory.

We have to follow the history of the two kingdoms, and yet more particularly that of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which retained the name of Israel, although God still caused the lamp of David to shine at Jerusalem.

Now, the moral fall of the new king—of Jeroboam—was not long delayed. Judging by human wisdom, and forgetting the fear of Jehovah he made two golden calves, in order that the powerful links of a worship in common might be broken, and no longer attach his subjects to Judah and Jerusalem. A new priesthood had to be set up; everything, with respect to worship, was devised of his own heart. Israel's sin was an established rule, and the phrase, "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," became the sad designation of their first king.

But the testimony and the judgment of God tarried

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not according to the mercy of God towards His people. Prophecy immediately re-appears; for the faithful love of God to His people never grows weary. His mercy endureth for ever. The testimony of His word—prophecy—that is to say, the intervention of God in testimony, when the people go astray and the ordinary connections between God and His people are broken, does not fail. Rehoboam himself is forbidden, by prophecy, to carry out his intention of fighting against Israel, to bring them again under his dominion; but, in the case of Jeroboam, Jehovah vindicates the rights of His glory against the king himself and against his altar. The altar is rent, the ashes poured out, the king's arm—put forth against the prophet—is dried up, and only restored through the prophet's intercession.

Here too Jehovah makes known that He has not forgotten the house of David in the midst of all this evil. From his house shall proceed the repairer of the breach, and the judge of that iniquity which caused the breach; for Judah is still recognized as the place of His throne.

The prophet, charged with such a testimony as this, is forbidden even to drink water among a people who call themselves Israel, but who are rebellious and defiled. No participation in such guilty confusion is allowed; and the prophet himself suffers the consequences of God's just judgment upon his disobedience. Such was the severity of God with respect to an action that countenanced a state of unfaithfulness, which the light He had given was sufficient to judge.

The details of this case deserve some notice.

XII.

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By the word of God the prophet had knowledge of the judgment of God. His heart should have recognized, morally as well as prophetically, the dreadful evil of Israel's position; and the moral sense of this evil should have given the prophetic testimony its full power over his own heart. At any rate the word of God was imperative: he was neither to eat nor to drink there. He knew it, and he remembered it; but there was in appearance another testimony, a motive for neglecting the Lord's command. The old prophet (and he was a prophet) told him that Jehovah had said unto him, "Bring him back into thine house that he may eat bread;" so the prophet from Judah went back with him. It was very desirable for the unfaithful old prophet, that a man whom God was using for testimony (and whose testimony he himself also believed) should sanction his unfaithfulness by association with it. Outwardly he appeared to honour the testimony of God, and the man who bore it. In fact the prophet from Judah, by returning with the old prophet, destroyed the power of his own testimony. The old prophet—although *truly* such—bore with the evil around him. The testimony of God, on the contrary, declared that the evil was not to be borne with. It was with this testimony that the other prophet was charged; and the refusal to eat or drink in the place was the moral and personal testimony of his own faithfulness, of his conviction, and of his obedience. This refusal was the testimony that, in this matter, he took *God's part*. But, by returning with the old prophet, he nullified his testimony, and countenanced the old prophet in his unfaithfulness. God did not re-

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verse His word, if the prophet was disobedient to it. The old prophet was punished, in that God made use of his mouth to announce the consequences of his fault to the prophet from Judah. It is also a lesson which teaches us, that, whenever God has made His will known to us, we are not to allow any after-influence whatever to call it in question, even although the latter may take the form of the word of God. If we were morally nearer to the Lord, we should feel that the only true and right position is to follow that which He told us at first.

In every case our part is to obey what He has said. His word will put us in a true position—in position apart from evil, and from the power of evil, even when we have not spiritual intelligence to appreciate it. If we fail in this obedience, we lose our sense of the falseness of our position, because the moral sentiment is weakened. At best there is uneasiness, but no liberty. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Unfaithfulness to the simple and primary testimony of God's word never sets us at liberty, whatever may be the reasons which apparently justify our putting it aside.

In spite of this testimony, Jeroboam perseveres in his sin. The only one of his sons in whom any piety is seen dies; and the judgment of God is pronounced upon his house.

Judah having walked in all sorts of iniquity also, during the reign of Rehoboam, Jerusalem is taken, and all the riches which Solomon had amassed became the prey of the Egyptians. Abijam, his son, follows no

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better course. There was constant war between the two kingdoms—the sad story, so often renewed, of man placed in the enjoyment of God's blessing, and the effect of his fall. In what a condition do we see the kingdom of God's people, and the house of David itself, recently so glorious!

Asa, pious himself and faithful to Jehovah, pressed by the power of Baasha, king of Israel, who had dethroned the house of Jeroboam, seeks that help from the Syrians which he did not know how to find in God. The family of Baasha falls, as that of Jeroboam had done, and the chief captains contend together for the throne, which remains at last in the hands of Ahab's father. Ahab added to the sin of his predecessors the worship of Baal, the god of his idolatrous wife; and, in the enormity of his transgressions against Jehovah, he went beyond all the kings of Israel that were before him.

But in the midst of all this moral ruin, the word of God reaches those who violate it; and Joshua's prophetic judgment upon whosoever should rebuild Jericho is fulfilled in the family of Hiel, the Bethelite. Not only are the ways and government of God manifested in full vigour, however great His patience with a rebellious people, but the energy of the king's iniquity, in the presence of God's long-suffering, gives occasion for a testimony remarkable in proportion to the evil which made it necessary.

The reign of Ahab was the occasion of the testimony of the prophet Elijah. Israel, at that time, was hastening to its doom. But, whatever their iniquity may be, God does not smite a people who have forsaken His

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ways, until He has sent them a testimony. He may chastise them previously, but will not definitively execute His judgment upon them.

The character of the testimony deserves particular attention here.

In Judah the prophets, who bore testimony in the midst of an order of things which God Himself had established, performed no miracles. They dwell upon the people's sin, and put them in mind of the law of Jehovah, His ordinances, and the obedience due to Him. They proclaim the advent of the Messiah, and the future blessing of Israel; but, the system in the midst of which they give this testimony being still owned of God, they perform no miracles.

Elijah and Elisha, on the contrary (witnesses for God in the midst of a people that according to grace God still recognized as His own, but who had openly forsaken God and worshipped golden calves), perform striking miracles in proof of their divine mission.

They maintain the power and the rights of Jehovah in the midst of a people who disavow His title; while the prophets of Judah, standing amid those who publicly profess to own Jehovah's authority, insist upon the consequences of this position. God sent indeed to Israel by the mouth of His prophets—such as Hosea and Amos—threatenings similar to those addressed to Judah; but it does not appear that miracles were wrought in Judah by the prophets who bore witness there.

Elisha's miracles, of which we shall speak farther on, have a different character from those of Elijah. The latter have a character which none but the miracles of

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Moses share with them. They are judicial miracles with respect to the people among whom the prophet dwelt. Accordingly God preserved His servant in a miraculous manner. I only speak now of what Elijah did in testimony in the very midst of the people.

Elijah's miracles are few in number, and of striking character. He shuts up the heavens* over a rebellious and apostate people, so that there should be no rain. He brings down fire from heaven upon the captains sent by the king to take him prisoner. At length he proves that Jehovah is God, and (in spite of all that had happened) the God of all the tribes of Israel, according to immutable rights which depend upon His coun-

* Let us remark here that this book gives us, as a solemn and positive declaration of the prophet's, that which we know from James's testimony to have been an answer to the prayer of a man like ourselves. This is the history of all true spiritual energy. It appears to man as a simple action, accompanied with more or less demonstration on God's part, and as a proof of the authority and spiritual power of the man who performs it; and so it is. But at the same time, in fact, all these things flow from the energy of divine life, and from communion with God; they are its expression and its fruit, but in power exercised on God's part. Compare Christ's words at the tomb of Lazarus.

It is profitable to examine such cases when presented to us in the word.

There are others also which have two aspects. Historically the mission of the spies was according to the will of God; it was nevertheless, as to its origin, the fruit of the people's unbelief, an unbelief which soon manifested its effects. Paul's journey to Jerusalem, related in Acts xv., is apparently the same which he mentions in Galatians ii.; but we find in the latter elements and motives which are not spoken of at all in the Acts.

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sels, and upon what He is in Himself. When the people confess this, by executing judgment themselves upon the priests of Baal, Jehovah grants His blessing anew, and the heavens give rain.* The import of these signs is evident.

Moses was in a different position. The people of God were in captivity, not in rebellion, and the judgment falls on their oppressors. It is neither the heaven become brass closed over the people, nor heaven the source of judgment which falls from thence. The earth, given to the children of men, and possessed by those who will not acknowledge that Jehovah is its God, or that He has any rights over its inhabitants, is smitten with all kinds of plagues. The earth, the water, the fruits of the earth, the cattle, the air, and, finally, man himself in his firstborn, all is smitten by the rod of God, according to the powerful word of God's witness. The Egyptians, enjoying the providential bounties of the gracious Creator, have not judgment inflicted upon them until they have refused to let go the people of God and to recognize His rights, who claims them for His own. After having refused to hear, they are first of all smitten in the enjoyment of the earthly blessings which they hold from Him, and afterwards the people themselves are smitten in the persons of their firstborn.

We may remark here, that the power of the two

* Elijah had said "but at my word," yet the rain is given when God is glorified; for Elijah was, as a witness, the witness of the government of Jehovah, of Jehovah the God of Israel, despised by Israel. Hence the truth and reality of Jehovah's authority and the principles of His government were both displayed.

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witnesses in the Apocalypse manifests itself in these two kinds of signs. They shut heaven that it rain not, they bring down fire from heaven: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. That is Elijah. They smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. That is Moses. Their testimony also will no doubt be given in the midst of a people who bear the double character of a rebellious people, and of a people in captivity, oppressed by the world who will not hear the God of the earth whose rights their testimony proclaims.

If, in the case of Elijah, God shut heaven over His rebellious people, He takes care of the remnant according to grace, overstepping even in this grace the limits of the covenant of law. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah the prophet, but unto none of them was he sent, save unto a widow of Sarepta in Sidon, a widow who hearkened to the voice of God's testimony, and by faith acted on that testimony in a case that required self-denial; and her life is preserved. This grace—a hard thing to the heart of Jews—which is a revelation of His heart, whom they knew not, reveals itself in power equal to the need; and the dead is restored to life. The poor widow receives her son by a power which is that of resurrection, and her faith is fully established in the word of God.*

* This reference to the sovereign rights and exercise of power of God in grace, out of the limits of Israel, is frequent and full of interest; and here, as followed by the renewed blessing of Israel, looked at as composed of the whole twelve tribes, is very striking. It will be remembered that Jehovah refers to it in the

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Afterwards God blesses Israel again, when they are brought back to the confession of His name by a striking manifestation of His power which confounds the priests of Baal. These are all slain by the people, now convinced of the folly of idolatry and made the instruments of God's judgment. It is here that—looked upon as the general expression of the mind of God—Elijah's mission closes, although his ministry was prolonged for some time.

Until now the prophet had stood before Jehovah (chap. xvii. 1; xviii. 15) and had spoken in His name; but now, terrified by the threats of Jezebel, he flees from the dangers of the place into which his testimony had brought him.

Just as we have seen in Moses at Meribah, Elijah's faith* does not rise to the height of Jehovah's grace and

Gospel of Luke, which is the witness of this great principle, and causes thereby the anger of the Jews. Pride sinks the lowest and worst when it clothes itself with a religious form.

* We see here how far the energy of the outward life of faith may continue to exist, while the inward life grows weak. It was at the moment of the most striking testimony to the presence of God in the midst of the rebellious people, and when Elijah had just caused all the prophets of Baal amongst them to be slain by the people's own hands, that his faith entirely fails at a mere threat from Jezebel. His life was not inwardly sustained by this faith in proportion to the outward testimony. His testimony excites the enemy in a way for which his personal faith was not prepared. This is a solemn lesson. The still small voice (which, unknown to him, was still heard among the people) had not perhaps its due influence upon his own heart, where the fire and manifestations had held too much place. Thus he did not know himself the grace which was still in exercise towards the people;

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patience, who is full of goodness and mercy to His people. It is this failure which put an end to Elijah's testimony, as it had shut Moses out of Canaan; for who can equal Jehovah in goodness? Elijah does not look to God; he thinks of himself, and takes flight; but God has His eye upon him. He who had not God's strength amid the evil had no refuge but the wilderness. There was a heart true to God, but not faith equal to meet Satan's hostile power in the place of testimony to the end. He must either be a witness for God amongst His rebellious people, or be entirely apart from them.

The heart of Elijah and the hand of God led the prophet into the wilderness, where, overwhelmed perhaps yet precious in Jehovah's sight, he will be alone with God. Elijah's forty days' journey in the wilderness has only a partial resemblance to the forty days which Moses spent with God, in the same Horeb to which the prophet was going, or to those which Jesus spent in the wilderness for conflict with the enemy of God and man. In the two latter cases nature was set aside. Neither Moses nor the Lord ate or drank. As for Elijah, the goodness of God sustains the weakness of tried nature, makes manifest that He considers it with all tenderness

he could not love them for the sake of the seven thousand faithful ones as God loved them, nor hope as charity hopes. Alas! what are we, even when so near God! And his complaint when he came to God, for a person so blessed, has a sad deal of self in it. I have been zealous, he says, and they have cast down thine altars and killed thy prophets; just when he had cast down Baal's and killed all his prophets; and then, I am left alone. It is a humbling testimony.

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and thoughtfulness, and gives the strength needed for such a journey. This should have touched him, and made him feel what he ought to be in the midst of the people, since he had to do with such a God. His heart was far from such a state. Impossible, when we think of ourselves, to be witnesses to others of what God is! Our poor hearts are too far from such a position.

Elijah goes on till he reaches Horeb. But coming before God to speak well of himself and ill of Israel is a very different thing from forgetting self through the power of the Lord's presence, and setting Him before the people in His power which is patient in mercy in spite of all their evil.* People sometimes come before God because they have forgotten Him in the place where they ought to have stood and borne testimony for Him. And thus God asks Elijah, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Terrible question! like those addressed to Adam, to Cain, and now to the world with respect to Jesus. The answer does but betray (as is always the case) the sad and fatal position of one who has forgotten God. The voice was not a voice of thunder, but one that made Elijah feel it was the voice which he had forgotten. Wind, fire, earthquake, these heralds to man of the power of God, would have suited the angry heart of Elijah as instruments of divine power against Israel; but these manifestations of His power were not God Himself. The still small voice reveals His presence to Elijah. That which would have satisfied his will, and that which would perhaps

* It was different too from Moses who, with God, interceded for the people, setting himself aside.

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have been just towards others, did not awaken his own conscience. But the still small voice by which God reveals Himself penetrates Elijah's heart, and he hides his face before the presence of Jehovah. Nevertheless the pride of his embittered heart is not yet subdued. He repeats his complaints, unsuitable as they were at the time when he had himself just destroyed all the prophets of Baal, and proving that his faith had not been able to find, by the light of his testimony, all that God saw of good in Israel.

God's answer, although just, is sorrowful to the heart. Vengeance shall be executed, and Elijah is commissioned to prepare its instruments—a sad mission for the prophet, if he loved the people. As to Elijah, he should be succeeded by Elisha in his prophetic office. But if the deserved vengeance was to be executed in his time, and if the saddened prophet was to announce it, God has still seven thousand souls who had not bowed the knee to Baal, although Elijah had not been able to discover them. (Oh! when will the heart of man, even in thought, rise to the height of God's grace and patience? If Elijah had leant more upon God, he would have known some of these seven thousand. He would at any rate have known Him who knew them, and who raised up his testimony to strengthen and comfort them.)

But the time was not ripe for the fulfilment of God's purposes; and God will not give up the patience of His grace towards His people to satisfy the prophet's impatience. Elisha is anointed; but, Ahab having humbled himself when God threatened him on account of his iniquity, the judgments are withheld even during the

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life-time of Ahab and of his son. This displays another feature in God's government, namely, that judgment upon the evil-doer may not only have been pronounced in the counsels of God, but may be already marked out in His dealings, and be even ready to be executed a long time before it is really poured out. The prophet, or the spiritual man, will know or will understand in spirit that it is so, and will have to wait for the moment that suits this perfect patience, which itself waits upon the slowness of our hearts and the filling up of the iniquity of the wicked, or at least for their refusal to repent.

According to the outward history of Israel, that which follows the revelations made to Elijah in Horeb looks like a time of restoration and blessing; and outwardly it was so. Benhadad is overcome and Israel delivered from his power; but Ahab has no knowledge at all of the mind of God, and he lets the man whom God had condemned escape. There are cases in which lenity only proves that the honour of God and His thoughts have no influence over the heart. It was not for Ahab to be on brotherly terms with a king whose constant aim was the oppression of God's people. It was putting himself on a level with a Gentile king, forgetting the position both of Israel and of Israel's king, with respect to God. In such a case as this, severity of conduct is the suitable accompaniment of the sense of God's perfect grace towards His people. He who, from love to God's people, desired in Mount Horeb to be blotted out of the book of Jehovah, is also he who said, in the presence of evil, "Consecrate yourselves to-day unto Jehovah, every man upon his brother, his companion, and his neigh-

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bour;" but the weakness which despisal of God produces in one who holds the place of God's servant assumes the character of kindness towards men.

At Jezebel's instigation, Ahab adds sin to sin, and a piece of flagrant injustice fills up the apostasy of the king of Israel. He enjoys the fruit of a crime which he had not courage to commit himself. His enjoyment was short-lived. Sent by God to meet the king, Elijah goes before him into the vineyard, which Ahab went down to possess. The king's heart bows before the word of Jehovah, and the fulfilment of the judgment is put off until the days of his son: a new proof of the long-suffering of a God ever ready to accept and respond to any movement of man's heart towards Himself.

The reign of Ahab, looked at historically, was in general prosperous and glorious. Moab was tributary, Syria subject and quiet. The king had an ivory palace, and built fresh cities: a new motive to own Jehovah, a snare to one who worshipped Baal. God did not regard all this prosperity. In a moral point of view, this reign stamps its character upon the kingdom of Israel. It is apostasy and iniquity, but at the same time the testimony of a faithful and patient God.

The last chapter presents another element of this history, namely, the guilty alliances which were formed between the royal families of Israel and Judah. Both of them prosperous at this period, they seek the establishment and increase of their power by peace and mutual alliances. On Jehoshaphat's side it was nothing but unfaithfulness and forgetfulness of God. And, if God did not forsake him, Jehoshaphat saw the com-

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mencement of chastisements, the results of which were deeply disastrous to his house.

We see also the false prophets in power: Ahab had four hundred of them. We may remark also, that they made use of Jehovah's name, and no longer, as it appears, of Baal's.* Nor was Elijah, as we see, the only prophet of Jehovah. The intermixture continues. Outwardly the state of things is less offensive; but the heart of Ahab is unchanged. At the request of Jehoshaphat, who is uneasy in this false position, Ahab sends for the prophet of Jehovah; but he does not hearken to him and has to meet the consequences.

We learn also here in what manner a lying spirit deceives and leads the wicked to ruin, fulfilling the purposes and judgments of Jehovah.

During all this time Elisha constantly accompanies Elijah; and, led to this intimacy by grace, he is morally imbued with his spirit before he is clothed with it in power. He seems identified with him.

Before passing on to the Second Book of Kings, I will add some general remarks, which apply equally to the two books.

That which is here in question is the *government* of God. Now the principles of this government are laid open to us in the revelation made to Moses, when he went up the second time to Mount Sinai. (Ex. xxxiii.) There was, first of all, goodness and mercy; then the declaration that the guilty shall not be held innocent; and, thirdly, a principle of public government, which

* Nevertheless the worship of Baal had not ceased.

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caused the effects of misconduct to be felt, namely, that their children should bear its consequences (a principle which could not be applied where the soul is in question), but this principle, important and salutary in the outward government of the world, is verified daily in that of providence. This government of God was in exercise in the case of the kings; but the condition of Israel depended on the conduct of the kings.

We have already seen that the fall of the priesthood and the demand for a king had placed the people in this position—a position which will be one of blessing when Christ shall be their king; but, meantime, God had set up prophecy, a more intimate and real connection between the counsels of God and His people. The existence of a king placed the people under the effect of their governor's responsibility.

The prophet was there on the part of God Himself in testimony and in grace. He recalled to the people the duties attached to this responsibility; but he was himself a proof of those counsels which assured them of future blessing, and of the interest which God took in their enjoying it both then and at all times. He supplied the key also to God's dealings, which were difficult to be understood without this.

We, Christians, have both these things. God will have us act by faith upon our own responsibility; but close communion with Him reveals to us the cause of many things, as also the perfection of His ways. Thus, in His public government, God could well bless Israel after the events related in chapter xviii. They strengthened the faith of His own people. Chapter xix. shews

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us the secret judgment of God upon the real state of things; and it was speedily manifested. Ahab knows not how to profit by the blessing; he spares Benhadad; and the affair of Naboth shews that Jezebel's influence is as strong as ever.

But to what a degree are the patience and mercy of God manifested in all this according to Exodus xxxiii.! Ahab, rebuked by Elijah, humbles himself, and the evil comes to pass neither in the days of Ahab, nor in those of Ahaziah, but in the days of Jehoram, who was also his son, and that according to the principle already laid down.. Personally Jehoram was less wicked than his father and his brother. He did not worship Baal. Israel, however, who had been led into the worship of this idol, still bow down to it.

Observe the difference between the judgment of God and the appearance of things. The judgment of God was pronounced against the king and against Israel (chap. xix.); yet prosperity and peace generally marked this reign, as we have seen. Syria is subdued, Moab tributary, and Judah in unaccustomed prosperity leagues itself with Israel. The king of Judah was as Ahab, his people as Ahab's people, and his horses as Ahab's. It was even proposed to send to Ophir for gold, as in the days of Solomon. Nevertheless judgment was only suspended, and its suspension was revealed to none but Elijah.

But what was morally the character of this alliance? It is Jehoshaphat who comes to Ahab, and not Ahab to Jehoshaphat. The latter asks, as a favour, that Jehovah may be consulted. After this request the false prophets

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make use of Jehovah's name to announce the success of the enterprise. This was natural enough; for the Syrians having been overcome, and having failed in performing the conditions of peace laid upon them, Ahab was going to assert his rights with the help of the king of Judah.

In short Jehovah's name is in the mouth of the false prophets. Micaiah (for the king of Judah was uneasy) —Micaiah, being come, announces misfortune. But Ahab's mind was made up; and the king of Judah was bound by his engagement. It was no longer time to consult Jehovah: to inquire after the truth, in such a position as this, was but to learn a judgment which they had resolved to contemn. Ahab was more consistent than Jehoshaphat. The conscience of the latter only made every one uncomfortable, and proved his own folly. To please Jehoshaphat by speaking to him of Jehovah was no more than decency required; but it was all that Ahab did for Jehoshaphat, except that he unwillingly sent for Micaiah. Jehoshaphat helped Ahab against Syria; he helped Jehoram against Moab; but neither Ahab nor his son helped Jehoshaphat in any one thing, except to be unfaithful to Jehovah. Ahaziah was willing indeed to go with him, but it was in order to obtain gold from Ophir. It would rather appear that this alliance was the cause of that between Moab, Ammon, and Seir against Jehoshaphat. Happily it was no question then of succouring Israel.

Such is the history of the alliances of believers, not only with unbelievers, but with the unfaithful. The latter are very willing that we should go with them;

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but to walk in the ways of truth is another thing. This is not the question with them; if they so walked, they would cease to be unfaithful. A true union would necessarily have made Jerusalem the centre and capital of the land: for Jehovah and His temple were there. The alliance took it for granted that Jehoshaphat had given up all such idea, since it shewed that he recognized Ahab in his position. There is no equality in an alliance between truth and error; since, by this very alliance, truth ceases to be truth, and error does not thereby become truth. The only thing lost is the authority and obligation of the truth.

I have anticipated some of the events related in the Second Book of Kings, in which we find the greater part of Jehoshaphat's history. Let us now proceed to examine the contents of this Second Book.

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II KINGS.

If God has shewn that He took notice of His servant's fault, and did not pass it lightly over, He did not fail towards him in either tenderness or faithfulness. He acted towards him as towards a beloved and faithful servant, even at the moment in which He made him sensible of his failure in the energy of faith; for He did not make others aware of it, although He has communicated it to us for our instruction.

I said failure in the energy of faith; for, with respect to the mass of the people, Elijah's judgment was just. God reveals His thoughts and His intentions to him, and even points out to him the agents He will employ; and, while definitely replacing the prophet by Elisha, God nevertheless makes him publicly re-enter His service, by commanding him to call Elisha to accompany him in his work. Thus Elijah resumes his ministry in the midst of Israel.

Now Ahaziah walked in the way of his father, and openly confessed Baal to be his god by sending to consult Baal-zebub at Ekron. Sent to meet the king's messengers, Elijah pronounces his sentence from the Lord. Incensed at being opposed in his iniquity, Ahaziah sends men of his army to take him.

We find again here the same judicial character in Elijah's miracles which was spoken of before—a character pointed out by Jehovah Himself. He calls down

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fire from heaven to consume these men. The last of those sent by the king, owning the authority and power of Elijah, has his life spared. Elijah goes down with him to the king to declare again to him in person Jehovah's judgment which awaited him.

And now we reach the end of the troubles and afflictions of this precious and faithful servant of God. And, if we do not find in his case the calmness of the ascension of Jesus, who, while blessing His disciples, ascends to His eternal and familiar home; if this peculiar characteristic became His departure alone, who—perfect in Himself and in His human life, in which nothing had been found out of harmony with the heaven He was re-entering—went back to His Father, from whom He came; if in Elijah's rapture we find not the elevation of One who, having come forth from the Father and come into the world, again left the world and returned to His Father, without having for one moment departed from this word—"The Son of man which is in heaven," and who had so much the more right and title to be there, that He had perfectly glorified the Father here below; if, in a word, he who goes up is not the God-man ascending after having finished the work committed to Him, at least the presence of God is felt throughout the whole scene in the most solemn manner—a God whose presence alone can abrogate the laws of His government, and set aside, in His servant's behalf, that which is appointed unto men.

Moreover it is not surprising that such an event should have been accompanied with the mysterious solemnity which in fact surrounds it, and that those who

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were present should feel that something was about to happen which was beyond the common track of human joy and sorrow.

Elijah, taken away by the power of God, quits the earth without passing through death. We find in the fact itself a marvellous testimony to the sovereign goodness of God, and to the approbation He bestowed upon His faithful servant.

The details are worthy of all attention.

If the prophet's translation to heaven is the great object presented to faith, we find also that he goes to every place that had a voice with respect to God's relationship to Israel. Elijah maintained, in spite of the king, the relationship between God and Israel, according to God's faithfulness, and as a prophet upon the earth.* He did not maintain it by the king, which, since David, was the normal state of the people. This earthly relationship was impossible, and was to close by an act of judgment. It is this which took

* This consideration makes Elijah's position pretty evident. We have seen that prophecy was the means of maintaining God's relationship with Israel, in a sovereign manner, when the ark had been taken and the priesthood was fallen. Prophecy still holds this place in the presence of royalty in a state of failure, which, instead of maintaining the people in relationship with God, causes them to depart from Him. While presenting their true King to the people according to Zechariah's prophecy, Christ filled also this prophetic office according to the word of Moses, only in a manner quite peculiar. It must be remembered that, in comparing Elijah and Elisha with the Lord, Christ is looked at in this character. This gives a very important position to the function of prophecy. (Compare Hosea xii. 13.)

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place, with respect even to Judah, in the rejection of Christ.

Nevertheless the counsels of God change not; they will be fulfilled in heavenly power.

Elisha is, so to say, the link between these two things as to prophecy. He does not return to Horeb, to announce the uselessness of an earthly ministry, and, in some sort, to place the broken law again in His hands who gave it, but who was really acting in grace.* The starting-point of his ministry is the ascended man, evidently quite a new starting-point in God's messages to Israel. Up to this point he constantly attached himself to Elijah. The latter had thrown his prophetic mantle over him (1 Kings xix.); Elisha thenceforth was as if identified with him.

At the present moment, when Elijah is under the extraordinary power which is to snatch him away from Elisha, will the faith of Elisha maintain this position? Yes; the power of God upholds him, and he accompanies Elijah until the chariots of God Himself separate them, and in such a way that he may see Elijah ascending to heaven upon them. Through grace the whole heart of Elisha was in the prophet's ministry, and by faith he walked in the height of God's thoughts in this respect.

Let us trace their path upon the earth. It is no

* It is this grace, which Elijah had not properly understood, that was the only means by which God could maintain His relationship with the people; so that a return to Horeb could only put an end to the relation itself as standing on Sinai ground, and especially to the ministry of Elijah which took no higher position. Nevertheless God wrought for the revelation of all this.

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longer the weakness of man, as when he went to Horeb, but the power of God; and Elijah traverses all that in type had to do with God's relationship with Israel, even death itself (and that dry-shod), up to heaven. Gilgal* is his starting-point—the consecration of man to God by death applied to the flesh—the place where Israel was cleansed from all remembrance of Egypt, where the people were set apart for God, where their camp was fixed for their victories under Joshua; in a word, it was the place where, by circumcision,† Israel was definitively separated unto God. Elijah repairs thither, and acknowledges it thus according to God, although it was now only a place of sin to the people.‡ He attains the mind of God with respect to the people, as separated from evil and consecrated to God. He sets out with this. He thinks with God: this is faith.

* Reflection will shew us that all this is a moral history of the life of Christ, save that Christ is what He makes us to be. But this is everywhere true. Still it was experimentally realized in Him. He had not to be circumcised: still it was the circumcision of Christ. See following note. So the high priest was washed as well as the priests. Though absolutely obedient in nature and will, He learned obedience.

† This, as we have seen in the Book of Joshua, was in Canaan after the passage of Jordan, as the circumcision of Christ (that is, His separation from evil which, always true in His person, was externally made good in His death) has a true heavenly character, and to us is by being risen, and in heavenly places.

‡ See Amos iv. 4, Hosea ix. 15, and many other passages in the prophets. This is a very striking fact, just as the cross now is a matter of constant idolatry. The memorial of good, of the denial and death of flesh too, is to flesh the power of evil. Oh, what is man!

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Elisha will not leave him; and they go away to Bethel; that is to say, that Elijah places himself in the testimony of God's unchangeable faithfulness to His people.* He acknowledges it; he takes his place in it; and Elisha is with him.

These were the two main branches of faith—of the faith of God's people: the setting apart of the people, of man, unto God; and the unchangeable and perpetual faithfulness of God to His people, whatever their circumstances may be.

Israel (what a triumph to Satan!) had set their false gods, their golden calf, in Bethel. Elijah (and this is faith) links himself with the mind of God there in spite of this. These two things compose the life of Jesus on earth in the midst of Israel.

Elijah cannot stay there. What will he find in going farther? The scene changes: he is still with God. But if transgression is multiplied at Gilgal, and if false gods are worshipped at Bethel, as "the king's chapel and the king's court," the curse will meet him (for Israel has placed itself under it). He goes to Jericho. It was there that formerly the power of the enemy barred the whole land against Israel, and God had smitten Jericho and pronounced a curse against it. Man had rebuilt it to his own destruction. (1 Kings xvi. 34.) Pleasant as its situation was, the curse of God still rested on it. Elijah goes thither, and Elisha accompanies him and refuses to leave him.

* See Genesis xxviii. 13—15. Here too one of the calves was set up. The place of special blessing again made the place of idolatry.

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But he does not remain there either; he is still under the mighty hand of God, Elisha following him. The sons of the prophets give their testimony to that which shall take place (but they only look on from afar, when the two prophets draw nigh to Jordan); Elisha knows it too, and puts an end to a discourse which, adding nothing to his knowledge of the mind of God, and disturbing the concentration of his thoughts, tended rather to weaken the union of his soul with Elijah.

Elijah comes at length to Jordan, the type of death, which should carry him out of the land of earthly promise, and break the links of God Himself with Israel on that footing. He crossed it indeed dry-shod. We know that he ascended without having tasted death, but typically he passed through it. (It is not a question here of expiation, but of passing through death.) And now, beyond the borders of Israel, the land of law, forsaken of God, he can freely propose blessing to Elisha according to his desire.

As Jesus said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." In every detail death is the path of liberty.

Elisha, attached by the power of God to the prophet—to the same ministry which Elijah had just left, asks for a double portion of his spirit; and, although now separated from him, yet united by faith to Elijah, gone up on high (a union testified by his having seen him in his heavenly condition), his request is granted. He again receives Elijah's mantle; but it is that of the ascended Elijah.

As we have said, the starting-point of his ministry is

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not Sinai. It is heaven beyond the borders of Canaan, the other side of Jordan, which is the type of death. For, the law having been broken, and prophecy—which set before the people their relation to God on earth, and His blessing on that earth—having been proved powerless for restoration, the faithful prophet, forsaking a land which had rejected him, had taken his place outside of a blind and ungrateful people, and had been taken up to Him who had sent him (hidden, so to speak, in God; although that expression, in its fulness, is true of the precious Saviour alone).

Up to Jordan Elijah demanded, by his ministry, that the righteous claims of God upon His people should be satisfied. He sets these claims before them. He must withdraw, and God takes him away from a people who did not know *Him*.

At Sinai he acted in human weakness, although God had revealed Himself. Why retire to Horeb, where the law dwelt which the people had broken? This could be only to demand the execution of justice. While manifesting that He could in His own time exercise justice, God reserved to Himself His sovereign rights of grace. But in effect it is fitting that it should be exercised in a sovereign manner beyond the limits of man's responsibility. The relationship of Christ with Israel, with man, clearly explains this. Therefore God first shews that grace has reserved the perfect number who were known of God in Israel; then, having sent Elijah to fill up the long-suffering of the will of God in grace towards the people, instead of cutting Israel off, He places ministry in a position with respect to Israel, in which He can

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act sovereignly in grace towards every one who has faith to avail himself of it.

After Elijah had passed the Jordan, we have seen that all was changed. Until then Elisha is on probation; after that grace acts. In principle it is the position of Christ towards the assembly* or at least towards men in grace; that is to say, it is sovereign grace, to the actings of which death has given free course, justice having nothing more to say, and no longer resting on the responsibility of man who had undertaken to obey, and from whom obedience was due. Justice now consists in God's having His rights, in His glorifying Himself, as is just, by being consistent with His entire being, love, justice, sovereignty, majesty, truth, and every attribute which forms a part of His perfection. He does so according to His sovereignty; and He does it by the Christ who has glorified Him on the earth in all these respects, in every part of His being, so indeed as to make Him known. The testimony of it is that He has exalted Christ as man to His right hand.

It must be remembered here that the *application* of this regards Israel, so that the rejection of the people is considered to have taken place by the very fact of Elijah's rapture. God has ceased to maintain His relationship with them. In His sovereign counsels God never withdraws His love from Israel; but, on the ground of the people's responsibility, God has judged them. He has stretched out His hands all the day to a rebellious and gainsaying people. Therefore Elisha says

* And of course towards Israel also.

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to the king of Israel, "Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee."

Elisha nevertheless returns to Israel in grace. His ministry has then this distinctive character, that it is a testimony to the rejection of all that belonged to the condition of responsibility in which the people had been placed; but at the same time it is a testimony to grace by faith, according to election and the sovereignty of God, in order to maintain the people in blessing; and that, through the righteous execution of the judgment which their sin had brought upon them.

This is what the return of Christ will be for Israel, rather than what it will be for the assembly, notwithstanding that fundamentally the principle is the same.

Elisha, in the power of resurrection, re-enters the scene of Elijah's labours, who had sought in vain—as He also had done who was more excellent than Elijah—to gather Israel unto the God of their fathers (that is to say, to bring back man in the flesh to some faithfulness towards God). Jericho (pleasant in itself yet, as we have seen, an accursed place) ceases to be so; the curse is removed, and the spring of waters permanently healed, by means of salt brought in a new cruse: a type, I doubt not, of the purifying power of grace which separates man from evil, and which removes evil, as contrary to the relationship of man with God; a moral power, which will take away the curse from the world, and especially from the Jews, who are the centre of rebellion against God. Salt represents purifying power in the efficacy and the

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permanency that distinguish the work of God which heals the object of blessing; and it characterizes, according to the faithfulness of God, the source of blessing itself. The new vessel is an image of the renewed condition of all things through resurrection.

From Jericho Elisha goes up to Bethel, which, as we have seen, is a place commemorative of the unchangeable faithfulness of God* towards Israel; a faithfulness which can now bring forth all its fruits through death and resurrection.

From Bethel he proceeds to Carmel,† that is to God's fruitful field, the place where judgment had been executed upon Baal, the prince of this world; a place typical of that condition of Israel which will be the fruit of the fulfilment of God's faithful promises. It will be seen that all this answers perfectly to the character of his ministry, as we have considered it, and answers to it in so much the more interesting a manner from being in contrast with Elijah's ministry; the path of each corresponding with the ministry which we have respectively ascribed to them.

From Carmel Elisha returns to Samaria, in connection with which his ordinary ministry is fulfilled.

* This is the reason why Paul (Acts xiii. 5) quotes these words, "I will give you the sure mercies of David," in proof of the resurrection of Christ, "no more to return to corruption." Death rendered blessing possible with respect to a rebellious people, and resurrection gave complete stability to the conferred blessing; this was secured. Compare Isaiah lv. where grace towards Israel and the nations, through a risen Saviour, is gloriously proclaimed.

† Compare Isaiah xxxii. 15—18.

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There remains another circumstance to be noticed in this history. Elisha curses the children who mock him. This action not only shews us the prophet's authority upheld by God; it characterizes his position. For although sovereign grace, in spite of Israel's fall, is in exercise towards the people, yet, together with grace, judgment shall be manifested with respect to those who despise the messenger of God. It will be well to remark that the judgment happens when he re-enters the land of Israel, before he takes his place in the unchangeable promises of God to His people. Thenceforth it is the Carmel of God which is presented to our faith.

We may observe also, in this chapter, how little man realizes and believes what he knows, if in spirit he is not identified with it. The sons of the prophets knew that Elijah was to be taken away. Nevertheless they propose to search for him.

In the following chapter we enter into the historical part of Elisha's ministry. Jehoram goes to war; and, although less wicked than his father, the prophet no longer regards him. Jehoshaphat is still something to him: but the prophet seeks to abstract himself from the influence of the whole scene. He then proclaims blessing, and directs the counsels of the united kings. He is a saviour of Israel. He provides (chap. iv.) for the need of the poor of his people, and delivers them from their distress. He bestows the heart's desire upon faith, which recognizes and receives the prophet; and restores life to the dead, thus binding up the broken heart. He feeds the sons of the prophets during the famine, and multiplies the scant measure of bread. Death having

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been mingled with the food, he remedies the evil so that they eat with impunity.

Elisha goes also beyond the borders of Israel in dispensing the blessing of which he is the instrument; and, when the king of Israel is troubled at Naaman's coming, Elisha heals the leprosy of this Gentile, who is brought to acknowledge Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the only true God. The Lord Jesus points out the sovereign grace of God on this occasion, which, overstepping the narrow limits of Israel, and, owning no longer their rights, acts towards the Gentiles in the way of election.

As it has been frequently remarked, the means used were simple, and humbling to the flesh and to the pride of man, having their efficacy in full apprehension of and full submission of heart and faith to death, which is become life unto man, and that which heals him and cleanses him from sin. The man who was the most closely connected with Elisha, a prey to covetousness, suffers the painful consequences of a hardened heart; and that from which the Gentile had been freed comes irremediably upon him. Such is the position of Israel, outwardly nearer to Jehovah, but morally afar from Him.

The sons of the prophets must enlarge their dwelling-place, and Elisha, who consents to go with them, secures them from the results of their negligence by reversing the laws of nature.

I know not if we should seek here for anything beyond the general character of the miracle, or find a type in the fact that Jordan is in question. So far as Jordan has a typical meaning, that meaning is abiding. It means

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death. The house built with that which was taken thence, and the power of the stream overcome and destroyed by the piece of wood cast into it, by means of which that which was beyond hope and lost was rescued from it, easily suggest a typical meaning. I dare not say positively that it is the mind of the Spirit; and we must not give way to imagination.

Elisha preserves Israel after this from the attacks of their powerful enemies. The king of Syria seeking to take Elisha prisoner, it is Elisha, on the contrary, who captures the whole host that came to seize him, thus teaching his blind servant, who had eyes and saw not, the unfailing care with which the Almighty constantly surrounds His own people.

After having taught the enemy the power of Israel's God, and the folly of attacking His people when the messenger of His covenant is with them, Elisha lets the Syrians go; and these men come no more into the land of Israel.

All these miracles sufficiently characterize Elisha's ministry. The poor comforted, the Gentiles healed, Israel delivered and protected, the election blessed, Israel and their unfaithful king set aside as regards the prophet's testimony—all this we find in it. These miracles are more numerous than Elijah's. The burden which weighed upon Elijah's heart had no place in Elisha's; and therefore he sought relief neither in judgment upon the evil, nor in withdrawing from a useless labour.

The iniquity of Israel plunges the nation again into distress; and Samaria is desolated by famine. The

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judgment produces indignation against Jehovah's testimony; for, although Jehoram did not worship Baal, his heart was unchanged. Then comes the despair which considers it useless to wait any longer upon Jehovah.* This is the result of professing Jehovah's name, when there is no faith in Him. It was so with Israel in the wilderness: "Wherefore hath Jehovah brought us up hither to destroy all this people?"

Elisha appears here again as saviour, or, at least, as proclaiming Jehovah's salvation. The unbelief of the king's attendant, who considered this deliverance impossible, is punished at the moment when he sees the abundance. When all is impossible to man, Jehovah interposes; and in a moment the whole scene is changed.

The history of the woman,† whose son Elisha had raised to life again, gives us a little picture of all God's dealings with Israel. During long years, as determined by Jehovah, Israel is deprived of everything; but God has preserved all for them, and in the day of blessing all will be restored to them; and they shall receive

* It may be doubted whether what is said in verse 33 be not the words of Elisha.

† It seems to me that Gehazi stands here in a grievous position. Smitten by the hand of God, because his heart clung to earth, even in the presence of Jehovah's mighty and long-suffering testimony, he is now a parasite in the king's court, relating the wonderful things in which he no longer took part. This poor world grows weary enough of itself to lead it to take some pleasure in hearing anything spoken of that has reality and power. Provided that it does not reach the conscience, they will listen to it for their amusement, taking credit to themselves perhaps for an

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double the fruit of their years of affliction. It is the son restored to life that brings blessing.

Nevertheless the judgments of God are being accomplished. Elisha goes to Damascus, and Hazael, the rod of Jehovah to chastise His people, is placed on the throne of Syria. On the other hand Elisha is acknowledged by the Gentiles themselves.

The Spirit of God takes notice of the consequences of Judah's alliance with Israel; but with this exception, Judah for the time is out of sight.

In chapter ix. the judgment on Ahab's house commences. He who executes it does not remove, in so doing, the rod which God had lifted up against Israel in the person of Hazael. By means of Jehu God judges the house of Ahab; but Israel was oppressed by the Syrians, and their land overrun by them during the whole of Jehu's reign. Going farther than Jehoram, Jehu destroyed Baal and his worship at the same time as the house of Ahab; but he did not return unto Jehovah. He saw the folly of idolatry: energetic and ambitious, his interest lay on the other side. When the prophet of the Lord announces to him the near possession of the throne, he hearkens unto him. Sincere perhaps in the conviction that Jehovah was God, he

enlarged and a liberal mind, which is not enslaved by that which they can yet recognize philosophically in its place. But that is a sad position, which makes it evident that formerly we were connected with a testimony, whilst now we only relate its marvels at court. Nevertheless God makes use of it; and it does not follow that there was no truth in Gehazi. But to rise in the world, and entertain the world with the mighty works of God, is to fall very deeply.

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was quite ready to honour Him when his interest agreed with his convictions. He displayed all his energies in accomplishing a work to which he had devoted himself. Ahab's religion had no charm for him. He had felt in his conscience the power of Elijah's testimony; and he understood that it was madness to fight against Jehovah, whose part he had taken. What he did for Jehovah, he did well according to his wonted energy. Nevertheless his vengeance is without the fear of Jehovah; it is carnal. (See Hosea i. 4.) At the same time, the golden calves still existed, as the sanctuary of the kingdom, with whose origin they were connected, and of which they were the national religion. This Jehu did not care to touch. God recognizes a zeal which had judged evil uprightly; for the question here was His outward government, and not His judgment of the secrets of the heart; and in fact Jehu acted faithfully in destroying Baal root and branch. Thus he slays the king of Judah, who was confederate with the evil, and the royal family of Judah, who had come to visit that of Israel. Everything falls before his avenging sword, and the words of Elijah, the servant of Jehovah, are fulfilled. Thus it is Elisha who performs the function of Elijah* in his stead, prophetically anointing Hazael and Jehu, although not with his own hands.

* In this respect Elijah and Elisha form but one prophet, with the difference that has been pointed out. Elisha was a "prophet *in his room*," an expression not used with regard to prophets in general. In fact it is Christ risen who will execute, or cause to be executed, the judgments of God upon apostate Israel. (See Psalms xx., xxi.)

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In chapter xi. the judgment of God falls upon the family* which had corrupted Israel, and even Judah also. The daughter of the house of Ahab, the usurper of the throne of Judah, Athaliah, is cut off through the faithfulness of the high priest, whose wife had preserved one of the offspring of David.

Nevertheless there is not true zeal for Jehovah. The priests keep the money to themselves, which they had agreed to use for repairing the house of the Lord, until the king interposes to set things in order.

Walking in the steps of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the house of Jehu was no protection to Israel against Hazael. But the compassion of Jehovah raised up a deliverer. To His pitiful heart there was yet space for long-suffering towards His people. Elisha, at the point of death, puts the king in the way of deliverance; but his heart was unable to embrace it in its full extent. Still, in the reign of Jehoash, the Syrians were driven back into their own land; and Jeroboam, although walking in the evil ways of the son of Nebat, was able to recover all the original possessions of Judah; for God had pity on Israel, and had seen that their affliction was very bitter.

Alas! when it is not the faith of God's people that is

* During the time that Ahab, stirred up by Jezebel, as well as his family and sons, are the instruments of Israel's apostasy and corruption, God sends the testimony of Elijah and Elisha. This is, in the main (after Solomon), the subject of the two Books of Kings. The fall of the house of David, brought on by its alliance with Israel, or by the example of their kings, is related in the end of the book, where we find also the connections of the Assyrians with the people of God.

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the source of their strength, one enemy destroyed only makes room for another. The Assyrian soon appears on the scene. Elisha being dead, Israel—deprived of this last link with God—soon fall into anarchy and ruin. The Assyrian invades the land. Israel, leagued with the king of Syria, turn their last efforts against Judah. A sorrowful picture of the people of God! The alliance between Syria and Israel brings out the king of Judah's unfaithfulness, and entangles him in the snares of the Assyrian.

Elisha, already dead, restores life to a corpse which was being hastily buried on account of an invasion of the Moabites. His history, unto the end, is stamped with the character of the power of life.*

This resurrection, wrought by contact with the bones of Elisha, appears to me to give the comforting instruction, that, while apparently lost to Israel, the true prophet is still the vessel and guardian of all their hopes; and that when Israel is, as it were, dead and forgotten, He will, after all, restore them to life in a manner as unexpected as powerful.

We come now to the connection of Judah with the

* To understand all this part of the history which we are considering, the prophets Hosea and Amos must be read, and Isaiah vii. and viii. (comp. Hosea v. 13; viii. 4; xi. 5; Amos vii. 27; and also 25, 26; Hosea xiii. 10, 11); but, to understand well God's dealings, the whole of these prophecies should be read. I have only quoted the passages which mark the connection with the history; but the internal condition of the people is much more seen in the prophets than even in the books which instruct us as to their public history.

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Assyrian, fruit of the inward demoralization of the former.

Ahaz plunged into the worst idolatry. Full of worldly wisdom, he seeks in the new power of Assyria a support against enemies nearer home, and he succeeds to his ruin. We see again here the nullity of the high priest in presence of the king. It appears that the people had lost their confidence in the house of David, as had the latter in the faithfulness and goodness of the Lord.

Hoshea, although less wicked than his predecessors, concludes the list of kings, whom the patience of God had borne with in Israel. God thought of His people; and now there was no more hope of them. They were not even a vessel fit to contain the election of God, to whom He made Himself known. Brought under subjection to the king of Assyria, Hoshea had sought help from Egypt. After the king of Assyria had put him in prison, Samaria and all Israel could not long resist. The people of God are carried into captivity, and dispersed among the cities of Assyria and Media; and the land which belonged to Jehovah, and which had been given in possession to Israel, is peopled by strangers, sent thither by the king of Assyria.

In the prophecies of Hosea the two great principles of God's dealings may be seen, one of which has been set before us in Elisha (the connection between the resurrection of the man about to be buried, and the first verse I shall quote, is remarkable), namely, redemption from the power of death (Hosea xiii. 14); and the governmental dealings of God. (Hosea xiv. 9.) But how the prophet labours to adapt his voice to the foolishness

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of Israel, and to make it reach the conscience of this erring people! He comes after Elisha's death. Elisha's presence among them, and the subsequent testimony of Hosea, bring out the marvellous patience and kindness of God towards them. Hosea gives us more than the internal history; he unfolds the causes of the judgments, although God may have sometimes interposed for restoration, and may have appeared to smite when the king was less wicked than ordinary.

In the language of the prophets we find what the people really were in the sight of God. The promise of their restoration, and in principle even that of our present blessing, is found there also.

The history of that which happened after foreign nations were brought in shews the strange confusion which had taken place in Israel. It is one of the former priests of Jeroboam's system who comes to instruct them in the fear of Jehovah. Together with this they worship their own gods. A medley, hateful to the Lord, is the consequence. In the same way that, in spite of their unfaithfulness, Jehovah retained His sovereign rights over the people, we find Him also vindicating His claim to the land after the people were driven out. He maintains these rights for ever.

Chapter xviii. brings us to a rather different subject, namely, the relations of Judah with the Assyrian, who had become their oppressor through their unfaithfulness; and also their relationship with Babylon.

In order to set His dealings with His people in their true light, God raises up a faithful king, distinguished by this, that he puts his trust in Jehovah as no king

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had done since David until this period, and as none did after him until the captivity.*

That which happened with respect to the brazen serpent shews us the tendency of the heart to idolatry. And how many things, to which man continues attached in a carnal way, remain hidden in the midst of so many blessings and chastenings! This teaches us also how near—with such hearts as ours—is the remembrance of blessing to idolatry of the symbols of blessing. Faith gets rid of these things; for God had given the brazen serpent, not to be a token of the remembrance after the cure, but in order to cure. Man preserved it by a very natural feeling; but this is not of God, and it soon became the instrument of Satan.

Hezekiah smites the Philistines, those inward and perpetual enemies of God's people, and in a great measure subdues them.

It is after this that the king of Assyria comes up.

The king of Assyria had carried Israel away captive. His successor seeks to conquer Judah likewise. According to the prophet's expression, the waters of this river reached even to the neck. The power of the allied kings of Israel and Syria appears to have had some attraction for the people of Judah, who, on the other hand, despised the weakness of the house of David; for God was little in their thoughts. In this confederacy, favoured apparently by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, they proposed to set aside the house of David in favour of the son of Tabeal. There was an apparently well con-

* We shall see, farther on, that which characterized Josiah.

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ceived plan on the one side, and an imminent danger on the other. But these were not God's thoughts. In His mercy He would not yet put out the lamp of David's house. He sends the promise of Emmanuel, and exhorts the remnant to put their trust in Jehovah Himself.

We shall examine this more in detail when we consider the prophecy of Isaiah. I only refer to it now, in order to elucidate the history and exhibit the condition of the people. Ahaz, who did not trust in Jehovah, was the instrument of fulfilling His purposes; but the Assyrian, in whose power he trusted, became through him the scourge of Judah.

But, in order still to bless and preserve Jerusalem and Judah, God raises up Hezekiah, a godly and faithful king, who put his trust in Jehovah. Hezekiah is unable to repulse Sennacherib; so that the people are punished. He submits to Sennacherib, offering to pay whatever he demands; but whether the king's resources were insufficient, or that the king of Assyria, after having accepted the present which Hezekiah sent him, broke his engagement (compare Isaiah xxxii.), Sennacherib, taking advantage of the king's apparent weakness, requires complete submission, both from the king and the kingdom, and invites the inhabitants of Jerusalem to come out of the city and place themselves under his command.

We see however, that even while blaspheming Jehovah, Sennacherib is conscious that he is in the presence of a principle and a power that he does not understand. The people, obedient to the king's commandment, make him no answer. Drawn elsewhere by tidings of the king of Ethiopia's attack, Sennacherib repeats in a

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letter his blasphemies and insults. Hezekiah lays all these things before Jehovah, and seeks his answer through the prophet Isaiah. The same night God smote the army of the Assyrians. Sennacherib returns to his own country, and dies there by the hand of his own sons.

Hezekiah is thus a type of the true Emmanuel, of Him before whom the Assyrian, the desolater of Israel, will fall. This is a very important history, as foreshadowing the events of the last days; but it will be studied more advantageously when examining the Book of Isaiah, which frequently applies it in this manner. It is but the general idea that needs to be touched upon here.

We find here again in a figure the principle with which Israel's deliverance, and that of all men, is connected—a principle pointed out in Elisha, and accomplished in Jesus. Hezekiah is raised as from the dead. He had been sick unto death; but Jehovah heard his prayer, and, on his humiliation, revokes the sentence which He had pronounced through Isaiah.

But man can scarcely bear exaltation. Blessed of Jehovah, he boasts himself of that which he has received. After having displayed all his riches, to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, who were sent to congratulate him on his recovery, he is warned that it shall all be carried away even to Babylon. The king of Babylon felt, perhaps, some satisfaction in allying himself with one who had not yielded to the power of the king of Assyria; but the world's wisdom, which cultivates profitable connections with the people of God, is always a

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snare to them. Hezekiah might have made known the source and giver of all this; but he acted as a man. Nevertheless he submits graciously and humbly to the word of Jehovah, which was spoken to him on this occasion.

But, at this period, the people had deeply corrupted themselves, and the impulse which God had given disappeared entirely with the man in whom it acted. The son of Hezekiah was a model of wickedness. God was about to transfer power to the Gentiles; and, even while making it manifest that certain blessing attended faithfulness and trust in Himself, He allowed the house of David to give themselves up to debasement.

When Hezekiah died at the age of fifty-four, his son was but twelve years old. Beguiled himself, Manasseh seduced the people, who were but too willing to commit greater iniquity than the nations who knew not God.

The particular events of Manasseh's life are not related here. The Holy Ghost, having given us the details, in that which precedes, of God's public government in Israel, until He had said, "Lo-ruhamah," then shews us God's dealings with Judah, governed by the conduct of their kings, until God has said, "Lo-ammi." This had been already announced on account of Manasseh's heinous sins; and Josiah's piety could not change the just judgment of God. There was yet for Judah some prolongation of tranquillity; but their repentance under Josiah was but outward,* and evil

* See Jeremiah iii. 10. This passage teaches us how seldom the heart, which is what God judges, corresponds with the semblance of zeal for Him and for His glory, which appears on the

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regained the mastery immediately after his death. Amon did but follow the evil ways of his father Manasseh.

Observe what grace raised up Hezekiah and Josiah, both of whom were born of fathers given up to idolatry, and followed by sons who were equally abandoned to it. But the sovereign grace of God towards Israel again raised up this testimony, and manifested that He was always ready to bless, even if Israel refused to be blessed, and chose their own ruin instead. Without God, what is the heart of man? In all this the patience of God's government was fully demonstrated; for, under Hezekiah, many things still existed which escaped the king's eye and judgment through lack of watchfulness in the fear of the Lord.

That which distinguished Josiah was his carefulness to observe the law of Moses, the book of which had been discovered in the temple; trust in Jehovah had characterized Hezekiah; and in these respective characteristics they are both unequalled as to their walk.

The kingdom of Assyria was declining, and Josiah exercises his royal power through the whole extent of the country. The threat addressed to Jeroboam of old is fulfilled. All the high places of Israel are destroyed. Perhaps the heart of Josiah was lifted up. Be that as it may, God performed His promise, and took him away from the evil, the dreadful accomplishment of which was hastening onwards; for, whatever might be the sincerity of Josiah's piety, all hearts were corrupted. Compare

surface, when, moved by the Spirit of God, a man of faith presents himself to promote His glory. See also under Hezekiah's reign the condition of the people and God's judgment—Isaiah xxii.

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with this (2 Chron. xxx. 17, &c.) the account of that which happened long before his reign.

The kings of Israel had been the fatal examples of a course which had led Judah and all Israel to their ruin. (See chap. xvi. 1.) The pious Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab was the origin of all this, for evil bears fruit which continues long to reproduce itself. Alas! alas! what is man when he turns aside from Jehovah's ways, from the narrow and straight path of God's word and will, from the path of faith—the true path of an obedient spirit?

The history which we have been going over has given us an account of the Assyrian's connection with the people of God. He was a cedar of Lebanon; but he is cut down. Pharaoh thought, for a moment, of making the empire his own; he sought to exalt himself that he might rule over the trees of the forest. Judah, brought out in former days with a high hand by the power of God from Pharaoh's country, is subject to him. But, whatever Pharaoh's pretensions may be, this is not the purpose of God. If God writes "Lo-Ammi" on His people, it is Babylon which is to begin the times of the Gentiles.* Pharaoh returns into his own country, and Jehoiakim, powerless and without God, comes under the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar.† We need not go into

* As a figure, this is an important principle; for Egypt is the state of nature, out of which the assembly is brought, Babylon is the corruption and worldliness into which she falls.

† How sorrowful is this part of the history, in which the only question is, whether Egypt or Babylon is to possess the land of God's people, the land of promise! It being no longer a doubtful

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the details. His son, as wicked as himself, rebels against Nebuchadnezzar; for Judah, the son of the Most High, was little used to bondage; but this heifer also must bend its neck to the yoke (Hosea x. 11), and Jehoiachin is carried captive to Babylon. The kingdom and the temple still exist; but Zedekiah, having broken the oath which he had made in the name of Jehovah,* and, allowing himself to be governed by the princes, persists in his rebellion and is taken prisoner. His sons having been slain before his eyes, and himself deprived of sight, he is carried away to Babylon. The temple is burnt; the walls of Jerusalem are broken down; the seat of Jehovah's throne is trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Sorrowful result of His having entrusted His glory to men among whom He had placed His throne! Sorrowful, thrice sorrowful, conduct of man—of that generation whom God had so honoured! On the other hand God will take occasion from it to

point whether Israel shall continue to possess it, it must become a prey to one or the other of these hostile and unbelieving powers.

Alas! Israel was unbelieving with more light than the others, who did but take advantage of the position and the strength which the unbelief of Israel gave them and acknowledged in them.

* This filled up the measure of sin. We shall draw the reader's attention to this when considering the prophecy of Ezekiel, who dwells upon it. By making use of an oath in Jehovah's name in the hope of preventing revolt, Nebuchadnezzar shewed more respect for that name than Zedekiah did, who despised such an oath. God permitted this final evidence of iniquity. Zedekiah might have remained a spreading vine of low stature. One who was above all alone knew how to render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.

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manifest that infinite goodness, which, in sovereign grace, will re-establish the very thing that man has cast under foot to the profane.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel must be read to have the complete history, and the internal history of the spirit of the people, and that of the king—the history at once of the condition which drew down the judgment, and of the patience of God, who, even until the very taking of the city, continued to send them most affecting calls to repentance, alas! in vain; and the times of the Gentiles began.

The reader who would thoroughly understand the events of all this history, the marvellous patience of God, and the way in which He raised up faithful kings, in order that He might bless, should read the prophets Hosea, Amos, Jeremiah, and certain chapters of Isaiah, which speak to the people in the name of Jehovah and tell them of their true condition.

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I CHRONICLES.

THE Books of Kings have given us the general and public history of God's government in Israel; and, from Rehoboam to Hezekiah, the history of the kings of *Israel*—a history in which the result of the fall of the kingly power is manifested in presence of God's long-suffering. That which is said in these books respecting Judah only extends to the connection of Judah with the house of Israel during this period.

The Books of Chronicles give us the history of the same period under another aspect (that is, that of blessing and of the grace of God); and, more particularly, they give us the history of the house of David with respect to which this grace was manifested. We shall see this verified in a multitude of instances.

These Books, written or drawn up after the captivity (see 1 Chron. vi. 15), preserve God's history of His people, recorded by the Holy Ghost, as He loved to remember it, exhibiting only such faults as require to be known in order to understand the instructions of His grace.

He records at the same time the names of those who had gone through the trials mentioned in this history without being blotted out of the book. Here indeed it is but the outward figure of this blessed memorial of the people of His grace; but in fact this is what we find here. All Israel is not there; but all are not Israel who

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are of Israel. At the same time the Spirit of God goes farther back, and gives us the genealogy from Adam of the generation blessed by grace according to the sovereignty of God, with that which belonged to it outwardly or after the flesh. He puts into relief, sufficiently to make it apparent, the part owned in grace, which stood externally in relationship with that which was merely outward and natural, putting always that which is natural first, as the apostle tells us.

Thus, beginning with Adam, we have the family of Seth down to Noah. Then come the families of Japheth and of Ham, one of whose descendants began to be mighty on the earth; and finally that of Shem, whose God was Jehovah, and whose line is followed down to Abraham. Abraham, called out from among men, becomes, as it were, a fresh stock. His posterity after the flesh is first given us; then Isaac, the child of promise, a fresh stock, whose children after the flesh are exhibited, with their kings and their chiefs, before the child of election.

At length, in the second chapter, we find Israel, all of whose sons were more or less under the care of God who had loved Jacob.

Judah is then introduced to lead us to the royal race of David, the object also of the promises according to the election of God.

Besides this, we find a picture of the prosperity of Judah's family in general, and that of Caleb's family in particular, who was faithful to God in his generation. God has preserved the memorial of it in this place.*

* It is well to remark here, that in all these genealogies, when a family has been established in a place, the name of the place is

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Thus also the way in which the land was peopled and its internal history are vividly presented to the reader.

The genealogy of David's family is next given us, as far as several generations after the return from the captivity; and then that of the tribes in succession; but in relationship with their position in Israel, and with the addition of certain notices of possessions acquired either by families or by an entire tribe. Dan and Zebulun are wanting; Judah is found. (Chap. iv. 1.) Simeon (chap. iv. 24) had had his lot within the territory of Judah, but he had enlarged his domain; and some of this tribe, having gone beyond the borders of the land, had escaped the captivity. Reuben (chap. v. 1), Gad (chap. v. 11), and the half tribe of Manasseh (chap. v. 23), had remained eastward of Jordan. These tribes together had also much extended their territory, and had enriched themselves at the expense of their enemies.

In the genealogies of Levi (chap. vi.) we see, first of all, the line of high priests until the captivity; and then the Levites, their services and their cities. After Levi come Issachar (chap. vii. 1), Benjamin (chap. vii. 6), Naphtali (chap. vii. 13), few in number; the other half tribe of Manasseh (chap. vii. 14), Ephraim (chap. vii. 20), and Asher (chap. vii. 30.) Then we find Benjamin again (chap. viii.), first of all with reference to Jerusalem, and afterwards in connection with the family of Saul.

often used for that of the family; that the descendants, through several generations, are named together as children of the head of the race (compare chap. iv. 1 with the commencement of chap. ii.); and that, without having been named before, the eminent man of a family is taken to begin a genealogy anew. (Chap. viii. 29, 33.)

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But that which has been preserved here of the genealogies of the people—an affecting remnant (through grace) of those who had fallen under the sorrowful condemnation of "Lo-ruhamah" and "Lo-ammi"—reveals to us another circumstance, namely, that, wherever there has been faith, God has blessed His people individually. Jabez (chap. iv. 9, 10), the son of affliction, seeking blessing in the presence of the God of Israel, failed not to find it. Jehovah enlarged his borders, and so kept him from evil that grieved him not. Simeon, although dispersed in Israel, was able to drive out the enemy and possess their land, even unto mount Seir. The two tribes and a half beyond Jordan enlarged their territories also, and possessed the gates of their enemies, "because they cried unto God." Afterwards they were carried away captives, because they forsook God. Thus, although there was neither the power of the king nor the order of the kingdom, yet, wherever there was faith, God blessed those of His people who trusted in Him.

These genealogies were imperfect. The condition of Israel bore the impress of the ruin which had befallen them; but also that of the goodness of God who had brought back a remnant, and who had preserved all that was needful to place those who formed it in the record of His people. If the needful proof to give them a title to this were wanting, such as were of the people ceased to enjoy their proper privileges, and the priests their sacerdotal position, until a priest stood up with Urim and with Thummim. For these genealogies served as a means to recognize the people. Happy he who had

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preserved his own, and who had so appreciated the heritage of Jehovah as to attach value to it! It was a proof of faith; for, it might have been said, Of what use are these genealogies in Babylon?

As to the Levites—for it is good to serve the Lord—their genealogies, their cities, and their services were known with sufficient certainty, even with respect to those that dwelt at Jerusalem. The mercy of God has not forgotten either to preserve a lamp in the house of Saul; for in judgment God remembers mercy. Chapter ix. teaches us the use which they made of their genealogies; for those mentioned in it are persons who had returned from the captivity, as may be seen in Nehemiah xi. This portion of the book closes at chapter ix. 34. Verse 35 begins the narrative.

A brief recital of the ruin of Saul's house introduces Jehovah's establishment of the house of David. All that took place before the people gathered themselves to David at Hebron, and before the kingdom was established in his house over all Israel at Jerusalem, is passed over in silence.

After this we find, as a general subject, the order of the kingly power, and of the kingdom as established in the house of David—the kingdom, looked at as ordained of God in blessing, rather than the historical account of all that took place;—excepting so far as was necessary to furnish this picture. There is not perfection here; but there is the order which God appointed. The faults and the sufferings of David, whether before or after he was made king, are consequently passed over in silence.

After having mentioned the king himself, anointed by

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Samuel according to the word of Jehovah to rule over all Israel, the history begins with that which constituted the strength and glory of David's kingdom. The high priest no longer occupies the foreground. Jehovah's anointed is essentially a man of war, although it is not always to be so. Joab and the mighty men who had been David's companions in arms come immediately after the king.

The first place next to the king is his who delivered Zion out of the enemy's hands;* and this spot, chosen of Jehovah, becomes the city of David and the seat of royal power. We are then told how David's companions in arms successively joined him, though yet for a long time rejected and pursued by Saul, mean as yet in appearance, a fugitive and without power to resist.

The first who are pointed out as having come to him—a proof that God and the knowledge of His will had

* David having built the city from Millo round about, Joab repaired the rest of the city. We may observe that Shammah the Harorite is not mentioned here. Perhaps it is Shammah in chapter xi. 27: but this is doubtful. (See 2 Samuel xxiii. 25.) It may also be observed that the exploits of these mighty men consisted especially of victories over the Philistines, the enemies by whom Saul, who had been raised up for the purpose of destroying them, was overcome. Whatever may have been their subsequent achievements, it was there they learnt to conquer, and that they acquired the reputation which procured them a place in the archives of God.

It is well that the reader should remember the connection between this whole history, and the establishment of the power of Christ, the Son of David, on the earth.

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more value in their eyes than parentage and the advantages which flow from thence—are from among the brethren of Saul (that is, of the tribe of Benjamin), and men of the greatest skill in handling the bow and the sling, the weapons with which Saul was slain in the battle in which he was overthrown.

There were some who came from beyond Jordan to David, while he was still concealed in the wilderness; for faith and the manifestation of God's power tend to bring into play the energy and strength of those who connect themselves with it. He with whom God is attracts those with whom God is working; and their energy developes itself in proportion to the manifestation of His presence and favour. Many of these had been with Saul, but when with him they were not mighty men; many also had never been with him. Yet even in Saul's camp David had been able to slay the Philistines when all Israel was in terror. After that, similar achievements became almost common. At the beginning such things required immediate communion with God, so as to shut out the influence of all that surrounded the man who enjoyed this communion. Afterwards the surrounding influence was favourable, and, in this sense, faith propagates itself. These were not the chief of the mighty men whom David had. When God acts in power, He gives strength to the weak, and produces, by the energy of faith and of His Spirit, an army of heroes.

In those who came from Benjamin and Judah we see that there was this link of faith. (Chap. xii. 16.) They knew that David's God helped him. David committed himself to God with respect to those who joined him,

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for he was in a very difficult position towards the end of his career of trial and affliction. Those to whom God had given energy and strength came to him in great numbers; for everything was ripe for his elevation to the throne of Israel, and for the transfer of Saul's kingdom to him.

There were various characteristics in this army of God: all famous for their valour, some among them had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, and, in this case, all their brethren were at David's command; others were armed for battle; others had all instruments for war, and were not of a double heart. And these things were according to the gift of God, and they all came with one heart to make David king; their brethren had prepared everything in abundance, for there was joy in Israel. It is always thus when Christ is really magnified by upright hearts who only seek His glory.

David immediately thinks of the ark. (See Psalm cxxxii.) He consults with the captains of the thousands of Israel in order to bring it back amongst them. Loving the people, and beloved by them, he acts with and for them; but his zeal was still too much connected with his warlike spirit; and, while giving himself up to joy, he did not sufficiently consider Jehovah's ways. He imitates no doubt the means by which God had glorified Himself, when the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. These were quite right in having nothing to do with it, and in leaving God to act, and to testify of Himself, that He was the God of all creation, exercising a power that overrules nature in His crea-

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tures. This was faith in the Philistines; but it was not faith in Uzza to touch the ark. Amongst God's people it is His word that must direct. God may act in sovereignty outside of all this; but here the word rules. Perez-Uzza is a witness that it cannot be neglected with impunity, and that the order of His house in the midst of His people is a thing which He will cause them to reverence. It was through having failed in this reverence that David's joy was turned into sorrow and fear; but the house of Obed-edom was nevertheless a proof that the presence of God assuredly brings blessing.

The history of the royalty continues. David establishes himself at Jerusalem, and Jehovah confirms the kingdom in his hands, and it is lifted up on high because of His people. Having enquired of God and exactly followed His directions, David twice gains a complete victory over the Philistines. Being thus blessed of Jehovah, his fame goes out into all lands.

He makes himself houses in Jerusalem, and prepares a place for the ark of God, pitching a tent for it.

Warned by the calamity* which his neglect had brought upon Uzza, the first time he undertook to bring

* It is to be observed, that, although this had its origin in the guilty forgetfulness of David, it nevertheless gave occasion through grace to his being set in his true position for the regulation and appointment of all that concerned the Levites' service. It is always thus with regard to faith, for the purposes of God are fulfilled in favour of it. Man in his zeal may depart from the will of God, and God will chasten him, but only to bring him into more honour, by setting him more completely in the position which God has purposed, and in the understanding of His ways, according to which He will magnify His servant.

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back the ark, David now gathers, not only all Israel together, but also the Levites and the children of Aaron. This gives occasion to the setting forth of the whole order of Levitical service as it had been appointed by David, and of the relation between the priesthood and royalty; that is, that the former is subordinated to the latter, the king being Jehovah's anointed, although the service of the sanctuary belonged to the priesthood.

As the head, David orders everything and appoints psalmody for the service of God. Then by the help of God, the ark is brought from the house of Obed-edom into the tent prepared for it in Zion, with offerings to God who helped the Levites by His power, and with joy and songs of triumph. David himself, clothed with a robe of fine linen and an ephod, dances and plays before the ark of Jehovah who was going up to His place in Zion. This action—unintelligible to the unbelieving Michal, to whom the king's behaviour was therefore unintelligible also—was of very great importance. It identified kingly power in Zion (that is to say, the kingly power of Christ, as deliverer in grace) with the token of Jehovah's covenant with Israel—a token established there in grace, when Israel had already failed entirely under the law, and even after their rejection of God as their king.

The Aaronic priesthood was not able to maintain the people's relationship with their God, and consequently the outward order had completely failed. The altar at which the priests were to sacrifice was elsewhere (at Gibeon), and not before the tent which contained the ark. And the ark, which was the sign of the covenant

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and of the throne of Jehovah, was at a distance from the altar at which the priests ministered.

The covenant of Jehovah is connected with the *kingly power*, and that in Zion—the place which He had chosen for His rest. David himself assumes somewhat of the Melchisedec character, but only in testimony and by anticipation. (Chap. xvi. 1—3.) In these verses the priests do not appear.

In order to apprehend more clearly the import of the removal of the ark to Zion, it will be well to consider Psalm lxxviii. 60—72 and Psalm cxxxii., and to compare verse 8 of the latter with what Moses said during Israel's journey in the wilderness. (Numb. x. 35, 36.) It is interesting to see that each petition in the earlier part of Psalm cxxxii. is exceeded by its fulfilment at the close.

The circumstance of the ark not being taken to the tabernacle at Gibeon was also of deep significance. It was completely judging the whole system connected with this tabernacle. The tabernacle was still in being, as well as the altar, and the priests offered sacrifices there; but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah had been taken away from it. The king disposed of the latter by his authority, placing it elsewhere. Ever since the ruin of Shiloh this judgment had continued as a chastisement executed by the enemy; but, now that God interposes by means of David and acts in power, this power places the visible sign of His covenant with His people elsewhere. The kingly power is established at Jerusalem, and the sign of God's covenant is taken away from the tabernacle of the congregation to be placed on Mount Zion, the seat of the kingly power.

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When the people were to journey, Moses said,* "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee." This was when the ark went before them to search out a resting-place for them. When it rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah, unto the ten thousand thousands of Israel." But, when God had up to a certain point given rest to Israel, they knew not how to enjoy it. They took the ark out of its place to carry it into the camp of Israel, when defeated on account of their unfaithfulness by their enemies; but this was not now the place for the ark. Neither the one nor the other of Moses's expressions was suitable to this transfer of the ark to the midst of the camp. The ark was taken, and, as we have seen elsewhere, Ichabod was pronounced upon the people.† But the faithfulness of God is abiding; and, now that He has interposed in grace and power, and that the throne is established as the vessel of this power and grace, another word is given: "Arise, O Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength." (Psalm cxxxii. 8.) Israel, the camp, and the priesthood were no longer the rest of God.

Let us now consider the import of this establishment of the ark and of the throne in Zion, as set before us in the psalm which David wrote on this occasion.

* Thus in the wilderness, it was Israel journeying, who were seeking their rest, who were to find enemies on their way, and whose faith recognized these enemies as the enemies of Jehovah; or Israel carefully surrounding the token of the presence of their God, when He gave a temporary rest unto His people.

† Expressed in these words, He has "delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand." (Psalm lxxviii.)

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It is true that, so far as it was entrusted to man,* the kingly power failed; but it is not, therefore, the less true that it has been placed in the house of David, according to the counsels, the gift, and the calling of God, and that all the promises connected with it—the sure mercies of David—will be fulfilled in Christ.

In that which we read here (chap. xvi.) the throne is considered in the light of God's thoughts, and of the blessing which, according to those thoughts, is linked with it. David, having offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and having blessed the people, deals to every one, both to man and woman, a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine; for God will "abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread." Then David gives the Levites a psalm to sing praises unto Jehovah.

This psalm is composed of a part of Psalm cv., of Psalm xcvi. with some alterations, of the beginning of Psalms cvi., cvii., cxviii., and cxxxvi., which is an important form of words; and of Psalm cvi. 47, 48.

The following are its subjects in the order which the psalm follows. First, Psalm cv. in which the deeds of Jehovah are celebrated, as well as His marvellous works, and the judgments of His mouth. Israel, as His people and the assembly of His chosen ones, are commanded to remember these things, for He is Jehovah their God, and His judgments are in all the earth. Israel is called to remember, not Moses and the

* Compare Psalm cxxxii. 11, 12, the two principles already pointed out in the thoughts on the Books of Kings.

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conditional promises given to the people through him, but the covenant made with Abraham unconditionally —an everlasting covenant to give the land to his seed. Israel is reminded of the way in which God preserved those heirs of promise, when they went from nation to nation. The remainder of the psalm is omitted; it speaks historically of the ways of God, with respect to the preservation of His people in Egypt, and of their deliverance thence, to be established in Canaan, that they might observe the statutes of Jehovah; and this part of the psalm would have been unsuitable here, where grace is celebrated in the establishment of the people in power after those statutes had been broken. The beginning of the psalm celebrates grace towards Israel according to the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, when the judgments of God are in all the earth. This is the first thing founded upon the presence of the ark, and the establishment of the throne in Zion.

The verses 23—33 are almost the words of Psalm xcvi. It is a call to the heathen to acknowledge Jehovah, whose glory should be declared among all nations. This psalm belongs to a series of psalms, which, from the first cry of the people until the universal joy of the nations, relate in order all that refers to the bringing again the Firstborn into the world. Only in Psalm xcvi. the words, "Say among the heathen that Jehovah reigneth," have a place which gives them a more prophetic character. Here the joy of the heavens and the earth precedes this message to the heathen, and, instead of saying "his courts," it is said "before him." The

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words, "He shall judge the people with righteousness," are also omitted, as well as the second half of the last verse, which applies this judgment to the world. Apart from these alterations, which appear to me to give this psalm more of the character of a present joy, these verses correspond with Psalm xcvi.

The omission of the judgment of the nation in righteousness is remarkable. It is because the subject here is joy, and the grace of deliverance in the establishment of power, with the subsequent government of the earth, and that the nations are called up to Jerusalem to present themselves there before Jehovah. This is the leading thought.

We have then in these two parts the fulfilment, in Israel's joy before Jehovah, of the covenant made with the fathers, following after His mighty works; and the call addressed to the nations to come up to the place of His glory.* We have next this form of words, "His mercy endureth for ever," declaring that in spite of all the faults, all the sins, and all the unfaithfulness of Israel, Jehovah's mercy has stood firm. It will be when

* Psalm c. could not have been used here, because before that Psalm Jehovah had already been celebrated as sitting between the cherubim (xcix. 1); while the act of placing the ark in Zion was only an anticipation. It is Psalm xcvi. therefore which was quoted. It is the presence of Christ on Mount Zion to fulfil the promises in power, before reigning in peace, which explains all these allusions, as well as some psalms, which seem to speak of a return from captivity, and a rebuilding of Jerusalem, while praying at the same time for the accomplishment of this return. In some the celebration of the blessing is in spirit, and the cry for blessing the fact preceding the accomplishment of it.

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the Lamb, the true ark of the covenant and the real David, shall be upon Mount Zion, even before He assumes the character of Solomon, that this will be fully demonstrated. Accordingly, since David, this has been sung. (Compare ver. 41; 2 Chron. v. 13; Ezra iii. 11; Jer. xxxiii. 11.)

Psalm cvi., which concludes the fourth book of Psalms, opens at length the proofs of this precious declaration, while the psalm we are considering, after giving the promises made to Abraham, passes over the whole history (omitting the after part of Psalm cv., which speaks of it, and which places Israel under responsibility in Canaan) to the end, going on with the first verse of Psalm cvi., which declares that the mercy of God has continued in spite of everything.

Psalm cvii. treats the same subject, but in connection with the deliverance and the return of Israel at the end of the age.

Psalm cxviii. brings out this truth in connection with the person of the Messiah, suffering with His people, but at last known and accepted in the day which Jehovah has made.

Finally, in Psalm cxxxvi., the same doxology is sung in connection with the full blessing of Israel and of all creation; beginning with the creation itself, and celebrating the proofs of this mercy throughout all things, until the blessing of the earth, resulting in the redemption of Israel.

Here we may remark, that from Psalm cxxxii., which we have already noticed as celebrating the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion, the psalms are con-

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secutive until Psalm cxxxvi. Only they go beyond our present subject and introduce us into the restored temple, although still speaking of Zion as the place of blessing. (Compare Psalms cxxxiii., cxxxiv., cxxxv., and finally cxxxvi., of which we are speaking, and which, as a chorus, concludes the series.)

Finally we have the two concluding verses of Psalm cvi., the first of which prays that God would gather Israel* from among the heathen, which will be the result of the throne of Jesus being set up in Zion;† and the second of which concludes the psalm (as we find at the close of each book of Psalms) by blessing for ever Jehovah the God of Israel. This song of praise contains then every subject which the presence of Christ in Zion will give occasion to celebrate, when He shall already have appeared to establish there His power in grace, but before the effects of His presence have been felt all around.

At the close of chapter xvi. we see that the king regulates everything that was to be done before the ark, and before the altar which was in the high place at Gibeon (that is to say, for the service of every day before the ark, and for the sacrifices upon the altar); and that he also appointed Levites to praise Jehovah, and to sing that "His mercy endureth for ever."

It is touching to see, that the testimony to this precious faithfulness on God's part is not only found in

* This petition proves the prophetic character of the psalm, and shews that it reaches onward to the latter times of Israel.

† See Matthew xxiv. 31 (although it is there in connection with His coming from heaven), and Psalm cxxvi.

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the place where power had set the ark, but there also where the heart of the people needed it meantime, namely, at the altar, which, although the place where the people drew nigh to God, had become after all a testimony to the fallen condition of the people, a tabernacle without the ark.

Faith, apprehending the counsels and the work of God, could see in the establishment of the ark in Zion (an act, which, according to the old order, was thorough disorder), the progress of God's power and intervention towards the peaceful and glorious reign of the Son of David. The sure mercies of David were as bright to the eye of faith as the dawn of day, in that the ark of the covenant had been set up by David the king in the mountain which God had chosen for His everlasting rest.

But all did not apprehend this intervention and these ways of God, so precious to those who understood them; and the condescending mercy of God stooped at Gibeon to the low estate of the people whom He loved, and He still spoke to them after His own heart there, at the altar where this people could draw near to God in an ignorance perhaps which saw no farther; but where, as far as this ignorance allowed, they were faithful to Him who had brought them out of Egypt: there God spoke to them, telling them that His mercy endured for ever. This was in fact a touching proof of it. David returns to bless his house, always a distinct thing, for David as for Solomon, from the people, and from the glory connected with them.

But although David was to connect kingly power in

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Zion with the ark of the covenant, and thus to secure blessing by the power of the king whom God had chosen, yet the warrior king was not to build the Lord's house. The energy which was victorious over the enemies of God and of His people was not yet the peaceful and glorious power which would bring the people into the enjoyment of all God's blessing, when the enemy should be no more and all should yield implicit obedience to the throne of God upon the earth. Like Abraham, David was to be in his own person the depositary of the promises; but he was not himself to enjoy the result of the promises on the earth.

When the people had been redeemed, their first spiritual desire was to build a habitation in which God should dwell among them (Ex. xv. 2),* and this desire was according to the mind of God. (Ex. xxix. 44–46.)

But if God had accompanied His people in their wanderings; if He had borne with their unfaithfulness, when He had entrusted to them His glory in the earth, which He had promised them; and if the song, "His mercy endureth for ever," echoed around His altar in the midst of the ruin; if, for the deliverance of His people, He had set up a king after His own heart, and placed the ark (rescued from the enemy) upon Mount Zion, the place which He had chosen for His rest; nevertheless it was still true that there *remained* a rest for the people of God. The victory which obtained it was not this rest, neither was the grace which bestowed the victory this

* The translation here is more than doubtful, but Exodus xxix. 46 is quite clear as to the purpose of God.

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rest. When God should give His people full and entire rest, then the house in which He would dwell among them should be built; for God comes into the midst of His people according to their condition and their need.*

But the holy desire to build it for the glory of God becomes the occasion of revealing to David all the counsels of God with respect to himself. Grace had chosen him when in a low estate, and had set him up to rule the people of God, who had Himself been with David wherever he went, who had cut off David's enemies, and who had exalted him. And this was not all. He had ordained a rest for His people, which should no more be disturbed, as it had been aforetime and during all the days of the judges.

Moreover God would subdue all his enemies, and would build him a house. It should no longer be saviours occasionally raised up to deliver a people from the miseries into which their unfaithfulness had plunged them; but the counsels of God on their behalf should be accomplished, and blessing established for evermore in

* When Israel was a slave, God became his Redeemer; when he dwelt in tents, God abode in one also; when in conflict, God presented Himself as captain of Jehovah's host: when settled in peace, God establishes Himself in the house of His glory. The interval was the probation of His people on earth. God abode in the tent, and even His ark is taken. He interposes in grace for deliverance.

Christ also, since we were born of woman, is born of a woman; since His people were under the law, He is born under the law; now that He will have a heavenly people, He is on high for us; when He comes in glory, we shall come with Him, and reign when He reigns, but in these last we are with Him.

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the house and family of the king. The son of David should sit upon his throne; he should be a son unto Jehovah, and Jehovah should be his father, and Jehovah's mercy should not be taken away from him. He should also be settled in the house, and in the kingdom of Jehovah for ever, and his throne should be established for evermore.

It will be remarked here, that all question of the responsibility of David's seed* is left out, and that the whole refers to the fulfilment of God's purposes in Christ, the true Son of David according to the promise. God takes the matter in hand. While His people are still deprived of rest, He is pleased to go with them from tent to tent, and desires not that they should build Him a house. At length He will himself raise up the One who shall build up a house, and under whose reign the people, established in power for ever, shall enjoy the rest which God Himself shall have procured them. David, with overflowing heart, makes answer to Jehovah,† who, for His servant's sake, and according to His own heart, had done all these great things, and had revealed them to make His servant know them. Whilst acknowledging Israel's glorious privilege, in being the people of

* The latter part of verse 14 in 2 Samuel vii. is omitted.

† It is beautiful to see, in this affecting prayer, how David's heart is full of that which God is in this matter. "There is none like thee;" and, if he speaks of the blessing upon His people, Israel is not that which the people are, but "the only nation in the earth whom God went to redeem to himself, that they might be his own people, to make himself a name of greatness and terribleness." "Let thy name be magnified for ever." This is the proper effect of faith.

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such a God—the only true God, he prays that the God of Israel will in fact be a God to Israel, and that He will fulfil all that He had spoken to him concerning his posterity.

In chapters xviii. xix. and xx. David, already delivered from all internal conflict in Israel, triumphs over the heathen, and spreads the glory of Israel and of his reign on every side. These are the events which occasioned Psalm xviii., although it has a more extended meaning. (Compare ver. 36–45.)

It will also be remarked that all David's faults are passed over in silence. Faithfully recounted elsewhere, they have no place here, because it is the fulfilment of the ways and thoughts of God in the house of the elect king that is here depicted.

The children of the giant fall with the Philistines before the children of Israel.

But prosperity exposes David to the temptations of the enemy. Head over Israel, and conqueror of all his enemies, he wishes to know the strength of Israel, which was his glory, forgetting the strength of God, who had given him all this and had multiplied Israel. This sin, always a great one and still more so in David's case, did not fail to bring chastisement from God—a chastisement however, which was the occasion of a fresh development of His grace, and of the accomplishment of His purposes. David, in his heart, knew God although for a moment he had forgotten Him, and He commits himself to Him, choosing rather to fall into the hands of God than to hope anything from man; and the pestilence is sent by God. This, by the grace of God, gives occasion for

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another element of David's glory—for the honour which God gave him of being the instrument to fix the spot, where the altar of God was to be the means of the daily connection between the people and Himself. Jerusalem was beloved of God. This election on His part is now manifested. The spot of ground in question was the threshing-floor of a stranger; the moment was one in which the people were suffering under the consequences of sin. But here all is grace; and God stays the angel's hand when stretched out to smite Jerusalem. Grace anticipates all movement in David's heart;* for it acts and has its source in the heart

* It is interesting to see the order unfolded here in the establishment of the relations of sovereign grace: first of all, the heart of God and His sovereign grace in election, suspending the execution of the deserved and pronounced judgment (ver. 15); next, the revelation of this judgment, a revelation which produces humiliation before God and a full confession of sin before His face. David, and the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth, fall upon their faces, and David presents himself as the guilty one. Then, instruction comes from God, as to that which must be done to cause the pestilence judicially and definitively to cease, namely, the sacrifice in Ornan's threshing-floor. God accepts the sacrifice, sending fire to consume it, and then He commands the angel to sheathe his sword. And sovereign grace, thus carried out in righteousness through sacrifice, becomes the means of Israel's approach to their God, and establishes the place of their access to Him. The tabernacle, a testimony to the conditions under which the people had failed, offered, as we have seen, no resource in such a case. On the contrary it occasioned fear. He was afraid to go to Gibeon. Nothing would do but the definitive intervention of God according to His own grace (the circumstance of the sin, on the king's own part, leaving no room for any other means). The whole system and principle of the tabernacle *as a legal institution*

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of God. Moved by this same grace, David on his part intercedes for the people, taking the sin on himself; and God hears his prayer, and sends His prophet to direct him in offering the atoning victim, which in fact formed the foundation of all subsequent relationship between the people and God. One cannot but feel—defective as the type is,* in comparison with the reality—how much this calls Him to mind who took upon Himself, and even in behalf of this very people, the sin which was not His own.

David having offered the sacrifice according to God's ordinance, God marks His acceptance of it by sending fire from heaven; and at God's command the angel sheathes his sword.

Here all is evidently grace. It is not the kingly power which interposes to deliver Israel from their enemies, and gives them rest. The ark of the covenant being there through the energy of faith, out of its regular place which is now desolate in consequence of the people's sin, it is Israel's own sin† (for all depends

is set aside, and the worship of Israel founded on grace by sacrifice coming in where all, even the king as responsible, had failed. Such was Israel's position for him who understood it.

* And even historically quite opposed; for it is the king's own sin that has brought chastisement on the people. Christ, however, made the sin His own. Nevertheless, this shews us how everything depended now on the throne. It is not the priest who brings in the remedy. David intercedes and David offers. The fact that the king, in whom the promises were, had sinned, made sovereign grace necessary.

† This difference between Israel's deliverance from their enemies, and the sense of their own sin before God, in the last day, is found in the psalms of degrees: see Psalm cxxx.

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upon the king) which is in question. God acts in grace, ordains and accepts the atoning sacrifice (David, in sackcloth with his elders, presenting himself before Him in intercession).

In the place where God has heard his prayer, David offers his sacrifices; and of this place it is said, "This is the house of Jehovah-Elohim, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel." In the presence of the sin, God acts in grace, and institutes, by means of sacrifice, the regular order of the religious relationship between Himself and His people who are accepted in grace, and the place of His own habitation in which they were to draw nigh unto Him.* It was a new order of things. The former presented no resource against the judgment of God: on the contrary, David himself feared to go to the tabernacle; it was all over with it as a means of approach to God. David's sin became the occasion of putting an end to it, by shewing the impossibility of using it in such a case, and by being thus made the occasion of founding everything upon sovereign grace.

From this chapter to verses 28, 29 of chapter xxvi. all refers to the house which is to be built. We see the provision that David made of everything necessary for its construction, the order of the Levites' service who were appointed for song, of those among them who were porters, of the priests in their classes, all being ordered and arranged by David. How entirely all was depen-

* Observe too here how sin gives *occasion* to the bringing out of the *counsels* of God, though the responsibility was also met in what did so. So the cross. Compare Titus i. 2, 3 and 2 Timothy ii. 9, 10, Ephesians iii., Colossians i.

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dent on the king is especially shewn in this that, without any distinctive break, the other royal appointments of his house, his administration, his officers and guard, are then continuously introduced; finally, the chief among the people, the number of whom is mentioned.

As to the numbering of the people, it had not been finished because of the wrath of God. The thing of interest here is, that all is ordered and arranged by David, even for the doors of the house which was not yet built. Thus, in Christ, all is appointed before it is manifested in glory.

We see too that David had it always at heart, and what immense preparations he had made. For whatever the warfare may be, the glory of God in peace among His people is always in the heart which is in unison with the Spirit of Christ, in the heart of Christ Himself.

It is David who places Solomon on the throne, who commands the princes to aid him, and who appoints prophecy in inspired psalms.* He ordains the age at which the Levites' service should commence—a different age from that ordained by Moses.†

It is the whole order of the house of God and of the king, which is appointed under his hand; a new system which is established, founded upon grace as its principle.

Solomon only puts in execution the order and plans of divine wisdom in David. Glory is but the fruit of

* Heman himself, apparently, was inspired also. Several psalms are ascribed to him, as well as to Asaph.

† At any rate the probably probationary period of four years is not mentioned. David ordains the age by his own authority.

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grace. It is the Christ who has suffered, who is the wisdom and the power of God, unto whom all the order of the house belongs. All the rest is glorious, but it is only a result. Only we have already seen that it is in peace, and by Christ, as Prince of peace, that this house must be built. It did not become the habitual manifestation of the glory of God, that there should be enemies to combat; neither was it suitable to the character of His people's joy. The character of such a state of things should be that of blessing flowing without obstacle from God.

It is very important to observe how everything here is ruled by David. It is important, in the first place, morally. The intelligence, the right of ordering all things, the energy which grasps the whole thought of God, the fellowship with Him in His counsels, the germ and moral foundation of all these counsels, as well as the power of maintaining them, are connected with the sufferings which Christ underwent for the glory of His Father. This is true of us also in our measure. It is the humbled suffering Christ, who is morally on a level with all this glory. It is important, in the second place, as to intelligence in the ways of God; for I doubt not that Christ, at the commencement of His reign, will act in the character of David.

We may also remark here, that the extent of authority which David exercised was very great and of wide bearing. The whole religious order was reconstructed. Everything, even to the age of the Levites' service, depends on the authority and regulations of David, as formerly on those of Moses. All the pattern of the

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temple, and of its vessels, is given him by inspiration, as that of the tabernacle and all belonging to it had been given to Moses. He also introduced singing, and divers musical instruments, which are even called "the musical instruments of Jehovah," and which, as well as the singing, had previously formed no part of the public service. With the exception of the ark, even the various vessels were different from those of the tabernacle; and for each thing the precise weight in gold or in silver was determined by David.

God would also associate the people with David in this willing service of the day of His power; and, even as they had been associated with him in his wars and conflicts, there are those who shall be so likewise in the liberality which he manifests towards the house of his God. They are at a great distance from him, it is true: it is, so to say, a superfluous thing. They have nothing to do with the wisdom that arranges and prepares, but they are allowed to share in the work. This favour is granted them, and their goodwill is acceptable to God, as it is also the fruit of His grace.

David here (chap. xxix. 18) again acknowledges God according to the promises made unto the fathers, and according to the memorial of God for ever; "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers;" he seeks that which will be accomplished under the new covenant, and directs the thanksgivings of the whole assembly. Sacrifices of righteousness are offered, and they eat *before Jehovah* with great gladness.

Solomon is made king the second time. (See chap. xxiii. 1.) The first time was when grace, being fully

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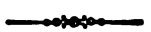
established in the altar built on the threshing-floor of Ornan, where the son of David, as the prince of peace, was to build the temple. Solomon is introduced as the head of all that was being established, and as holding the first and supreme place in the mind of God—the one on whom all the rest depended, which could not even exist now without him. The house, the whole order of the house, and its government, all referred to Solomon; and thus his identification with David, in that both were on the throne at the same time, makes it much easier to understand the type of Christ in this. It is *one* person, whom His sufferings and victories place on the throne of glory and of peace. For at this moment, although the result of the glory was not yet manifested, God had given rest unto His people, that they might dwell at Jerusalem. (Chap. xxiii. 25.)

David now disappears, although it is he who puts Solomon in this position. That which we see, as filling the whole scene of royal glory, is Solomon himself reigning in peace over a willing people, who can offer these sacrifices of righteousness. The son of David is seen in his own true character, and in this character alone, namely, that Jehovah's anointed, the governor of the people; and Zadok, the faithful priest (not Abiathar), walks before the anointed one (all the counsel of God, according to Hannah's song, and the words of the man of God in 1 Samuel ii. being thus fulfilled). "And Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah"—a remarkable expression: everything is subject to him.

The attentive reader cannot fail to observe the prominent place given to the counsels of God respecting

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Christ the Lord, and the contrast there is between this and the history of Adonijah in Kings—a history which, by the contrast it presents with the narrative in Chronicles, so fully proves that the thought and intention of the Spirit of God in this Book was to give us in type the expression of God's purposes with regard to the true Son of David, and the position He is to occupy, and to shew what will be the character in those days of the throne at Jerusalem, when Christ shall be seated upon it. It will be the throne of Jehovah, and the royal majesty in Israel shall be such as has never yet been known. With reference to this the Book of Chronicles is full of instruction.



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II CHRONICLES.

THIS Second Book of Chronicles unfolds the reign of the son of David and of the family of David. It does not commence with the faith of David at the ark, but with the tabernacle that Moses, the servant of Jehovah had set up, and the brazen altar, at which the king and the congregation worshipped. The kingly power is realized in connection with Israel, the people of God whom Moses brought out of Egypt.* It is the means by which the purposes of God with respect to them are accomplished; it is not yet assuredly a new covenant by a new power, but the object of blessing is Israel. If it is Boaz and Ruth who raise up the family, it is to *Naomi* that a son is born, that is, through sovereign grace, by a redeemer "in whom is strength:"† one who had no title (and Israel had no more any) is introduced into the enjoyment of the promises. Israel, long known as the "pleasant one"‡ of God, is the people which receives into its bosom the son that is born. To us, they say, a son is born. (Isaiah ix. 7.) At the altar which was before Jehovah in the tabernacle of the congregation Solomon recognizes his position. He is to judge the people of God. Hereafter all this shall take place in power.

* But the connection is not with the ark in Zion. He goes, historically, where the people are.

† Such is the meaning of the name of Boaz.

‡ Naomi means "my pleasant one."

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This book presents us also with kingly power in connection with the earth and the government of the people on the earth. Glory and riches are added to that which Solomon requests. Neither enemies nor the energy of faith is in question. The king's position is the result of the victory which that faith had obtained. He reigns, and is established in glory and in riches. He begins to build the house. Hiram acknowledges Jehovah as the creator of heaven and earth, and the strangers who dwell in Israel are the king's servants to do his work. In the temple the cherubim have their faces towards the house, that is, outwards.* The attributes of God do not now look only at the covenant to maintain it in spite of everything, but they also look outwards in order to bless. It is the time of the millennium; but the veil is here found again in the temple. Whatever may be the blessing of the true Solomon's reign, Israel and the earth have not immediate and direct access to Him who is hidden in the heavens. That is *our* portion, even to enter boldly now through the veil, and to find no veil in heaven: blessed be God! There is no temple there. Jehovah God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The stability of a divine government is granted to the earth,† and the blessing of a God whose face is

* In the Authorized Version it is *inwards*. It is literally towards the house, which, generally, would mean inwards; but, as the cherubim were at the very bottom of the house, looking towards the house was really *outwards*. The French translation is literal.

† This stability consists, apparently, in two things—God shall establish it, and then in Him is strength. These are the two

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turned towards it; but those who are blessed do not behold that face, do not draw nigh unto it. There is also an altar adapted for worship in a time of such blessing. The altar and the veil are not mentioned in the Book of Kings, where the structure of the temple is the figure of things not seen, and where, as a whole, it is presented to us as the dwelling-place and manifestation of God. We are told of a golden door, opening with two leaves, before the oracle, and nothing is said about the altar.

In Chronicles the order is arranged also according to the state of things which this book sets before us, that is to say, according to the state of Christ's glorious kingdom. There is a court for the priests, and the large outer court with doors. All was arranged (chap. iv. 6) for the relationship of which we speak.

So also, as to the manifestation of the glory, nothing is said in the Book of Kings of the public acceptance of the sacrifice; but it is simply stated that when the ark had been carried into the holy place, and the priests were gone out, and the staves of the ark had been drawn out, so that the dwelling of Jehovah was definitively established there, the glory of Jehovah filled the house. It is God's habitation, a figure of the heavenly dwelling-place which awaits us, our Father's house. On the other hand, that which is set before us in the Book of Chronicles is God's connection with His people Israel in the last days, prefigured by that which happened to Solomon. It was when the trumpeters and singers

sources of the stability of Christ's kingdom. This is the meaning of the words Jachin and Boaz, the names of the pillars before the temple.

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lifted up their voices with one accord to praise Jehovah, saying "His mercy endureth for ever," that the house was filled with a cloud. As we have seen, when all shall be accomplished for Israel, these words will celebrate the untiring mercy of which Israel's blessing will be the proof in that day. It is the deliverance and blessing of that people which demonstrate the truth of those words.

We have seen that there was a second part of grace; the acceptance of Israel as worshippers after their sin—not only the ark on Mount Zion, but the sacrifice and pardon and consequent worship of Mount Moriah, the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Thus Solomon having prayed, and entreated Jehovah that His eyes should be open, and His ears attent to the prayers that should be offered to Him in that place quoting (David's petition in Psalms cxxxii., and using His mercies to David as a plea), the fire comes down and consumes the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah fills the house. And now, it is not only that the priests cannot enter, but the children of Israel behold the glory which rests upon the house; they fall upon their faces and worship. It is the public acceptance of the sacrifice which sets the people in public connection with God, and makes them confess that "Jehovah is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever." (Comp. Lev. ix. 24.) Only in this last passage the acknowledgment of God's unwearied mercy was not the point.

There is also another element in the scene we are considering, and that is the public and joyful assembly of

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the whole people, the feast of tabernacles, the great congregation (Psalm xxii. 25), and also the dedication of the altar.

These are the two things which mark Israel's participation in the blessing, namely, the altar, and the feast of tabernacles; worship subsequent to their fall and ruin, founded on the acceptance of the sacrifice, and the realized effect of the promises, the people being no longer in distress.*

We find again here the musical instruments of Jehovah, which David had made to praise Jehovah, "because his mercy endureth for ever;" when David himself "praised by their ministry" (vii. 6): blessed thought! for who is this David? (Compare Psalm xxii. 22.) The people saw themselves blessed and happy in all the goodness of Jehovah. After this the Lord sets before Solomon the conditions under which He places him, as well as the people, for the enjoyment or for the recovery of these blessings. He had chosen this house of prayer. If there was chastening and the people humbled themselves, there was respite; the eyes and the heart of Jehovah should be there perpetually.

Then, with respect to Solomon and the seed of David generally, on their faithfulness the blessing of the whole people was to depend. If the house of David should turn away from God, Israel should be rooted out of the land; and the house, which had been sanctified by the

* It does not appear however that they made booths with the branches of trees. Since Joshua, this had not been done until the days of Nehemiah. At the time which we are considering, joy and prosperity had made them a little neglectful of the word.

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worship of Jehovah, should become a by-word among all nations, and a witness to the just judgment of God.

Chapter viii. gives us a few more details of the state of Israel—a state which prefigures that of the last days. Solomon brings everything into subjection that could have hindered the full enjoyment of the promised land in its whole extent, whether on the side of Tyre or of Syria. The strangers in the land continue to pay tribute, and the children of Israel are captains and men of war. Zion is entirely sanctified, and the worship of Jehovah maintained and honoured by the king. The service of the house of God, the praises, and the whole order connected therewith, were appointed according to the ordinance of David. The king's commandment was the absolute rule for everything. Edom itself was his possession; and, as far as the Red Sea, all were the king's subjects. The king of Tyre, who represents the Gentile glory of the world, supplied all that he needed to accomplish his designs.

But it is not only within the borders of the land that the power and glory of Solomon are known. His fame spreads among the heathen, even to distant lands; and the queen of Sheba comes to bring him her tribute of admiration, and the precious things of the Gentiles, who thus contribute to the splendour and glory of the place chosen by God, whose light had come and upon which the glory of Jehovah had risen (in type doubtless for the moment, but according to the principle of grace, and by the power that will fully accomplish it, according to the counsels of God). It is a glory, the report of which attracts the nations, but which, when seen, surpasses all

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that could be said of it; and which one must be near to appreciate. It is a glory that excels all that the world has seen, a wisdom never equalled—a wisdom that attracted all the kings of the earth, who, each year, brought their offerings and their gifts to the king who sat upon the throne of Jehovah on earth.

Thus, ruling even to the farthest limits of the promised land, he causes all Israel to enjoy the abundance and the blessing, which God poured out upon His people.

But soon the picture changes.

Solomon's faults are not related here for reasons which we have already pointed out; but the history of Rehoboam shews us the immediate fall of the kingly power which God had established. The king's folly occasioned it, but it was only the fulfilment of the Lord's word by Ahijah.

The war which Rehoboam began against the revolted tribes was prevented. Rehoboam submits to the man of God's prohibition. He is blessed and fortifies himself in Judah. The Levites repair to Jerusalem as well as a great number of the faithful, who would not forsake the true worship of Jehovah to bow down before golden calves, to which His name had been attached. Thus Judah was strengthened; for, during three years, the king walked in the ways of David and Solomon. But soon he forsook the law of Jehovah, and, secure against revolted Israel, he is chastised by unexpected enemies, and all the riches amassed by Solomon fall into their hands. Nevertheless he humbled himself, and the wrath of Jehovah was turned from him.

In the history which we are about to consider we

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shall find the ways of God more immediate and direct with those who were in direct and avowed relationship with Him, according to His grace towards David, and in connection with the house that had been dedicated to His name. When their kings were faithful, all went on well.

In his wars with Jeroboam Abijah stands entirely upon this ground, and he is blessed.

Asa follows his steps; and, whether at peace, or while at war with the Ethiopians, Israel prospers in his reign. He takes away the strange gods; for we continually find them again. Energy is required to cast them out and prevent their return. Even the king's mother is deprived of her royal position, on account of her idolatry. Nevertheless "the high places were not taken away."

But, although Asa's faithfulness continued, his trust in God failed afterwards. Jealous of the Israelites resorting to Judah, Baasha builds a city to prevent it; and Asa, instead of looking to the Lord, allies himself with Syria—an alliance which produced the desired effect, but which stirred up Gentiles against Israel. And this was not all; alliance with the world prevents our overcoming the world. Had he not done this, the Syrians would have fallen into the hands of Asa; for "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." Solemn and precious word! Wounded in his self-love, and irritated at having thus missed so good an opportunity, Asa puts the seer who gave this testimony in prison; and he oppresses the people. He is chastened of God, and alas! he does not seek God in

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the chastening. Nevertheless, except in this instance, Asa continued faithful and was honoured.

Jehoshaphat, his son, succeeds him, and begins his reign by walking faithfully with God. He strengthened his kingdom against Israel, an enemy more dangerous by their example than by their strength. When anything pretends to be in connection with God and to acknowledge Him, there is no safety except in judging it with a spiritual judgment—which can only be formed through a just sense of God's honour—making no terms with that which pretends to be connected with Him, and treating it as an enemy. This is what Jehoshaphat did at first; and, as he did not walk in the ways of Israel, Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand. Blessed of Jehovah, he takes away the high places and the groves, and seeks with much faithfulness and zeal to instruct the people in the true knowledge of the Lord; Jehovah preserves him from war, and some of the nations even become tributary to him on account of his power.

In many respects this is a more beautiful picture than anything we have yet read in the history of the kings. But this prosperity becomes a snare to him; and it bore most bitter fruits when his real piety was not present as a counterpoise.

The prosperity with which God had blessed him in consequence of his faithfulness made it worth while to seek alliance with him, and rendered it more difficult to attack him. Thus at ease, Jehoshaphat on his part joins affinity with Israel. His prosperity put him in a condition to do so in a manner which made the alliance honourable. The human heart, when it is not kept by

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God, can act generously with respect to the evil which it fears not; but this is not charity. Outwardly Jehoshaphat is faithful to Jehovah, but the wrath of Jehovah is upon him.

Nevertheless, when he had returned to his house, the king sets himself to bring back the people to the fear of Jehovah, and to cause judgment and righteousness to be executed in Israel. But war begins. He could no longer have the unmingled blessing of having to do with God alone without trial. The intervention of the enemy was now needful for his good, according to God's government, although in the trial through which he passes he may have full blessing. His piety was genuine; the trial proves it. He appeals to the relationship of God with Abraham, and to His promises to Solomon, when the latter had built the house. Jehoshaphat understood also the relation in which the enemy stood to Israel, looked at in connection with God's dealings. (Chap. xx. 10, 11.) God answers him, and the king encourages the people by acknowledging the voice of the prophets, and by singing the praises of God before the blessing came—singing in faith that His mercy endureth for ever. God abundantly granted his prayer. Israel, whose enemies had slain each other, had only to carry away the spoil; and God gave rest to the king, and his realm was quiet.

Still, if Jehoshaphat no longer united himself with the king of Israel to make war, he joined him in a matter of commerce. But God put a stop to his undertakings.

In spite of some faults the character of Jehoshaphat is a fine one, and refreshes the heart. But soon the sor-

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rowful fruits of his league with Ahab ripen and bring Judah into distress. Jehoram, his son, Ahab's son-in-law, walks in the ways of the kings of Israel. The Edomites revolt, and Libnah, a city of Judah, does the same. The king makes high places, and compels Judah to worship at them. The judgment of God is soon manifested. He whom God has raised up as a witness against the sins of the house of Ahab has foreseen their fruits in Judah; and a writing of Elijah's is brought to the king,* threatening him with the terrible judgments of God. Judah also is attacked by their enemies, who pillage the land, laying waste even the king's house, and slaying all his sons excepting one. This was of Jehovah. It is His government which we see here; for He rules over those who are in covenant with Him, those who are His house.

Finally, the king perishes, according to Elijah's prediction. Disaster upon disaster falls upon Judah in consequence of this connection with the house of Ahab. To connect oneself with that which claims to be of God, according to His religion, but which is not so, is intolerable to God. The only son that remained to Jehoram is slain by Jehu, as participating in the iniquity of Ahab's family; and Athaliah, who belonged to this family, takes possession of the throne, destroying all the seed

* Elijah had been taken up to heaven some time before the writing reached its destination. Being a prophecy, there is nothing which makes any difficulty in believing that this writing, like any other prophecy, was left by Elijah to be used at the suitable time. It was a function which, according to the ways of God, naturally belonged to him as a witness against the iniquity of Ahab.

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royal, except one child that God in His grace took care of, who would not have the lamp of David put out at Jerusalem, although He chastened his family. The sister of Ahaziah, wife to the high priest, preserves the child, who is concealed in the house of God for six years.

Everything was in a very low state; and, to outward appearance, all was over with the house of David; but the faithfulness of God did not fail. And, although the power of the throne is absolutely destroyed, and the family of David set aside, God raises up a man of faith, in the person of the high priest, to restore the whole. The chastisement of God was complete. The entire order of the throne was subverted by His judgment. Nothing was left but the faithfulness of God. Man was judged. He had no longer any means of recovery. But all things are at God's disposal, the heart of Jehoshabeath and the faith of Jehoiada. The latter takes the needful steps, and the king is set upon his throne; and, after all, the same thing which we have seen before again takes place: the king appoints everything concerning the re-establishment of the order in the house of God.

How often the energy of faith may, so to say, establish a kingdom, yet fail at the same time in maintaining the ordinary duty of those who have to do with the service of God! Faithful at the commencement of his reign, Joash walks nevertheless more by Jehoiada's faith than by his own; and, after the death of the high priest, he leans on the princes of Judah, and serves idols, and even puts to death the son of Jehoiada, by whom the Holy Ghost had testified against him. Joash, forsaken of

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God, is defeated by the Syrians. He falls into many diseases, and is at length slain by his own servants.

In this whole history we must observe that the immediate government of a God of judgment is in exercise, because those whom He judges were in close connection with Himself.

Amaziah, up to a certain point, walks with God, but in weakness and with an unsteady step. He leans upon an arm of flesh: but he hearkens to the prophet, and this saves him from being defeated. The cities of Judah, however, suffer the consequences of his false step, and are plundered by the army of Israel, which Amaziah had sent back. Lifted up by the victory that he had obtained over Edom, he takes the gods of Seir which could not deliver their own people, and bows himself down before them. He then turns a deaf ear to the prophet who rebukes him. But pride goes before confusion, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Amaziah, making war against Israel, is ignominiously defeated and made prisoner, and Jerusalem itself is laid waste.

We should remark in this part of the history the goodness of the Lord, who continually interposes by means of prophets.

Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, walks for a long time with Jehovah and prospers. The strength of Judah is increased, and all the king's undertakings are successful. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up;" he takes upon himself the priestly function, and is smitten with leprosy by the hand of God.

We enter now on a period in which Isaiah throws much light on the state of the people. This state was

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partly exhibited before, in the reign of Joash, who, as soon as he hearkens to the princes, falls into idolatry. But in reading the first two chapters of Isaiah, of the prophecy of Hosea, we shall see the terrible condition of the people, the greatness of God's patience, and the manner in which iniquity and idolatry multiplied on every side, when the king was not faithful and energetic.*

Jotham, the son of Uzziah, walks uprightly; and he avoids his father's fault; but the people are still corrupt. Nevertheless the faithfulness of Jotham procures him blessing and prosperity. For it is always the state of the king which is the object of God's judgment. As we have seen, the people as such had failed long before.

The reign of Ahaz forms an epoch. Entirely forsaking Jehovah, he gives himself up wholly to idolatry; and, the more he is smitten of God, the more he sins against Him. He is delivered into the hands of the Syrians, and into the hand of Pekah, the king of Israel. In the latter case however God interposes for the rescue at least of the

* We find consequently, that Isaiah, after exposing the evil and the consequent judgment, immediately introduces the promises of latter-day blessing and of the Messiah. In the first chapters he sets forth the state of the people, as well as the blessing of the last days. The house of David is not judged till chapter vii., and it is there that the Messiah, the Son of the virgin, is brought in as the resource, and the means of deliverance and grace according to the counsels of God. The rest of this prophet's writings gives us the whole history of the people, according to the thoughts of God, and that of the nations, in connection with Israel, until the accomplishment, at the end of the age, of full blessing in Christ, with the judgment of Israel's sin in respect of Jehovah (xl.—xlviii.), and in respect of Christ (xlix.—lvii.)

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captives. The Edomites, and afterwards the Philistines, invade Judah. All this distress induces Ahaz to seek help from the king of Assyria, who only brought him into still greater trouble. (Comp. Isaiah vii. 17 ; see also Hosea v. 13—15.)

If piety is not transmitted from father to son, grace can work in the heart and direct the steps of one who had the most wicked father. This was the case with the son of Ahaz. The way in which Hezekiah sought the glory of his God shews remarkable faith and energy. In the better days of the kingdom, true piety and the work of righteousness were manifested in Jehoshaphat ; great energy of faith is now displayed in Hezekiah ; and we shall find in Josiah profound reverence for the scriptures, for the book of the law.

I recall here the great principle, the effects of which the reader has to remark in the book which occupies us, namely, the government of God, which visited every act with its immediate consequences, a government which always had reference to the king's conduct. But, in spite of some awakenings and some restorations wrought by grace, the people having entirely corrupted themselves, the kingly power which alone recalled them to their duties came short of the glory of God; and at length, the oath made in Jehovah's name being broken, the measure of sin was filled up, and the judgment of Israel, and the times of the Gentiles, commenced.

Hezekiah acknowledges the sinful state of Israel, and he invites the people to cleanse themselves. A true worship, affecting in its character, is re-established

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(chap. xxix. 25—29), and the service of Jehovah's house is set in order.

But Hezekiah's zeal embraces all Israel, and he sends letters which, although the greater part laughed them to scorn, brought up many serious souls to the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem. If everything is not re-established as a whole, yet, wherever faith is in action and a sincere heart seeks to glorify God, there is always cause for the faithful to rejoice in the dealings of God. God pardoned their failure in the purification necessary for participation in the service of the sanctuary; the prayer for blessing came up to His holy dwelling-place and was granted.

Strengthened by this communion with Jehovah, all Israel that had been present went out and destroyed the groves and the images, not only in Judah, but also in Ephraim and Manasseh. The state of disorder in Israel gave an opportunity on God's part for the exercise of faithfulness and the manifestation of devotedness in His people. Abundance and blessing are found in Judah, and Jehovah's house is filled with proofs of His goodness brought in by grateful hearts according to the ordinances of the law; and even in the cities of the priests all is set in order according to the law, and everything prospers.*

God fully answered the king's faith; but the iniquity of the people's heart was little changed, and the ways of

* Observe here that, when God blesses and there is faithfulness, the instruments whom He employs in His service partake of the glory that is connected with the blessing. Their names are inscribed in the record of God's dealings.

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God in judgment began to be manifested; and in such a manner as to make it evident that, in the midst of His judgments, and at the height of the enemy's power, the faithful seed of David should be the infallible resource of His people. This is the lesson of chapter xxxii. This man is the peace of the people when the Assyrian enters the land. See, in Isaiah viii., the Assyrian's entrance into the land already called the land of Immanuel through the prophetic revelation of the birth of the virgin's Son—a revelation addressed to the unfaithful king, to Ahaz; see also, in the same chapter, the revelation of the terrible distress of the people, the law being sealed and entrusted to the remnant who would follow Christ as a prophet, until the people confess that a Son was born unto them. See also, in chapter xxii. of the same prophet, the Spirit's judgment as to the moral condition of the people, on the occasion of those events which are recorded in 2 Chronicles xxxii. Hezekiah himself did not render again to Jehovah according to the benefit done unto him; but his heart was lifted up. Nevertheless, as he humbled himself, he was allowed to see the peace of Jerusalem all the days of his life.

Manasseh, his son, who gave himself up to iniquity in spite of the warnings of the prophets, brought desolation and ruin upon himself and afterwards upon Israel. Guilty of sins which God could not forget, his personal repentance in his captivity procured him personal restoration and peace through the mercy of God; and after his return to Jerusalem he acted faithfully and was jealous for the glory of God; for the time of Judah's

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judgment was not yet come. His son Amon followed him in his iniquity but not in his repentance, and he dies by the hand of his own servants.

We find in Josiah a tender heart, subject to the word, and a conscience that respected the mind and will of God: only at last he had too much confidence in the effect of this to secure blessing from God, without the possession of that faith which gives intelligence in His ways to understand the position of God's people. God however makes use of this confidence to take Josiah away from the evil He was preparing in the judgments which were to fall upon Judah, the knowledge of which should have made Josiah walk more humbly. At the age of sixteen he began by the grace of God to seek Jehovah; and at twenty he had acquired the moral strength necessary for acting with energy against idolatry, which he destroyed even unto Naphtali. We see here how sovereign grace came in; for both Hezekiah and Josiah were the sons of extremely wicked fathers.

Having cleansed the land from idolatry, Josiah begins to repair the temple; and there the book of the law was found. The king's conscience, and his heart also, are bowed under the authority of the word of his God. He seeks for the prophetic testimony of God with respect to the state in which he sees Israel to be, and God makes known to him by Huldah the judgment about to fall upon Israel; but tells him at the same time that his eyes shall not see the evil. It was this communication which should have made him act with less precipitation, and with a more exercised heart than he manifested when

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he went up against the king of Egypt. The knowledge that their well-deserved judgment was soon to overwhelm Israel, and there was no remedy for their sins (although Josiah himself was spared), ought to have prevented his going up against Pharaoh, when the latter did not attack him, and even warned him to forbear; but he would not hearken, and was lost through a hardihood which was not of God.

His death opened the sluices to the affliction of Judah and Jerusalem, which had been blessed through his means; for they had followed Jehovah all the days of Josiah, and had therefore been blessed; they had also mourned for his death. Jeremiah (that is to say, the Spirit of God by the prophet), in lamenting over the last king who would maintain the relations of God with His people, wept for the ruin and desolation which sin would bring upon the flock which Jehovah loved—the vineyard that He had planted with the choicest vine.

However faithful Josiah had been, this had not changed the heart of the people. (Compare Jer. iii. 10.) Josiah's faith was in action, and overruled this state of things; and, as we have constantly seen, blessing depended on the conduct of the king, although the undercurrent was always tending to the ruin and rejection of the people.

It remains for us to notice the passover. Everything is set in order according to the ordinances of Moses and David, and that in a remarkable manner. It appears that even the ark had been removed from its place (chap. xxxv. 3); but now, the ark being restored to its rest, the Levites occupy themselves diligently with their ser-

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vice, and even make ready for the priests, that they might keep the feast. They were all in their places according to the blessing of Israel in the rest they enjoyed unto Solomon. Those who taught all Israel no longer bore the ark, but they ministered to God and to His people. The singers were there also, according to their order, so that there had not been such a passover since the days of Samuel. It was like the last glimmering of the lamp which God had lighted among His people in the house of David. It was soon extinguished in the darkness of the nation which knew not God, and those who had been His people came under the judgment expressed by the word Lo-ammi (Not-my-people); but this was only to give occasion afterwards to the manifestation of His infinite grace towards the one, and His unchangeable faithfulness to the others. Ezekiel dates his prophecy from the year of this passover, when he says "the thirtieth year." Why so, I cannot tell. Was it the year of the jubilee? or did the passover itself form an epoch?

Little need be said of the succeeding reigns. The king of Egypt took possession of the land, and the iniquity of Jehoiakim, whom he made king in Jerusalem, was far from leading to restoration on God's part. One more powerful than the king of Egypt, a king by whom God would commence the dominion of the Gentiles, comes up against Jerusalem, and binds Jehoiakim in fetters, yet leaves him after all to end his reign and his life at Jerusalem. Three years after he carried away his son to Babylon.

Zedekiah, whom this king had made to swear by Je-

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hovah—thus acknowledging the authority of that name over his conscience,—more sinful in this respect than Nebuchadnezzar, despises his oath and the name of Jehovah; and, after an interval of fruitless resistance, in which he perseveres in spite of Jeremiah's testimony, he falls into the hands of the king of Babylon, who utterly destroys the city and the sanctuary. For both people and priests were thoroughly corrupted; they dishonoured Jehovah, and despised His prophets, till there was no remedy, and the land enjoyed her sabbaths.

Sad and solemn lesson of the sin and iniquity of man, and of the just judgment of God!

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But in His judgments God remembers mercy; and in the counsels of His grace He had already prepared, and even proclaimed by His prophets (and that by name), an instrument to give His people some respite.

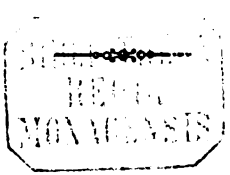
After the seventy years which Jeremiah had announced as the period of Judah's captivity, Jehovah put it into the heart of Cyrus to proclaim publicly that it was Jehovah the God of heaven, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and that He had charged him to build Him a house at Jerusalem. He invites the people of God to go thither, assuring them that Jehovah their God will be with them.

Thus it is by mercy—but by a mercy which recognizes that power has passed into the hands of the Gentiles—that the history of Israel's downfall concludes; the downfall of a people placed in the most favourable circumstances, so that God could say to them, "What

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could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"—of a people that had already been pardoned once; and who, after having allowed the ark of Jehovah to fall into the enemy's hands, and after God had forsaken Shiloh, His habitation, had been re-established in blessing, but re-established in vain. The long-suffering of God, the restorations He had granted them, the establishment of the house of David in grace, all was fruitless. The vineyard (for they were men) brought forth wild grapes. Its walls were broken down; it had been laid waste. Jerusalem had ceased for the present to be the throne of Jehovah, and government and power in the earth have been entrusted to the Gentiles.

END OF VOL. I.



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